



Wildlife Trusts
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Powys Cysylltiadau Gwyrdd Green Connections Powys

Final Report March 2023



This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.

1. Introduction

Green Connections was delivered by a formal partnership between the three Wildlife Trusts working in Powys, namely Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and the Brecknock Office of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. The project started 'at risk' in April 2021 with it receiving final approval in July 2021. It finished in March 2023.

The project was funded by a grant from the 'Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing' (ENRaW) programme provided by the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2012-2020, which was funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government. The grant was for £870,080 and had an intervention rate of 100%, which means there was no match funding or matched time involved.

The project team and consultants have been working across Powys with community groups, landowners, small businesses and statutory organisations to take localised action to address climate change and biodiversity loss and create a network of land being managed for nature's recovery across the county.

Together we have been:

- Advising on habitat management and undertaking small scale practical works,
- Helping people take action to encourage more wildlife into their local area,
- Providing opportunities for upskilling, training and volunteering,
- Surveying, recording and mapping wildlife and carrying out investigative studies,
- Facilitating collaborations that will deliver increased knowledge and improved habitat management towards a target of 30% of land managed for wildlife by 2030.
- Carrying out feasibility and investigative studies into the economics of land management for wildlife on common land and with small scale contractors.

The project was conceived by the partner organisations in 2019 as a response to the increasing numbers of landowners and community groups contacting the Wildlife Trusts asking for advice on tree planting and other ways to address the threat of climate change and loss of biodiversity. The ENRaW application window was seen by the Trusts as an opportunity to help people become aware of the existing wildlife value of their land or community green spaces and offer ways to enhance its value for biodiversity without destroying elements that were already good.

To address this demand the Trusts needed to increase staff capacity and build new relationships that would remain going forward. Recognising that neither wildlife nor communities see the internal boundaries of Powys, collaboration between Wildlife Trust staff to share skills and work across borders was also important. The Project delivery team came from all three Trusts and was a mixture of current staff seconded onto the project and new staff, which helped the team build on existing stakeholder relationships and gave scope to develop new ones. The team was made up of a Project Manager, Admin Assistant, three Conservation Officers, three Community Officers, a cross-border Volunteers Officer and two trainees. All but three of the team were part-time on the project. Additional support staff time contributed to administration and steering group with a Finance Manager being brought in to help with financial control (**Table 1**).

Table 1 – Staff list

Role	Wildlife Trust	FTE	Comment
Project Manager	RWT	FTE 0.8	Cross-border
Admin assistant	RWT	FTE 0.6	Cross-border
Conservation Officer	RWT	FTE 1.0	Reduced to FTE 0.6 in last 3-4 months of project
Community Wildlife Officer	RWT	FTE 0.6	
Wildlife Volunteers Officer	RWT	FTE 0.6	Cross-border
Summer trainees (2 people) 2022/2023	RWT	FTE 0.66 FTE 0.42	Yr 1: 8-month contract Yr 2: 5-month contract
Autumn Trainees 2022/2023	RWT/WTSWW job share	FTE 0.58	7-month contract for two trainees
People and Wildlife Officer (Community)	WTSWW (Brecknock)	FTE 1.0	
Wildlife Trust Officer (Conservation)	WTSWW (Brecknock)	FTE 0.4	
Conservation Officer	MWT	FTE 0.6	
Community Wildlife Officer	MWT	FTE 1.0	
Trainee	MWT	FTE 0.4	
Finance manager	RWT		(Yr 2) 5hrs/month
Steering group/management	RWT		7.5 hrs/month
Steering group/management	MWT		7 hrs/month
Steering group/management	WTSWW		7 hrs/month

Despite the compressed timescale, Green Connections exceeded most of its targets and has been successful in achieving its objectives: several of the staff say it has been one of the most rewarding projects they have ever worked on. The project's headline targets are shown in **Table 2**, along with a map showing the distribution of stakeholders across Powys.

Once the project started, it became apparent that there was a demand for support from a range of groups or projects that already had funding (for example Local Places for Nature capital works) but still needed face to face advice, training, input at meetings or activity materials not covered by their own funding. These are recorded as 'collaborative groups' and the GC team were able to add value to 32 additional groups or projects while still being mindful to avoid potential double-funding.

Table 2 – Headline Indicator targets

Number	Target	Total
Landowner stakeholders	60	111
Community groups stakeholders	60	102
Business stakeholders	30	42
Collaborative stakeholders	n/a	37
Externally delivered training courses	15	34
Attendances on externally delivered training courses (staff and volunteers)	n/a	147
Internally delivered training sessions	n/a	75
Attendances at internally delivered training sessions (volunteers)	n/a	440
Green Connections Volunteers	30	80

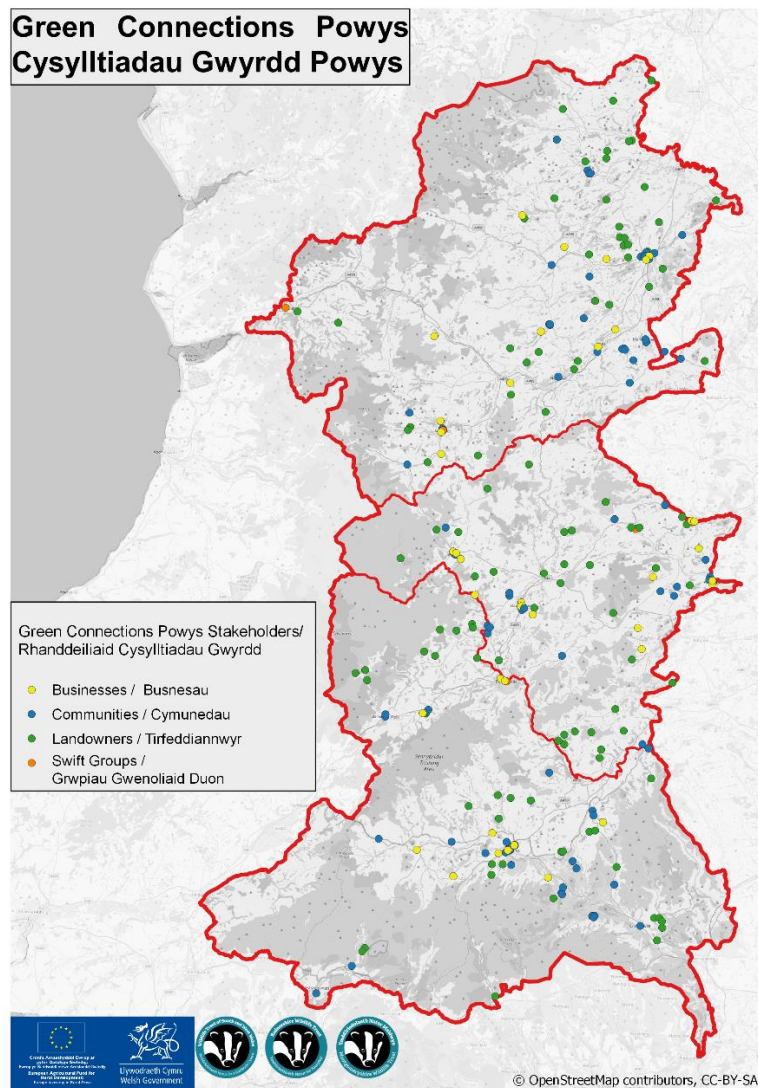


Figure 1 – Distribution of Green Connections Powys Stakeholders Map: BIS

Report layout

The main body of the report provides information structured around the project objectives A to G. Because of the huge amount of work that was undertaken, case studies have been used to illustrate some of the activities from around Powys. The two report Appendices (1: Stakeholders and 2: Case Studies) provide more detail. There are additional project reports held by each Wildlife Trust which provide more detail of the activities with each stakeholder.

The three feasibility studies identified in the application form plus additional studies undertaken by external consultants are referred to in the relevant sections A to G and the full reports can be found on the RWT website. All the reports and resources developed during the project including the promotional films will remain available on the [Green Connections](#) webpage and [Project Resources](#) pages and [You Tube channel](#).

Objectives A to G

A: Support Powys County Council (PCC) and other statutory bodies to take action for climate change and the ecological emergency

The Wildlife Trusts were aware that PCC and smaller town and community councils were needing advice to deliver sustainable resource management and to report on their biodiversity duty for the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. With the additional capacity, the GC team were able to give support in various areas of work, but it was agreed that the Local Nature Partnership Officer would take on direct communications with the councils. PCC announced a climate emergency and an ecological emergency during this period, and although it cannot be directly attributed to the project, there was considerable background input from the Wildlife Trusts into this.

A substantial amount of project time was spent working with the Powys Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and the LNP Officer who is hosted by PCC, to help deliver shared objectives across the county. In 2021 the Conservation Officers attended multiple meetings to develop the detail of the Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) and its species and habitat action plans. The NRAP was approved August 2022 and is an important framework for wildlife conservation in Powys going forwards.

