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## Arfordir Ceredigion – Disgrifiad cryno

Mae'r ardal yn eithriadol bwysig yn rhinwedd ei chynefinoedd morol, rhynglanwol ac arfordirol. Mae llawer o rannau distaw o'r glannau, ymhell o brif aneddiadau Aberaeron, Cei Newydd ac Aber-porth, sydd oll yn gyrchfannau glan môr poblogaidd gydag amryfal feysydd carafanau gwyliau'n gysylltiedig â nhw. Mae llawer o'r arfordir wedi'i ddynodi'n Arfordir Treftadaeth. Mae tref Aberaeron yn anheddiad Sioraidd, deniadol a gynlluniwyd yn ofalus o gwmpas ei harbwr, gyda'r blaenau'r adeiladau wedi'u lliwio mewn modd neilltuol. Mae angen cryn ddychymyg, er hynny, i fedru ail-greu amgylchedd prysur y glannau hyn yn y 19eg ganrif, pryd y bu llawer o "Gardis" yn ennill bywoliaeth o'r môr ac o adeiladu llongau, a phan ddibynnai amaethwyr ar y calch a fewnforiwyd yno, ac a losgwyd mewn odynau glan môr. Bu gwersyll yr Urdd yn Llangrannog yn rhan o fywyd llawer o Gymry ifainc ers ei agor yn y 1930au.

## Summary description

This area is of outstanding importance for its marine, intertidal and coastal habitats. There are many quiet sections of the coastline away from the main settlements of Aberaeron, Newquay and Aberporth, all of which have become popular resort centres, with various holiday caravan parks associated with them. Much of the coastline is designated as Heritage Coast. The town of Aberporth is an attractive, tightly-planned Georgian harbour settlement, which makes distinctive use of colour washes on the front of the buildings, though it now takes some imagination to recreate the once busy environment of this coast in the 19th century, when many 'Cardis' earned their living from the sea and from ship-building, and when farmers depended on imported lime burnt in coastal kilns. The Urdd (Welsh League of Youth) camp at Llangrannog has been a part of many Welsh-speaking young people's lives ever since the 1930s.

Key Characteristics
<b>High coastal cliffs and exposed headlands</b> - from Ordovician and Silurian shales, grits and sandstones
<b>Sheltered bays</b> - backed with softer materials.
<b>Marine, intertidal and coastal habitats and landscapes</b> - of outstanding importance and many sections have been designated as Heritage Coast.
<b>Rivers and streams in narrow, sheltered valleys, emerging quickly at the coast.</b>
<b>Pastoral farmland and limited extents of arable</b> - Fine loamy and fine silty soils, improved grassland, stock rearing and dairying, in a generally open, exposed agricultural landscape, together with limited extents of arable land.
<b>Woodland tends to be in sheltered valleys and on steeper slopes.</b>
<b>Windblown gorse hedges atop clawdd</b> (hedge banks) - featuring in some exposed locations.
<b>Archaeology</b> - Prehistoric domestic and defensive sites along the coastal edge indicate the history and antiquity of coastal settlement.
<b>Coastal settlements</b> - in either the sheltered lee of headlands, or at river mouths, with buildings facing out to sea – most grew up as fishing villages and small ports but tourism is important today. A number of coastal caravan sites are evident. <b>Building style</b> - typically stone built with slate roofs but often rendered or painted colourfully.
<b>The main A487 road</b> - follows the coastline, but is generally set back from the coast and a sense of relative remoteness and 'wildness' exists along parts of the coast.

## Visual and Sensory Profile

This section of the vast arc of Cardigan Bay presents a series of cliffs and headlands, small bays, sheltered fishing villages and coastal flatlands. On clear days the craggy outline of Llŷn can be seen to the north. Between Aberaeron and Aberystwyth the coast is quieter, with few recreational beaches. Aberaeron's well known and attractive multi-coloured terraces are seen to best effect where they reflect in the waters of the harbour. The colour schemes are replicated elsewhere in towns and villages across West Wales. North of Aberaeron, coastal flatlands predominate backed by the steep, mainly wooded slopes of former cliffs. Where the coast road runs along the base of these slopes, there are views out to sea across gently undulating fields with wind-swept trees and sparse hedges.

