

Local Wildlife Sites (SINCs)

The following is a quick guide to Local Wildlife Sites, compiled by the [Gwent Wildlife Trust](#):

1. What are Local Wildlife Sites?

Local Wildlife Sites (also known as **Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation**, or **SINCs**) are wildlife rich areas, identified and selected for their local biodiversity value. Selection takes into consideration important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species. Local Wildlife Sites vary in size, shape and habitat type and can include wildlife rich ponds, heaths, wetlands and ancient woodlands and grasslands.

2. Why are they valuable?

Areas where wildlife thrives are very important. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are vital in providing refuges for declining wildlife and creating a network of sites acting as corridors for migration and dispersal. They are the most important places for wildlife outside of protected areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

3. Why do we need Local Wildlife Sites?

It is recognised that the existence of many important sites is due to sympathetic management by farmers and other landowners. However, occasionally sites are lost or damaged through lack of knowledge about their importance.

Local Wildlife Sites can help to both draw the attention of owners to the importance of the site for wildlife and record and monitor the wildlife resources of the local area.

Local Wildlife Sites are part of a nationwide approach to a network of similar sites, which are recognised by many national and local organisations. Where funding allows, wildlife site projects such as Gwent Wildlife Trust's recent Gwent Grasslands Initiative can help support LWS owners with guidance on how to manage for wildlife.

4. How are sites identified?

Sites for survey are initially targeted through the study of existing habitat survey data, followed by field visits. Sites are assessed against the relevant set of Wildlife Site Criteria as contained within the [South Wales Guidelines for Selection of Wildlife Sites](#) (*click the link to download - 850KB*) and can be identified for both their plant and animal interest.

A number of Local Authorities within the Mid-Valleys area have recently been reviewing these criteria and making slight refinements to ensure regard is given to the special wildlife character of this area. You can download the *Criteria for the Selection of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in the County Boroughs of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff (the 'Mid-Valleys Area')* by clicking on the three sections: [Section 1: Introduction](#) (Pdf, 219 KB), [Section 2: Habitats](#) (Pdf, 467 KB), [Section 3: Species](#) (Pdf, 742 KB).

5. What does having a Local Wildlife Site mean to landowners?

- Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites. There are NO legal obligations directly associated with identification as a Local Wildlife Site.
- Ordinary land management and agricultural operations are not affected.
- They do not affect existing access conditions.
- Within certain Local Authority areas Local Wildlife Site owners can have access to expert advice regarding species and habitat management, with potential financial support to assist with this management.

- Having a Local Wildlife Site can be a positive advantage when applying to agri-environment grant schemes.
- Local Wildlife Sites are recognised by Local Authorities and taken into account when considering planning applications. When determining any planning application, wildlife issues are always considered. If the wildlife value of land is already known by both parties this makes the planning process quicker and much easier.

6. What should I do if I know of a potential Local Wildlife Site?

If you think you know of, or own a site of potential Local Wildlife Site standard, firstly seek permission from the landowner to take a closer look. Remember a site can qualify on habitat or species grounds. Record the species present and their frequency and compare against the LWS criteria. If you think the site qualifies then contact the relevant Local Authority Ecologist or Biodiversity Officer (see below). Ensure you have the site's grid reference, ownership details (and check the owner is happy for these to be passed on) as well as a brief description of the site including size, aspect, slope, special features and a sketch map of the site and adjacent land use. Also record which section of the LWS criteria you think the site qualifies under.

To find details of your Local Authority Ecologist or Biodiversity Officer, click on the map in the relevant Authority region.

- [West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre \(WWBIC\)](#)
- [Biodiversity Information Service \(BIS\)](#)
- [Herefordshire Biological Records Centre \(HBRC\)](#)
- [Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records \(GCER\)](#)
- [Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre \(BRERC\)](#)

For more information on Local Wildlife Sites & SINC's, please contact the relevant local authority, or the [Gwent Wildlife Trust](#).