In 2023, following a need identified in the LNP meeting of December 2022, GC contracted and supported a consultant to facilitate four focus group workshops across Powys to find out how much was known about the LNP and the NRAP and to consult on wider engagement and increased effectiveness of the Partnership. The study suggested that the NRAP was not widely understood even by groups that were effectively contributing to its targets and that a Communication Plan with actions would help to raise its profile and reporting. The results of this work will be taken forward by the LNP Officer and Partnership over the next year.

GC project staff supported the LNP Officer at a useful multi-stakeholder meeting on road verge management in Oct 2021. Participants included staff from the PCC Highways team, the Mid and North Wales Trunk Road Agency and wildlife conservation NGOs who were able to discuss the opportunities and barriers for managing road verges with wildlife in mind and also feedback on behalf of community groups or road verge nature reserve 'guardians' on management issues. This work was picked up by the LNP Officer who was able to liaise with the Powys staff and other local authority staff across Wales to share experiences. The PCC team purchased two cut-and-collect machines for urban road verge work following this discussion. GC Project staff provided habitat management advice to several communities for their local road verges during the project.

Building on previous project work, GC conservation staff led on development of the Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) /Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) system in Powys. Powys is some way behind some other authorities in Wales in using this system to identify high quality sites against a set of agreed criteria. During the project, the GC team had the capacity to formalise the Partnership's membership and the Terms of Reference, which includes PCC and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Fifty-four sites were put forward to the Partnership for formal approval during the project. The approved sites will be mapped by BIS and are likely to be used by the LNP to contribute to the target of 30% of land being managed for wildlife by 2030.

On a more local level, GC project staff worked with various community and town councils around the county to provide advice on enhancing habitat for biodiversity. These included Brecon, Llanyre, Abermule/Llandyssil (**Appendix 2: Case study 1**), Ystradgynlais, Welshpool and Newtown. One staff

Work undertaken with landowners to enhance their sites ranged from field tree and hedge planting, scrub clearance, Himalayan balsam clearing, pond and scrape creation, pond clearance, laurel and rhododendron clearance, soil sampling, green hay and meadow seed enhancement, and nest boxes for species including barn owls, bats and dormice. It became clear that most small landowners primarily wanted habitat management advice, particularly for managing grasslands, and species surveys, rather than practical work. Face-to-face advice also allowed for discussions around landscape-scale connectivity, slowing the flow of water in a catchment and the value of a range of habitats to biodiversity for mitigating climate change.

A range of species surveys were undertaken by staff and volunteers during landowner site visits, including vascular plants, grassland fungi, butterflies, invertebrates and birds. Records were given to the landowner and also submitted to the Powys and BBNP Biodiversity Information Service (BIS). As part of their contract with the project, BIS ran four recording days on landowner sites across Powys bringing a range of expert recorders together to survey. More than 5000 species records were added to the biodiversity record for Powys from all the activities of the project.



Landowner visit to Troedrhiwdraen in the Elan Valley Photo: Darylle Hardy

Although the majority of landowners visited were small landowners, GC staff were beginning to build relationships with the Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN) and other collaborative farmer groups like the Beacons Water Group and Wye Soils Group, and through the consultants' contracts, with Commoner Associations. Three collaborative farm visits were organised with the NFFN in 2022 which were well received and attended by 51 people. A longer project would have offered more opportunities for farmer advisory visits as it is apparent that there is an increasing demand from larger landowners for species surveys and habitat management advice.

Hay meadow enhancement trial

Project staff took the opportunity to trial different methods of increasing the botanical diversity of local stakeholder's meadows using the application of wild meadow seed. The green hay method involved cutting, baling and spreading green hay: in one case using contractors and farm machinery and another using hand scything, raking and hand baling. Another method used a hired seed brush harvester to collect seed from a nature reserve. Staff and volunteers also handpicked (mainly yellow rattle) or hoovered seed with a seed blower purchased specifically for this purpose. The project also purchased quality wild meadow seed harvested from meadows of the National Botanic Garden of

Wales and other more local sites to give to community groups and landowners to spread by hand. It is not possible to gauge the results of this work within the timeframe of the project but an evaluation report of the practicality and costs of the different methods is available with the other project reports.



Hand spreading of green hay provided by a donor field. Over the next year the owners will monitor its effectiveness. Photo Michael Pearce

Conservation clusters

The project aimed to set up three conservation cluster groups in different parts of Powys, either as landowner groups or wildlife survey groups, who would self-manage and therefore continue beyond the project. Some of the development of these clusters was facilitated by GC staff but even more was achieved through the Collaborative Land Management Feasibility Study and the additional facilitation projects, several based around Commons, which were undertaken by consultants towards the end of the project.

RWT already had a 'wildlife habitats group' for members so the focus was initially on other areas in Powys. MWT's fledgling landowner group, known now as the Montgomeryshire Habitats Management Group, became firmly established during the project to the extent it became affiliated with the Trust and set up its own website. A huge success for the project was the start of a 'North Brecknock Landowner Group' (**Case Study 3**) bringing a range of small landowners together and clearly fulfilling a demand, with other landowners from different areas wishing to join. In Radnorshire, small local landowner networks were being brought together in the last six months of the project: one group for a Nature Networks Fund2 bid (which was unfortunately unsuccessful) and another network which will be supported through the Trusts' Wilder Marches programme.

Key to the success of all these groups is having volunteers willing to coordinate the network, therefore allowing time-restricted NGO staff and wildlife experts to concentrate on targeted advice or surveys. The project provided the capacity for staff and consultants to bring individuals together and initiate group establishment and this will make support of the networks much easier going forward.

Collaboration with other landowner projects

Two separately funded landowner projects benefitted considerably from the input of Green Connections staff who provided additionality and gained reciprocal benefits.

One was the 'Gwneud Gwair Cymreig/ Making Welsh Hay Project around Llanidloes, funded by the Landfill Disposal Tax Communities scheme which received steering group support, activities at events, habitat advice, wildlife surveys and training. Participants in that project joined events in the GC project and the relationships built through this partnership helped GC staff meet a wider audience and will endure well into the future.

The second collaboration was with a Nature Networks Fund project in Radnorshire called The Ciliau Farm Restoration Project. RWT were instrumental in helping the farm owners obtain a grant from the NRW/NLHF fund and were the only farm enterprise to successfully do so. Project support came in the form of the steering group, advising on biodiversity survey contracts, Health and Safety for public activities, and helping with claim paperwork, all of which were new to the farm enterprise. The reciprocal benefit for GC was running a training weekend on the farm, eDNA waxcap samples and meeting other nearby landowners. The Ciliau Farm project has been very successful, land and the farm owners say that a large part of that is due to the support given by the GC conservation officer.

More networks and collaborative working were explored in the feasibility study and follow-up work in the last three months of the project.

Feasibility study: Exploring Collaborative Habitat Land Management in Powys (H. Barnes, 2022)

This study looked at different ways to use collaboration to help address habitat management difficulties by bringing different sectors or skill-sets together. It was based on a consultation but also on barriers that the consultant and conservation staff were already aware of. The resulting report recognises that although many landowners are willing to undertake habitat management for wildlife, active management of small areas in isolation tends to be resource-heavy, often requiring high financial outlay or significant upskilling.

Farmers undertaking contractor work were often less visible to those outside the farming community and were often unwilling to do small-area work as it was impractical or uneconomic. Some contractors were found to be willing to broaden their scope with small-scale machinery but needed to know it was going to be economically viable. Some equipment Hire firms in Powys already hold suitable hand-driven machinery but the hire cost plus potential repair costs, plus any additional labour costs do not necessarily make it an economically viable option for small areas of habitat. It was also noted that although small landowners might offer non-monetary exchange arrangements (like being able to take hay in return for making it) it was not always particularly valuable to a neighbouring farmer or contractor for the effort involved.

There was some interest shown in the consultation for volunteer workshare days, and shared equipment hire could form part of this system as happens in some of the existing Meadows Groups, but it would be very much up to individual groups to find an agreed arrangement that addresses different land sizes or required work needs.

The report concluded that finding local solutions and a flexible approach were important for managing small habitat areas. Although traditional hay meadows are a flagship habitat, alternative

management such as successional hay making within a field or timely conservation grazing are just as relevant for habitat diversity and even more so for invertebrates. The report noted the value of knowledgeable facilitators in helping to develop relationships and capacity build between landowners and contractors.

Additional studies

As there was underspend available in the last three months of project, five additional contracts were drawn up to take forward the work of the initial study and to scope out other collaborative working opportunities for the benefit of the natural environment. Despite the very tight timescale, the consultants pulled out some useful recommendations and ways forward. The work also highlights the value of knowledgeable facilitators in supporting collaborative action.

Developing Collaborative Land Management Actions in Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and Breconshire (G Ellis, 2023, H Barnes, 2023 and M Day, 2023).