In the opposite direction, from Aberaeron to Cardigan, the area is similar in many respects to the Pembrokeshire coast to the south, but is not so well-known. A mix of sheer cliffs

and steep slopes predominate, with the grass kept short by sheep and salt-laden winds. Here all the layers of rocks are revealed in their variety of colour and form, from the silver-grey slate at Aberporth to the dark disturbed shales at Llangrannog, leaving rocky shores and grotesquely shaped stacks and headlands in places such as Ynys Lochtyn.

Activity is concentrated at the former fishing villages, which are reached by tortuous routes down the coastal valleys. Newquay and Aberporth, and to a lesser extent Llangrannog, attract large numbers of visitors in summer, drawn into the area by the picture-postcard, tight-knit settlements overlooking their harbours, the sandy beaches and by the boat trips to view the well-known dolphins and seals of Cardigan Bay. The holiday caravan parks scattered along the cliffs and concentrated around Newquay, are often well contained in the wooded landscape. Their extent is most apparent from the sea where the formal lines of caravans can be seen aligned up the hillsides and along the clifftop rims, to take advantage of the sea views. Out of season these places return to a relative rural tranquillity, but with the frequent noise of the wind, sea and sea birds. The DERA base compromises this tranquillity with its prominent masts, large hangers, scattered buildings, security fences, aircraft movement and noise from weekday missile testing. The presence of this activity unsettles the senses, which is in contrast relaxed by the much calmer atmosphere of the popular village and beach of Aberporth close by.



Aberaeron's colourful buildings and harbour are distinctive features. © John Briggs



New Quay, sheltered by a headland from prevailing south westerly winds like many other coastal settlements in the area. © John Briggs



A spectacular and rugged coastal area, with cliffs predominating. © Bronwen Thomas



Coastal plateau near Aberporth. © LUC



Looking north over Llansantffraed © John Briggs



Gentle rolling farmland inland from the coast near Llanrhystud © John Briggs



One of the small sheltered valleys, here seen at Cwm Mabus, near Llanrhystud. © John Briggs

## Geological Landscape influences

The bedrock geology comprises late Ordovician (Ashgill Series) and early Silurian (Llandovery Series) sandstones, siltstones and mudstones. The sedimentary sequence is dominated by turbidites, a rock-type consisting of repetitive sequences of sandstones, siltstones and mudstones, occurring in varying proportions. The world-famous Aberystwyth Grits are superbly exposed in the high coastal cliffs extending south west from Aberystwyth and provide some of the best examples of this rock type. Spectacular trending folds are exposed in the cliffs at many locations, for example south of Aberystwyth below Allt-wen, north east of Llanrhystud at Carreg Ti-pw, and north east of Cwmttydu below Castell Bach. The Ystwyth Fault forms a major topographical feature that is coincident with the valley of the Afon Wyre between Llangwryfon and Llanrhystud. The fault can be traced east north east into the adjacent Rheidol and Ystwyth Hill and Valleys area along the deeply-incised valley of the Ystwyth.

The rivers cut through the valley fills of glacial material and flushed large volumes of sediment from their upland catchments. Much of this material was re-deposited as silts, sands and gravels in extensive, gently sloping coastal alluvial fans as, for example, at Aberaeron between the Arth and Aeron rivers, and at Llanon between the Clydan and Peris rivers. In the latter case, cold-climate (periglacial) conditions persisted after the Ice Age glaciers had melted, resulting in the development of locally frozen ground (permafrost) and the churning up of the river-lain sediments into spectacular contortions by repeated freezing and thawing of the surface layers. With rising sea levels, wave-action has progressively re-worked the unconsolidated sediment creating extensive beach deposits that are transported north east along the coast under the influence of long-shore drift. In contrast, the hard rock cliffs frequently display embayments and narrow headlands that

reflect minor contrasts in rock type, as well as the presence of geological faults that form zones of weakness exploited by the waves.

## Landscape Habitats influences

This area is of outstanding importance for its marine, intertidal and coastal habitats, as well as much of it having been designated as Heritage Coast. The marine waters of Cardigan Bay are frequented by harbour porpoise and bottle-nosed dolphin. The intertidal area provides a diverse intertidal flora and fauna, frequented by many wading birds. At the base of the cliffs, seals frequent the reefs, sea caves and offshore sandbanks.

The cliffs themselves form an open and very exposed coastal landscape. Their vertical faces are an important and extensive habitat, supporting cliff crevasse and ledge vegetation, providing a blaze of colour in the spring, with the blue of spring squill, pink thrift and white campion on the cliff faces, set against yellow primrose and purple heath violet in the cliff top grasslands. Peregrine falcons breed on the cliff faces, along with a host of seabirds. Much of the coastline is owned and protected by the National Trust, especially south of Newquay.

The tops of the cliffs are dominated by short coastal grasslands and areas of heath, favourite breeding and foraging grounds for choughs. On the rougher, scrubby heath vegetation where gorse and bracken predominate, whinchat and stonechat breed. Inland the coastal nature of the land merges slowly into the rolling hills of central Ceredigion.

The area is drained by a number of rivers. The largest, the Aeron, forms a wide valley at Aberaeron, whilst the smaller rivers and streams empty into the sea through narrow and steep-sided gulleys covered in sessile oak woodlands. The only flat ground within this area is the coastal strip between Llanrhystud and Llanon, where low cliffs of glacial till predominate. It supports farming, with some arable cropping.

## Historic Landscape influences

This is a well-settled coastal strip, with major settlements at Aberaeron, Newquay and Aberporth, as well as along the main road from Aberystwyth to Cardigan at Llanrhystud, Llanon, Sarnau and elsewhere. The area is rich in prehistoric domestic and defensive sites along the coastal edge, such as Castell Bach, Pen Dinas Lochtyrn, Gaer Wen, and Castell. Since the 16th century, crop-production was achieved by the use of burnt and slaked lime and there are the notable remains of a group of six lime-kilns close to Llanrhystud and elsewhere along the coast. The remains of Medieval fish traps are periodically exposed in places at low tide. A distinctive Medieval open field system survives at Llanon, originally part of the agricultural estate of Strata Florida Abbey.

The three towns grew up as fishing ports that developed into harbours, and in the case of Newquay in particular, also sustained a ship-building industry. This reached its peak in the middle of the 19th century, but was short lived and died out towards the end of the century, although Newquay is still a busy harbour today. Aberaeron is notable for its Georgian town-planning and architecture, however, Newquay and Aberporth evolved in a more ad-hoc way during the 19th century.

In between the towns are a number of villages, typically located at the mouth of the streams and rivers along the coast, within sandy coves sheltered by rocky headlands. Villages such as Tresaith, Llangrannog, Llanon and Llanrhystud grew up as fishing villages

or along the coast road and many exhibit the simple architecture of stone-built cottages with slate roofs. There are some excellent survivals of localised building techniques, including thatch. The main villages are also largely 19th century, and clearly relate to the road, perhaps displacing earlier focal points such as Llanon, where the church and relict Medieval open field system lies some way to the west of the present village centre that was more oriented to the sea. Several of the small seaside settlements certainly appear to have earlier origins, and though they acquired a certain cachet as small resorts during the 19th century, development remained small-scale, such as at Tresaith and at Llangrannog.

Between the villages the agricultural landscape supports scattered hamlets and dwellings. The main A487 follows the coastline, but is set back from the coast, with smaller roads providing access to the coastal settlements while leaving the intervening coastline inaccessible by car. In recent years the growth and popularity of caravanning has resulted in the establishment of large, holiday caravan parks along the coast, such as at Aberporth and Newquay. The presence of the military base and aerodrome on the coastline above Aberporth also contribute to the more developed character of the coast.

## Cultural Landscape influences

An area traditionally associated with St Non, who is commemorated at Llanerchaeron and Llanon, and with her son David, patron saint of Wales. The traditional culture of this area has depended on farming and on the sea, nourishing a long tradition of ship-building in its small harbours. The sea is an ever-present prospect for travellers along the A487. Until the 20th century these small coastal settlements were busy with ship-building and coastal trade, lime kilns and fisheries. Many sailors who lived in the little white houses and small farms would have travelled the world in locally-built ships.

The best-known of the families which earned a living on this strip, both from the sea and the land, are the Teulu Cilie, who farmed 300 acres between New Quay and Llangrannog – including some who were smiths, preachers, musicians and poets. Several very different and distinct landscapes testify to the cultural variety of this narrow coastal strip. The Urdd (Welsh League of Youth) camp at Llangrannog has been a part of many a Welsh childhood ever since Sir Ifan ab O.M. Edwards established it in 1932.

Not far away, near Aberporth, is the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) base at Aberporth, an amalgamation of three separate sites developed in the late 1930s, which has played a major part in the development, evaluation and service practice of virtually every guided weapon to enter service with the UK Armed Forces.

Today, the Ceredigion Coastal Path is an important recreational resource as part of the Wales Coast Path National Trail.