These three contracts picked up facilitation work identified in the initial study or flagged by GC staff and focussed on a different vice-county. Engagement included identifying and discussing common-land management with graziers, signposting support for the fledgling landowner groups, and additional visits to landowners who had requested advice.

There were common themes and recommendations across the whole area:

- A need for signposting, to, for example the Farm Liaison Service for support with grants and regulations, or the WG 'Gwlad' newsletter, something commercial farmers may know about but a small landowner may not.
- The valuable role played and the demand for additional small landowner groups to support networking and sharing of information, for example about potential farm contractors, conservation graziers and paid advisors. Creation of a 'one stop location' for sharing requests for these services. A 'Contractors and Consultants Directory' was also suggested.
- The value of a potential paid facilitator or 'land manager' role/s who could support multiple landholdings to undertake conservation grazing and conservation management over a longer period so that relationships could be built.
- Raising awareness within the Young Farmer network that there is a real demand for conservation graziers, offering a potential for new enterprises. Further time could be invested in scoping farmer interest in this and facilitating the practical roll out of it in several areas across Powys.

Producing a Habitat Management plan for Maelienydd Common (H Barnes, 2023)

The Maelienydd and associated Commons in Radnorshire are partly designated as a SSSI and this contract provided facilitation time for the stakeholders (Commoners Association, the Crown Estate Owners and NRW) to develop a management plan to improve conditions for grazing, for wildlife and for fire control purposes. The discussions enabled the graziers collectively to have a clearer idea of priorities across the common and for management agreements to start being drawn up with the Fire Service and NRW to allow work to go ahead. The outline management plan will also enable the Commoners Association to apply for funding for future work.

Opportunities and challenges in implementing a results-based payments package – a scoping study on three Powys commons (2023, G Jones and S Spencer)

This report was carried out to assess the relevance to three mid Wales commons – the Begwns in South Radnorshire and Y Golfa and Y Frochas in East Montgomeryshire – of a results-based payment scoring methodology, which is being developed and trialled by EFNCP.

The three commons studied were all of high environment significance, notably for ponds and grassland fungi (the Begwns), for pearl-bordered fritillary (Y Golfa and Y Frochas) and hazel dormouse (Y Frochas). The objective was to suggest potential adjustments for field testing where the current scoring cards were felt to be lacking, to ascertain the interest of the current graziers in participating in any pilot programme for such an approach, and to scan the horizon for any potential issues which might arise in that regard.

In all three cases, the results-based payment scorecard methodology as developed so far in Wales did not adequately reflect these values. A generally-applicable amendment, based on adapting the Plantlife area scoring methodology to a grid-based sampling scheme, was proposed for the grassland fungi, and a new species-specific approach for use in polygons delimited by butterfly experts was designed. Both amendments to the score-cards require field testing.

Discussions and meetings with stakeholders of all three commons suggested an interest in being involved in a results-based payment package although there were challenges to be worked through including dividing funding fairly, rewarding activity without increasing the number of grazing sheep and recognising and contributing to the costs of non-graziers.

C: Undertake specific habitat management work for rare or uncommon species on identified target areas in wider countryside

This part of the project offered an opportunity to undertake a pilot study on re-establishing rare plant species and to target habitat management on sites that supported less common (Section 7 on the Environment (Wales) Act 2016) species or habitat assemblages.

Habitat management work undertaken included cleaning out or creating ponds used by great crested newts and toads and significant dragonfly assemblages, gap filling of hedgerows to benefit dormouse movement, and bracken management on fridd for the Pearl Bordered Fritillary (**Case Study 6**).

GC staff expected to do more habitat management work to support the introduction of the target species in the Rare Plant Reintroduction Study, but this was not needed.

Rare Plants Reintroduction Pilot Study (A Shaw, 2022)

The project commissioned a pilot study from the Rare Plant Nursery (Builth Wells) to undertake the reinforcement or reintroduction of twelve uncommon vascular plant species that would have been more common in the past. The objective was to plant local provenance specimens onto sites where the landowner would micro-manage the habitat if necessary to enable the species to establish and spread. The primary role of the project staff was to connect the Rare Plant Nursery with willing landowners and to pay for habitat management if needed.

The twelve species reintroduced included the Hepste Hawkweed which is endemic to a Beacons valley where only five plants remained until a further sixty plants were introduced during the project; Brecon Dandelion (the only Welsh endemic species of dandelion) which has been grown

from relict seed and will be planted on a project stakeholder's site when mature enough; Pennyroyal (known from a single Wales site in Powys) from which cultivated plants were introduced to a nearby pond margin; and the Deptford Pink which was introduced to a community garden located on an old tennis court which provided both suitable habitat and keen volunteers to care for it.

The Rare Plant Nursery has checked the survival of the planted specimens and sees the pilot as a success, with some incredibly rare species returned to the wild in a relatively short time and seeds from cultivated specimens donated to the Seed Bank at Kew Gardens. The short timescale of the project restricted the range of species that could be cultivated and reintroduced but supporting the resilience of these rare plants populations seems feasible and the pilot should act as inspiration for inclusion in future projects.



Sitting on a rock ledge in the Hepste Glen, next to the last remaining wild Hepste Hawkweed plants. Photos: Andy Shaw

D: Help community groups improve their natural environment and take action for climate change and the ecological crisis

Each Wildlife Trust aimed to connect with twenty community groups to provide initial advice about their local wildlife, then work with ten of those groups to help them get to know their green spaces better and make improvements for wildlife. The targets for engagement with community groups was easily exceeded but it was notable that the groups were requesting support in a range of ways and not always to do work on the ground.

Engagement included advisory visits to green spaces and activities including wildlife recording events, planting trees and native plug plants, putting up nest boxes for swifts, bees, and birds, and putting in planters filled with pollinator-friendly garden plants. Lots of community groups received informal training as part of the activities they did with the GC team in their green spaces. Many of the stakeholders put up the GC mini-signs to show that the wildness was intentional rather than neglect and towards the end of the project, several communities put up interpretation panels or had leaflets designed to raise the profile of local wildlife.

Table 5 – Number of Community Group Stakeholders

Number of Community group Stakeholders	Target	Total
Initial visit and verbal advice	30	49
Written habitat management advice	30	39
Formal training days	15	54
Site wildlife surveys and recording events	30	38
Sites having contractor habitat management work	n/a	24
Sites given nest boxes, trees, plants and seeds	n/a	37
Talks	n/a	28

Community groups taking action in their local green space included Knucklas Castle Community Group, Llandrindod pollinator-friendly gardeners, Llanfyllin Workhouse, Llangydnir Community Hall, Ynyswen Community Field, and Friends of Deri Woods. Swift groups supported included Llanidloes, Presteigne and Brecon (see **Case Study 7**). Communities helping with wildlife survey work include Kinnerton, Dolwen Field Llanwrtyd and Norton Church. Various groups had talks provided, including Sarn Womens Institute (WI), Hundred House WI, Trallong WI and the Heart of Wales footpath volunteers.

The work with Waun Capel Park Committee and gardening group in Rhayader (**Case study 2**) demonstrates the sort of support that was offered by the project. They had already agreed with PCC to leave some of the grass long to benefit wildlife, but to help the people see this as a benefit, stakeholder meetings took place as well as activities including the planting of native and garden species, wildlife recording day, pollinator and tree safety training, and development of a written management plan to guide and justify work going forward.

Other sites like Tregynon Community Garden and Dolydd Gobiath CIC had received funding from different sources but needed face-to-face advice on what was already good for wildlife on the site. Dolydd Gobiath CIC (**Case study 9**) is a good example of how a lack of knowledge may have had a detrimental impact on the site's existing value for wildlife. Waxcap surveys and eDNA analysis showed it was nationally important for fungi and for that reason, trees were planted around the edge of the fields rather than across the whole. The site passed the criteria and became designated as a Local Wildlife Site in 2022. An external habitat survey was commissioned for the valuable land at Diamond Park and Coronation Park, Ystradgynlais and recommendations for management made.



Photo: Lottie Glover

Members of the Dolydd Gobaith Community Group learn how to identify wildflowers

In 2022 the Community Officers worked together to promote ‘Swift Powys’ right across the county. This involved supporting existing community swift groups and delivering public swift walks that helped people identify and record swift nesting sites. This **Case Study 7** shows the interest that community groups are showing in this declining species and the number of swift boxes given out.

E: Provide opportunities for people to learn about wildlife and take part in training and volunteering activities

The project strategy, which was a different model to the Trusts’ normal way of working, was to take the training and learning out to community groups in their local green space and consider it as capacity building and upskilling. The actual numbers attending training activities were not considered important because it was targeted for individual groups. The concept was that local people would be invested in joining because it was their own green space, and this was part of the exit strategy for addressing the short length of the project.

Table 6 – training sessions

Number	Target	Total
External training courses	15	34
Attendances on externally-delivered training courses (including staff and trainees)	n/a	147
Internally-delivered training sessions	n/a	75
Attendances at internally delivered training sessions (community group volunteers)		440
Green Connections Volunteers	30	80

Internal training delivered by the staff team or expert volunteers was defined as informal training. It proved to be a successful model with lots of happy participants and relationships built for future engagement and support. The project defined ‘External’ training as that where an external trainer was brought in, or if participants attended an external training course with another organisation.

The project target of thirty individual volunteers was easily exceeded, for example the Brecknock, Montgomeryshire and newly created East Radnorshire botany groups helped with species surveys, as did all the expert volunteers who attended the BIS-led bioblitz recording days. However, it could be said that nearly everybody who took part in the project by taking action in their local community could be counted as a volunteer. For our target we have only counted those volunteers who helped the GC project objectives.

The informal training approach allowed for mentoring and follow-up support and visits, rather than the start/stop nature of a normal training course. Both the River Lugg case study (**Case study 11**) and the Knighton Woodlanders (case study 10) demonstrate what can be achieved in this way. The Lugg volunteers attended training and then follow up monthly online drop-in sessions to answer any queries and to be updated on the wider results of their water quality surveys. The group then

merged with Friends of the Upper Wye network and the training and support was taken on by a dedicated project officer.



Volunteers from Friends of the river Lugg training for the Citizens Science river monitoring programme Photo: Christine Hugh Jones

The Knighton Woodlanders (**Case study 10**) had received funding for one-day training elsewhere but the GC staff ran the follow-up mentoring sessions on bird song and setting up a bird recording transect. The group are now well prepared to continue for the next season.

In November 2021, the Powys local record centre BIS worked with the GC staff to set up a new Facebook group called the 'Powys and Brecon Beacons Wildlife Recording Group' to act as a forum for shared learning and to encourage people to make records from their green spaces and farmland. Currently the group has 162 members and is steadily growing with regular interactions. It made sense for BIS to be central host with support from individuals from the team.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/powysbnpwildlife>

BIS ran two very successful bioblitz sessions open to the general public, one in Llanwrtyd Wells and the other near Pen-y-Bont (Montgomeryshire) drawing together a range of ages and expertise to record the local wildlife, as can be seen on the GC film. The BIS communications officer attended various GC events to talk to people about the importance of wildlife recording in Powys, including activity days and roadshows.

The project also hosted several informative Zoom talks from partner conservation organisations which were widely shared with project stakeholders. As well as talks on swifts, there were presentations on waxcaps, hedgerow management and meadows, most of which were recorded and are hosted on the Trust YouTube channels.

Much of the formal training with external providers comprised of Outdoor First Aid training (28 people trained) and Lantra Tree Safety Training (20 people trained). Other training courses included scything, fruit tree pruning, soil sampling and analysis, bat call analysis and strimmer training. Staff also undertook professional development training or renewal of proficiencies (CPD) and specific training was offered to the project Trainees (including quad bike training, brushcutter training and QGIS mapping), depending on what area of the environment sector their interests lay. The project did not organise as many external training sessions as expected as the demand from stakeholders was not apparent, possibly because the team's knowledgeable informal training met their needs.

Green Connections Trainees

The project aimed to provide three paid (Real Living Wage or above) work opportunities for Trainees, defined as young people taking an early step on the job ladder in the environment sector. By the end, six Trainees had benefitted from the work, partly because an underspend was utilised in the last eight months (see Table 1). The Trainees worked within a GC project team in an assistant project officer role, with the length of each Trainee's contract depending on the capacity for each team to support the role.

Tasks included practical work with volunteer groups, assisting with family activities and community wildlife surveys, working in a small visitor centre and engaging with visitors, organising and attending meetings and as well as administrative work and soft skills within the team. The project commissioned a short film to showcase the role of the Trainees which can be seen [here](#).

This proved to be a valuable part of the project with five of the six being offered jobs once their GC contracts ended, and the remaining autumn trainee reaching the interview stage of an upcoming post.

F: Support rural businesses in making changes in their land management to implement nature - based solutions and support biodiversity

Table7 – Number of Business Stakeholders

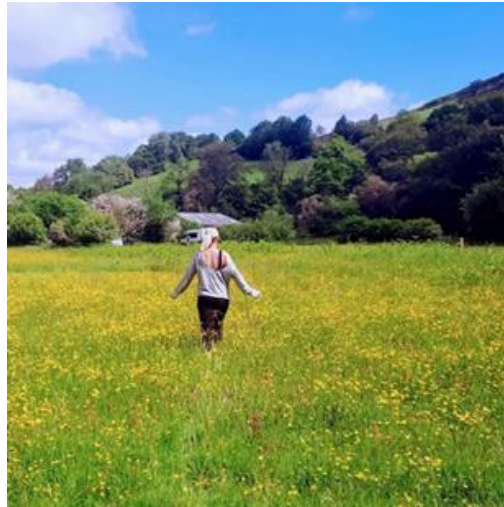
Number of Business Stakeholders	Target	Total
Initial visit and verbal advice	30	32
Written habitat management advice	n/a	11
Training	n/a	2
Sites having contractor habitat management work	n/a	6
Sites given nest boxes, trees, plants and seeds	3	26

The target was for each Wildlife Trust to provide biodiversity advice to ten businesses and while each trust exceeded the target, this was the last area of work to be picked up by the staff and would have benefited from a longer project to enable deeper discussions on improvements within the built environment. Initial investigations found that some businesses didn't have control of the management of green spaces around their buildings. However, the GC staff found that once they identified receptive businesses, there was a lot of opportunity for more work in the future. For example, towards the end of the project, a housing association was persuaded to start putting 'swift bricks' and other nest boxes into its estate.

[Former construction sites being turned into wildlife havens \(swg.co.uk\)](#)

As well as verbal advice on wildlife, a range of businesses including tourism enterprises, golf courses, housing associations, fire engine stations and offices received swift boxes, trees, and plug plants and interpretation panels. Golf courses were found to be particularly interested in improving their grounds for wildlife with one (**Case Study 4**) having a large area of invasive laurel removed, treated and chipped so that native trees could be established in the area to benefit the amphibian populations in the ponds. People from a business on an industrial estate in Presteigne worked with

the team to plant native plug plants in their grounds and committed to managing the green space for wildlife.



Camp Plas: Managing the meadow for wildflowers Photo: Camp Plas

Rural tourism businesses were a target market for this work as improved space for wildlife could easily benefit the business. An early success for the project was engagement at Camp Plas (**Case Study 12**) where advice was taken on to improve the campsite and surrounding land for wildlife, and promoting the local wildlife to visiting campers as well as people in the surrounding community.

Feasibility study: Community/SME growing of local provenance plants for pollinators (D Robinson, 2022)

A study was undertaken to investigate whether there was an interest from the public in buying native plants and pollinator friendly plants for gardens and green spaces and whether the plants available were of a local provenance. Initially the study was to include tree saplings but as Llais y Goedwig were found to be doing that already, the study concentrated on plants.

The study found clear interest from the public in buying native plants and those labelled as pollinator-friendly but identified a lack of public awareness that many so-called pollinator friendly plants were grown using pesticides. There was interest from small independent growers in Wales in growing native plants and it was suggested that registering for the assurance scheme developed by the Botanic Garden of Wales would be of value. Growers needed assurance that there was demand.

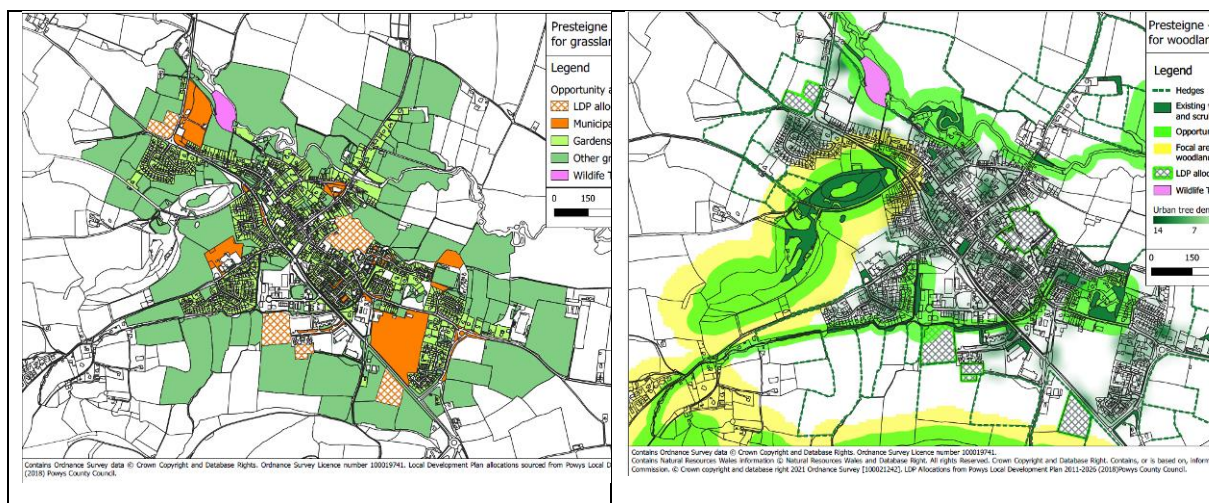
Growers and the public had found problems growing plants in some brands of peat-free compost and this made it less attractive to use. It was recommended that more publicity was needed to discourage the use of peat composts and to promote the brands of peat-free that give good results.

The Green Connection project commissioned the Botanic Garden of Wales to grow a range of native plants which were used in many of the community sites to diversify green spaces and it is hoped they will continue to offer this service in the future. Both native plants and organic pollinator garden plants were grown and purchased from Looking glass Nursery, one of the businesses approached through the study.

G: Create a nature recovery map/s for Powys showing opportunities and achievements on both local and landscape scale

When the project was conceived, it planned to produce a nature recovery map with BIS undertaking the habitat scoping and mapping. By the time the project started, this had effectively already been created by another project in the form of a 'potential SINC' map so it was decided to use that instead and commission some work overlaying that map with priority species distribution. The digital maps are available to the Trust staff and other project staff in PDF format and will provide a useful guide when targeting connectivity in future projects.

A second contract explored the creation of two Community Nature Recovery Maps that identify existing and potential wildlife opportunities along parish boundaries. The intention in the future is to use these to guide advice and enable communities to link their activities where there are multiple initiatives being carried out on individual sites. It would also enable individual businesses and industrial estates to investigate sustainable options for their land that compliments the activity being carried out by local communities. Community Nature Recovery Maps have been completed for Presteigne and Newbridge on Wye with a methodology that enables the mapping to be replicated for other areas. This work did not get developed any further during this project but can be used in future work.



Maps: S.Jones

Another strand of a Nature Recovery Map was an online interactive map where groups could input their own activity to build a picture, something that is being promoted by various organisations. This was available on the GC website but the staff were unable to persuade many people to add their mark and it will be taken down after the project ends.

Other specialist eDNA work was undertaken to increase knowledge about White Clawed Crayfish, a threatened section 7 species in Powys, and waxcap grasslands of which Powys is likely to have a significant number of sites, particularly on the Commons where short turf is associated with seeing the fruiting bodies. These studies added useful information to distribution maps of these species.

eDNA analysis for White Clawed Crayfish (M Abram, 2022)

The native White Clawed Crayfish is declining in mid Wales due to increasing numbers of the non-native invasive American Signal Crayfish and the crayfish plague it carries. A licence is required to survey for the native crayfish and therefore using eDNA analysis of water samples was a useful tool

for establishing the presence of these species. A project Trainee took sixteen water samples from eight water courses in Breconshire and Radnorshire and the samples were sent to a company for analysis with mixed results. Only two streams had white clawed crayfish present while others had signal crayfish and plague and others had no crayfish at all. This was a very small sample of rivers, but the data adds to bigger picture of decline.

eDNA Analysis of Soils for Grassland Fungi (G Griffiths, 2023)

Assemblages of grassland fungi known as CHEGD (an acronym of Latin species names including the waxcaps) are an under-recorded group generally found in soils that have not been significantly improved with chemical fertilisers. Wales is recognised as internationally important for these fungi.

The GC conservation staff were keen to raise the profile of waxcaps and the value of unimproved grasslands, including Commons, for these species. Good waxcap grasslands, whilst of agriculturally low productivity, have also often been disregarded from a nature conservation perspective as apparently being species-poor. There is also a current threat from tree planting on sites for the same reason.

The project worked with Aberystwyth University to undertake an investigation of soil fungal populations of selected grassland quadrats across Powys, both to confirm that some sites are indeed rich in CHEGD fungi and to determine whether others merit more detailed fruitbody surveys. The study permitted an opportunity to determine the effectiveness of soil eDNA analysis as a potential method for more rapid site surveys which do not rely on the availability of suitably skilled mycological surveyors. Such a method would be useful for identifying previously unsurveyed sites for their mycological potential and also for site monitoring for protected sites.

Samples from sixteen quadrats from selected sites across Powys were collected by the GC staff and volunteers. The eDNA analysis identified one species of waxcap assessed by the IUCN as globally endangered, eight as globally vulnerable with five more likely to be assessed as globally vulnerable. Six of the CHEGD fungi found are classified as vulnerable or likely to be assessed as vulnerable in the near future. Four species of Green Earthtongue were identified and are listed as Vulnerable and also appear in Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. One very rare species was identified at eight of the sites and appears to be far more widespread and common than fruitbody records would suggest, likely because it fruits only very infrequently.

The study demonstrates the value of eDNA analysis of soil samples for identifying grasslands important for CHEGD fungi in the face of land-use change. Initial comparisons with the fruiting body records suggests that the eDNA has identified species not seen in visual surveys but has also missed others. The quadrat sampling methodology may not capture the range of fungi from a site as the extent of the web of mycelium in the soils for each species is not yet known. More follow-up work is needed to compare fruiting body records with the eDNA results before eDNA sampling can be fully relied upon.

For the Green Connections project, it indicates the value of collaborations between scientists who have the technology and the wildlife conservation sector who can do the field work and work with landowners.

Promoting Green Connections

The project held a launch event in Talgarth in August 2021 once the project was formally approved: publicity had to be restricted before this point which hindered the team from properly starting the project. From then on staff were regularly (for some Trusts weekly) posting on social media about

their activities as well as writing in Trust e-newsletters and magazines. The target of sixty posts and three articles was therefore well exceeded. Project webpages were set up on the Trust websites and have become a valuable resource for all sorts of information useful to people interested in managing land for wildlife, including the feasibility study reports associated with the project.

A promotional film was filmed during summer 2022 and used at talks and events in the latter stages of the project to show some of the activities. A short two-minute version of the film was shown at an LNP meeting and was requested by a County Councillor to be used at a Councillor biodiversity training session. These films can be seen on the [RWT YouTube channel](#).

In 2022, a series of eight popular 'Walks in Welsh' led by a Welsh-speaking nature enthusiast helped Welsh-learners to explore the language around wildlife in natural settings, including watching for salmon in the autumn. Another area of work commissioned towards the end of the project was Nature Connectedness workshops to encourage younger and older people to connect to nature through sound maps and through creative writing. Some people wrote poetry in Welsh and English after immersing themselves in the landscape and some of this work is on a temporary display at Gilfach Nature Reserve and other work has been recorded. The workshops were well received by participants and proved to be an effective way of engaging different audiences with nature.

As the project raced to a close, the Green Connections team rounded off the project with a series of 'roadshows', where community groups, landowners and other participants gathered together to share their experiences. It was decided that it was more effective in such a large county to keep the events localised and this turned out to be a successful way of bringing groups together to network and share. Roadshows were held in Welshpool, Newtown, Knighton, Llandrindod, Cilmeri and Talybont-on-Usk. It was rewarding and inspiring to hear people talking about the many things they had been doing for wildlife in the green spaces where they lived, and there was much appreciation expressed for the GC staff who had provide advice, training and support.

During the last three months of the project, a range of interpretation was developed for groups that wished to have them, including Llanyre, Welshpool Town Council, Cradoc Golf Course, Lower Common in Llandrindod Wells, Newbridge on Wye (interpretation panels) and leaflets for Montgomery Town Council and Zero Carbon Llanidloes. Many stakeholders took away the project's 'mini-signs' to put in their green spaces to show that they were deliberately left for wildlife and not abandoned.



New interpretation panel for Lower Common Meadow in Llandrindod Wells Photo: Phil Ward

Challenges for the delivering the Green Connections Powys project

The main challenge was the delayed start. The project Expression of Interest was submitted in March 2020 but Covid intervened and it wasn't until December 2020 that the second stage bid was able to be submitted. The project started 'at risk' in April 2021 with minimal spend or public activity until it had final approval. Because of this, the staff team had a staggered start over the first few months, so it wasn't until mid-August 2021 that all the team were in post. The project finished in March 2023 so effectively ran for less than two years and staff found they were really busy all the time.

For effective and measurable environmental and behavioural change, funding programmes need to be longer lasting so that interpersonal relationships can be built and biological changes monitored: three years at a minimum and five to ten year programmes to make a difference. At less than two years, some of the physical impacts the GC project made were superficial or just a first step, for example, putting up nest boxes. This is not to take away from the value of first steps or the less tangible conversations that take place alongside those first steps. The lasting benefit comes with building on those.

The administration of the project through RPW was extremely time-consuming and the admin and Project Manager staff hours allocated to this work were inadequately planned for in the original project application budget. For any future WG- funded projects, more admin support would need to be costed in for all the partner organisations so that the Project Manager's time was freed up to focus on strategic support.

Cash flow issues were created by the months taken to approve annual staff cost-of-living increases and the need for approvals to be put on hold until re-evaluations had been approved. It would have been helpful if staff working solely on this project did not need to come under the simplified unit cost regime.

The claims system through WEFO worked reasonably well once the GC project administrative staff had become familiar with the system. However, payment of the claims within 30 days of submission was never achieved. For the upcoming final claim (31st March), it needs to be considered that project staff will finish at the end of the project and any post project accruals or queries will have to be dealt with by someone else, not costed into the project and unfamiliar with the system.

The administration paperwork changed and improved as the project progressed, but it was a steep learning curve at the beginning and was stressful. It would have been helpful to have a named person to help with administration and finance queries. When it was possible to speak to a member of the SMU or RPW team they were always helpful, but the RPW online messaging system was quite a barrier. The SMS project zoom meetings held in the early days were useful because lots of project staff had similar queries or frustrations. It would have been helpful to have equivalent ENRaW project zoom meetings to share project experiences both good and bad.

Covid restrictions were still in place when the project started, and indoor public activities were a constraint or consideration all the way through the project. Generally, because the majority of events and activities were outdoors, it was possible to mitigate the risk fairly easily.

Learnings

Green Connections project approach

The project approach was effective at supporting community groups in their local areas. It provided the staff capacity to meet the demand from community groups and to offer advice, expertise and training depending on what was wanted by the group, with each situation being different. Where needed, for example for wildlife surveys, other project staff or volunteers with different skills were drawn in to help.

Targets were not set for the usual parameters, like the number of people attending each event or training, so this allowed more informal support at the participants' own green spaces and for just a few people. In working with these groups in the future, it would be hoped that additional and different activities could draw in a wider local audience and help reach compromise where conflict was a barrier.

Collaboration with community groups who had already obtained a small grant, for example a WG Local Places for Nature Grant or Lottery funding, was not anticipated when the project was designed. The Green Connections project landed at a time when several small grants were reaching communities. The GC staff were able to amplify the impact of those small grants with staff knowledge and support for those groups with their activities. Staff were careful to ensure that double funding was not taking place.

The capacity for the project staff to spend time visiting landowners to provide initial advice on habitat management was very much in demand, as demonstrated by the totals that exceeded the project targets. It was apparent that the main demand was for advice and species surveys and not management plans or for practical work to be undertaken: in fact it was hard to spend the budget for habitat management.

The approach was an efficient utilisation of skills, whereby initial visits could take place at any time of the year and be followed up in the summer season for additional species surveys undertaken by staff, volunteers or in collaboration of the Powys local record centre (BIS). While efficient, the short timescale of the project hindered some of this progression. The conservation officers were however able to flag up sites that, with future surveys, may qualify as Local Wildlife Sites or SINCs and build up connectivity at landscape scale.

The size geographically of Powys is always a challenge but for delivery this was reasonably mitigated by having project staff based in all three vice-counties and for some of them to be seconded on from other roles. Certain remoter areas like Ystradgynlais were deliberately targeted for activities to ensure that a broad coverage was offered but a longer project would have helped the staff reach out further.

The Steering Group was made up of partner and key organisations. The use of a small pan-Powys working group to hold the project together was not effective partly because of the distance: the meetings were online but more local task and finish working groups might have been more useful. Weekly or fortnightly GC staff meetings and occasional full team meet-ups were effective at holding the staff team together in one project. The roadshows were definitely an effective way of gathering different stakeholders together and with more time these could have been developed so that more community group 'exchanges' were facilitated. It is evident that landowner groups or clusters are in demand by stakeholders and the next step could have been to hold larger seminars targeted to a particular stakeholder group.

Collaboration between partners

A range of new staff and seconded staff with different levels of experience and skills came together in the GC team which allowed staff to hit the ground running with existing stakeholder contacts and provided opportunities for inter-Trust learning. The collaboration of staff within Trust teams and across the Trust boundaries was evident when specific skills were needed for a particular site or situation, for example conservation management advice, species training or for the soft skills of engaging with a new stakeholder.

There was still a risk that the Trust teams would look inwards rather than across border for support and this was the case when people were very busy. But the focussed 'Swift Powys' sub-project (Case study 7) where the community officers were working with different swift groups across the county was a good example of inter-staff communication and learning, with joint events and a joint meeting with Powys CC taking place. The whole GC team had regular zoom meetings (weekly in year one and fortnightly in year two) which also offered a useful platform to discuss activities, issues and joint areas of work.

Collaboration with consultants

Three feasibility studies were written into the project application and completed, albeit more time would have been beneficial to consolidate and develop the work. The additional studies undertaken during the project (including those in the last three months using underspend) provided a benefit not conceived when the project started.

The collaboration between various GC staff and consultants with a view to more in-depth science, knowledge sharing and broader outcomes for the environment in Powys was inspiring. It indicates the importance for funders to recognise at the application stage that projects benefit from scope for adaptive changes, for example for unplanned research and collaborations.

Finance learnings

When the last ENRaW grant window opened in autumn 2019, the minimum project size was £500,000. The three Wildlife Trusts were keen to make an application, but this threshold was too high for an individual trust to take on. This was based on the knowledge from a previous project that cash flow was likely to be difficult because of the Welsh Government's poor reputation for paying claims in a timely manner. A collaboration between the Trusts was necessary and it was agreed that Radnorshire was the best placed to lead on the application. What made the cash flow possible was the formal partnership agreement between the Trusts, whereby each Trust would cover their staff salaries and 15% overheads (the biggest cost of the project at 56% of the budget) and would not be reimbursed until the claim had been paid. This arrangement was found to be an effective way of managing the project cash flow.

The staff budget could be regarded as high but the impact of the staff team with their people engagement skills and conservation knowledge is significant when it is considered that they engaged with 290 stakeholders and with over 580 attendees on training sessions across Powys. A future project would require much more back-office staff time allocated for administration and claim paperwork to free up the project manager for more strategic work.

The project was shortened because of the delayed start and the budget was underspent by circa £84,000. The main areas of underspend were in:

- Revenue VAT because many of the consultants used were not VAT registered;
- travel budget: over-estimated but partly because covid restriction-related reasons;
- Estates revenue – habitat management element of this budget because less work, and cheaper work was undertaken than expected

The project over-spent the Legal and Professional budget line deliberately in the last three months of the project when it was clear there was going to be underspend in other areas. However, the value of the consultant contracts taking forward the feasibility study recommendations with an eye to the Sustainable Farming Scheme collaborative element and new project funding has been significant and well spent.

Legacy

The main legacy of the project is the new relationships built between the three Wildlife Trusts, communities, landowners, businesses and various consultants and freelance staff. As intended when it was conceived, the project will be a springboard for new projects going forward including for third parties like Commoners associations who may enter a collaborative element of the upcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme.

A third year of funding (at least) would have increased the legacy of the project, consolidated the relationships built and allowed better preparation for follow-on funding applications (at all scales) and the collaborative element of the upcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme.

Recommendations

- There is a latent demand for advice from communities and landowners who want to take action to address biodiversity loss and climate change.
- The project demonstrated that the impact of facilitators, whether they are project staff or consultants, can help multiple landowners and communities make positive changes in their local area. This role should not be undervalued.
- It will take many years to see the evidence of restored ecosystems and reverse the decline in biodiversity, so funding programmes need to give time for monitoring and change to take place. They also need to be adaptive so that people delivering the change can respond to successes or failures and keep moving forward.

References

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eDNA analysis for White Clawed Crayfish - 2022 Megan Abram

eDNA Analysis of Soils for Grassland Fungi - 2023 Gareth Griffiths

Appendix 1 – Stakeholder Reports

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RWT Landowner Stakeholders Report

No.	Site Name	Initial Site Visit & Verbal Advice	Follow up visit	Written report	Survey	Recording day	Nest boxes	Site management works	Seed, plants or trees	Soil Sampling	eDNA Sampling	Existing LWS	Submitted LWS	Possible LWS	Hosted event	Part of feasibility study/pilot	Scoping visit for NNF2
1	Penthiw	✓	✓					✓		✓				✓	✓		
2	Warren house	✓	✓	✓									✓	✓			
3	Penybont Hall	✓	✓	✓										✓			
4	Samatha Trust	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓							
5	Rock House.	✓															
6	Upper Rowley.	✓			✓												
7	Lower House	✓															
8	Lower Laitthdu	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓				✓			
9	Cwmbach Llechrhyd	✓	✓		✓												
10	Spriggs Wood	✓															
11	Pantourlais.	✓															
12	Trehirion	✓											✓				
13	Nannerth	✓	✓										✓				
14	Labour in vain	✓	✓				✓										
15	Cwm y Nace	✓	✓											✓			
16	Jackets Fields	✓	✓		✓					✓				✓		✓	
17	New Barn	✓	✓		✓									✓		✓	
18	Mais y Geidfa	✓	✓				✓		✓								
19	Ysgubor	✓	✓		✓				✓					✓			
20	The Rookery	✓			✓									✓			
21	Goytre Woods/ Caerhyddwen	✓			✓		✓							✓			
22	Llanstephan Estate.	✓															
23	Penisarwyf	✓															
24	Rhosgoch Hay Meadow	✓			✓												
25	Upper Llandewi	✓					✓										
26	The Begwys common (NT)	✓															
27	Cwm Du	✓	✓		✓				✓					✓			
28	Ffynnon Gynydd Common	✓			✓												
29	The Gllau	✓	✓				✓										
30	New House	✓	✓		✓				✓								
31	Troedrihwdraen				✓		✓							✓			
32	Beacon Hill																
33	Cwmderw						✓										
34	MV Nantglas	✓			✓				✓								
35	Brilley Mountain Common	✓	✓														
36	Maelienydd Common	✓			✓												
37	Penytreol	✓															
		34	17	18	12	3	7	6	3	6	2	3	6	10	4	7	7

RWT Community Group Stakeholders Report

No.	Community groups	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site survey	Activity	Practical work on site	Took kit or advice pack	Given nest/ insect boxes	Given wildflower/ seed/plant plugs/trees	Talk given	Attended event	Interpretation /wildlife signs	Article for local newsletter
1	Friends of Upper Lugg	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Waun Chapel Park Rhayader Gardeners Group and Committee	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
3	Newbridge Bog Volunteers with Fred Slater	✓												
4	Heart of Wales train trails					✓								
5	East Rads botany group			✓			✓						✓	
6	Llandrindod wildlife gardeners						✓		✓	✓				
7	Cefnlllys Church						✓		✓					
8	Knighon Woodland Group Castering Wood	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
9	Llanre community	✓					✓		✓	✓			✓	
10	Prestelgme community groups - road verge volunteers,	✓					✓					✓		
11	Prestelgme - the Warden	✓					✓			✓				
12	Newbridge on Wye Volunteer group - community council led	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓			✓	
13	Llangunllo WI and community	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
14	Arlais Community Gardens, Llandrindod	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
15	Knuckles Castle Community Group	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
16	Norton Volunteers				✓		✓							
17	Rhayader by Nature - natural history/practical group			✓			✓		✓			✓		✓
18	Kinnerton Community	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓		✓
19	Ewenjobb WI and Community													
20	RWT Voluntary Warden Group (training)			✓										
21	Radnor Swift groups - Llandrindod, Llangunllo, Prestelgme, Knighon	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
22	Prestelgme Scouts	✓					✓							
23	Llandrindod Horticultural Society													
24	Cyfo landowners pollinator training			✓										
25	Rhayader Mothers Union and WI talk													
26	Llanre Thursday Club													
27	Hundred House WI						✓		✓					✓
28	Llandrindod Town Council	13	6	11	6	14	10	7	11	6	13	6	7	5

RWT Business Stakeholders Report

No.	Business	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site species survey	Activity	Practical work on site	Toolkit or advice pack	Given nest/ insect boxes/ planters	Given wildflower/ seed/ plant plugs/trees	Talk given	Attended their event	Interpretation /wildlife signs	Article for local newsletter	Part of feasibility study or pilot
1	Presteigne Industrial Estate	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
2	Tesco Llandrindod	✓													
3	Wyeside Camping and Caravan Club Rhayader	✓													
4	Metropole Hotel	✓						✓	✓	✓					
5	Rhayader Sewage Treatment Works	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓					
6	Looking glass nursery (plants)	✓						✓	✓	✓					✓
7	Rhos Organic Garden							✓				✓			
8	Radnorshire Arms hotel Presteigne							✓	✓	✓					
9	Texaco Garage, Rhayader							✓	✓	✓					
10	Hush hush, kinnerton	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓					
11	Bach Dingle/Woodland group (CIC)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					
12	Llandrindod Golf course	✓						✓	✓	✓			✓		
13	Valley Yurts, Gladestry	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓					
14	Pentre Farm	✓		✓					✓				✓		
15	Llandrindod food bank							✓							
16	Knighton men's shed	12	2	1	1	1	3	9	9	3	0	1	3	0	1

RWT Collaborative Work Stakeholders Report

No.	Collaboration with other projects and organisations	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site survey	Activity	Practical work on site	Toolkit or advice pack	Given plants/ nest/insect boxes/signs / planters	Given wildflower/ seed/plant plugs/trees	Talk given	Attended event/meetings	Interpretation/wildlife signs	Article for local newsletter
1	Powys LNP Partnership											✓		
2	Beacons Water Group											✓		
3	Ciliau Farm Restoration NNF project	✓										✓		
4	Gwneud Gwair Cymreig / Making Welsh Hay (MMWH) project	✓			✓	✓						✓		
5	Nature Friendly Farming Network			✓								✓		
6	Abbey GwmHir Heritage Group					✓	✓							
7	Celf - adults with learning disabilities						✓							
8	Prestelgne gardening group			✓										
9	Sunny patch, Llandrindod						✓							
10	Glasgwm Community (saplings)								✓					
11	Bracken Trust								✓					
12	Bryngwy Residential Home Rhayader								✓					
13	Spa residential home Llandrindod								✓					
14	Wylesfield Residential and dementia care								✓					
15	Crosfield House Nursing and Residential Home								✓					
16	Elan Valley Visitor Centre, Wildlife garden			✓					✓					
17	Friends of Upper Wye	2	0	3	1	3	2	0	9	7	0	5	0	0

MWT Landowner Stakeholders Report

No.	Landowner stakeholder	Initial Site Visit & Verbal Advice	Follow up visit	Written report/ advice	Survey	Recording day	Given nest boxes	Site management works	Seed, plants or trees	Soil Sampling	eDNA Sampling	Existing LWS	Submitted LWS	Possible future LWS	Hosted event	Part of feasibility study/pilot
1	Llwynderw Farm	✓		✓	✓								✓			
2	Home Farm	✓		✓												
3	Ty Brith Farm	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓				✓	
4	Llanerchbrochwel	✓		✓				✓								
5	Lower Gelli	✓		✓												
6	Stone Cottage	✓		✓												
7	Rose Cottage	✓		✓												
8	Eitha Bach	✓		✓												
9	Bryn Teg	✓		✓	✓											
10	Rhewport Hall	✓		✓												
11	Varchoel Hall Farm	✓		✓												
12	Glanhafren Chapel	✓		✓												
13	Darffodil Wood															
14	Heulfryn	✓	✓	✓	✓											
15	Chaldon	✓		✓												
16	Tegfryn	✓		✓												
17	Coed Camnant	✓		✓												
18	Llanerch Farm	✓		✓		✓										
19	Bwlch y Garreg Farm	✓		✓												
20	Brook House	✓		✓												
21	Pentre Mawr						✓								✓	
22	Gwern Pen y Nant Farm						✓								✓	
23	Pentre Farm	✓		✓				✓								
24	Land near Garth Hill	✓		✓												
25	Tyn y Drain	✓		✓												
26	Vaynor Wood	✓		✓												
27	Nant y Pandy Field	✓		✓												
28	Little Fron	✓		✓												
29	Tyn-y-Celyn Ochr	✓		✓			✓									
30	Red House	✓		✓												
31	Cae Gwyntog	✓		✓												
32	The Clois & PortHouse Wood	✓		✓		✓										
33	Isfryn	✓		✓												
34	O'Dwyer land at Dolanog	✓		✓												
35	Old House	✓		✓												
36	Garth Hellyn	✓		✓												
37	Burgess Land Trust	✓		✓												
38	Tanyfron	✓		✓												
39	llys Coplice	✓		✓	✓											
		35	2	35	12	3	0	3	0	1	1	0	2	0	3	0

MWT Community Group Stakeholders Report

No.	Community group stakeholder	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site survey	activity	Practical work on site	Toolkit or advice pack	Given nest/insect boxes	Given wildflower /seed/plant/trees	Given eDNA for waxcaps	Given tools or PPE	Talk given	Attended their event	Interpretation/mini-wildlife signs	Article for local newsletter
1	Welshpool town council (greenspace)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓
2	Dolydd Gobiath CIC	✓	✓	✓										✓	✓	✓
3	Tregynon Community Garden Group	✓		✓										✓	✓	✓
4	Montgomery Town Council	✓												✓	✓	✓
5	Llantyllyn Shed													✓	✓	✓
6	Zero Carbon Llanidloes													✓	✓	✓
7	Llandysill road verges	✓												✓	✓	✓
8	Brooks Community	✓	✓	✓										✓	✓	✓
9	Gwneud Gwair-Cymreig / Making Welsh Hay			✓		✓								✓	✓	✓
10	Abermule/Llandysill Community Council	✓	✓					✓						✓	✓	✓
11	BRACE															
12	Gerdri Bro Ddyfi Gardens			✓										✓	✓	✓
13	Dyfi Biosphere Swift Group													✓	✓	✓
14	Friends of Deri Woods			✓					✓			✓				✓
15	Montgomeryshire Habitat Management Group															
16	Vale of Montgomery Rural Clusters															
17	Llanidloes Swift Group		✓	✓										✓	✓	✓
18	Trefoil Guild Montgomery	✓	✓							✓				✓	✓	✓
19	Llantyllyn Workhouse	✓	✓	✓										✓	✓	✓
20	Radiate Arts	✓														
21	Newtown Town Council	✓	✓													
22	Sarn WI															
23	Tregynon WI															
24	Welshpool WI															
25	MWT Bird Group															
26	Carnlad Valley Wildlife Group															
27	Ysgol Rhiv-Bechan															
28	Welshpool CIW School								✓							
29	Buttlington School															
30	Montgomery School															
31	Powys County Council Housing Dept															
32	St Curig's Church	✓	✓													
		12	8	10	3	15	3	5	7	3	1	1	11	14	9	3

MWT Business Stakeholders Report

No.	Business	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site species survey	Activity	Practical work on site	Toolkit or advice pack	Given nest/ insect boxes/ planters	Given wildflower/ seed/ plant plugs/trees	Talk given	Attended their event	Interpretation/ wildlife signs	Article for local newsletter	Part of feasibility study or pilot
1	Camp Plas	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓		
2	Maes-y-wennol	✓													
3	Porth Farm	✓	✓												
4	Dolforwyn Hall					✓									
5	Ty Llewelyn campsite	✓	✓												
6	Gyegynog					✓									
7	Cledan Valley campsite	✓	✓												
8	Llanidloes Golf Club	✓	✓							✓					
9	Penllwyn Lodges								✓				✓		
10	The Heritage Residential Care Home	✓						✓	✓						
11	Welshpool Golf Club	✓							✓						
12	SWG Group (construction company)	✓							✓						
13	Mefod Alpaca's	✓													
14	Hughes Architects			✓											
		10	5	1	0	3	0	3	5	1	0	0	3	0	0

MWT Collaborative Stakeholders Report

No. projects and organisations	Stakeholder - Collaboration with other	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site survey	Activity	Practical work on site	Toolkit or advice pack	Given plants/ nest/insect boxes/ planters	Given wildflower/ seed/plant plugs/trees	Talk given	Attended event/ meetings	Interpretation/ wildlife signs	Article for local newsletter
1	Powys LNP Partnership			✓		✓						✓		
2	NFFN					✓								
3	WARREN					✓						✓		
4	Montgomeryshire Moth Group					✓								
5	MWT Team Wilder					✓								
6	Y Gofa (Welshpool Golf Club on this site)						✓							
7	Arts Connection					✓						✓		
8	The Wilderness Trust					✓						✓		
9	BRACE					✓						✓		
10	Montgomeryshire Bat Group					✓								
11	RSPB					✓								
		0	0	1	0	10	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0

WTSWW Brecknock Landowner Stakeholders Report

No.	Landowners Site Name	Initial Site Visit & Verbal Advice	Follow up visit	Written report	Survey	Recording day	Nest boxes	Site management Works	Wildflower seed/plug plants/trees	Soil Sampling	eDNA Sampling	Existing LWS	Submitted LWS	Possible LWS	Hosted event	Part of feasibility study/pilot
1	Brochen	✓		✓												
2	Cefnmadllys Farm	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						✓		
3	Ciltheol	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓						✓	✓	
4	Coed Rhydggoch	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓								
5	Coed Chwefri	✓	✓	✓	✓											
6	Cwm Coed	✓	✓	✓	✓											
7	Dros y Nant	✓		✓												
8	Llanerch Farm	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓					✓		
9	Llwyn Derw	✓		✓												
10	Bron yr Eglwys	✓		✓				✓								
11	Old House	✓		✓												
12	Perrhiw	✓		✓												
13	Pen y Garreg	✓		✓										✓		
14	Pont ar Dulas	✓		✓										✓		
15	Pontfaen Barn	✓		✓												
16	Pwll y Rhwaid	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓						✓	
17	Rufes Barn	✓		✓				✓								
18	Quarry, (SWCC)	✓		✓				✓						✓		
19	Ty Llangenny Barn	✓		✓												
20	Ty Ysgybor Llangenny	✓		✓			✓									
21	Ty Canol	✓		✓			✓	✓						✓	✓	
22	Tyn y Clyn	✓		✓												
23	Field Llanfihangel Tal-y-Llyn	✓	✓						✓							
24	Garden Llanfihangel Tal-y-Llyn	✓														
25	Land Behind Cae Pwll Bo (NRW)	✓														
26	Lower Trewalkin	✓		✓				✓	✓							
27	Derwen Doppa	✓		✓				✓						✓		✓
28	Kite Cottage Field	✓	✓													
29	Dan y Darren	✓		✓										✓		
30	Gelli Rhyd	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓					✓		
31	Rhysgog	✓						✓								
32	Penlan Ponds (PowysCC)	✓		✓												
33	Cwm Farm	✓						✓								
34	Land Below y Grithig	✓												✓		
35	Land near Vicarage Meadows	✓														
		35	12	25	8	2	7	11	5	0	1	3	1	9	3	1

WTSWW Brecknock Community Group Stakeholders Report

No.	Community groups	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site survey	activity	Practical work on site	Toolkit or advice pack	Given nest/insect boxes	Given wildflower seed/plants /trees	Given tools or PPE	Talk given	Attended event	Interpretation/mini wildlife signs	Article for local newsletter
1	Dolwen Fields Recreation for all	✓	✓							✓					
2	Friends of Diamond Park	✓	✓								✓				
3	Llangamarch Wells Community Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
4	Llangydrir Community Hall	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓					
5	Llangydrir Community Council	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓					
6	On the Verge, Talgarth	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
7	Paramor orchard	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓						
8	Pencantref Barns Residents Group	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
9	Talylbont-on-Usk Wildflower Group	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓					
10	Brecon Town Council	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓					
11	Ynyswen Community Field	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓					
12	Children, Youth & Families - Greater Brecon							✓					✓	✓	✓
13	St David's Church, Llywel	✓						✓					✓	✓	✓
14	Brecon Local Group			✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	North Brecknock Landowners Group					✓						✓	✓	✓	
16	Brecon Swift Group			✓		✓			✓				✓	✓	
17	Builth Wells Swift Group			✓		✓			✓				✓	✓	
18	Talylbont-on-Usk Community Woodland Group	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	
19	Talylbont-on-Usk Orchard Trail group	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓					✓	
20	Brecon Green Minds	✓	✓			✓			✓						
21	Bridgend Local Group	✓	✓			✓			✓						
22	Llangasty Village Hall	✓	✓			✓			✓					✓	
23	Hay-on-Wye Primary School	✓	✓			✓			✓						
24	Botany Group					✓			✓						
25	Brecon Cathedral Heritage project Inc	✓				✓			✓						
26	Dormouse volunteer group				✓		✓		✓						
27	Trailong WI								✓						
28	Talgarth Community Woodland Group											✓			
29	Powys County Council	✓					✓	✓							
30	Christ College, Brecon	✓					✓	✓							
31	Llanwrtyd Wells Gardening Club								✓			✓			
32	Brecknock Bat Group								✓						
33	Llangor's Community/dragonfly hotspot												✓		
34	Crickhowell Walking Festival					✓									
35	Brecon Men's Shed					✓					✓				
36	Friends of Lanspyddid	✓		✓			✓							✓	
37	Llangoed Commoners	✓			✓		✓								
38	South Wales Caving Club (land owned by a members club)	✓				✓	✓								
39	Friends of Maendu Well														
40	Llangamarch Community Growers	✓					✓		✓						
41	Llanraes Orchard Project														
42	Penlan Ponds	24	10	10	5	19	14	11	12	10	4	4	6	20	2

WTSWW Brecknock Business Stakeholders Report

No.	Business	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site species survey	activity	Practical work on site	Toolkit or advice pack	Given nest/insect boxes/signs	Given wildflower seed/plug plants/trees	Talk given	Attended their event	Interpretation/signs	Article for local newsletter	Part of feasibility study or pilot
1	Ty Mawr	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓					
2	Builth Wells Golf Course	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		
3	Cradoc Golf Course	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		
4	Irfon Valley Pods	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓					
5	Pencelli Castle	✓						✓		✓					
6	Pwlllyn Brwnt Camping	✓						✓							
7	Brecon Leisure Centre	✓						✓				✓			
8	Builth Fire Station	✓						✓							
9	Black Mountains College	✓						✓							
10	Welsh Water								✓					✓	
11	Ty llyd (PTHB)	✓							✓	✓				✓	
12	Llanfaes Dairy								✓						
		10	4	0	1	2	3	5	6	6	0	1	2	3	0

WTSWW Brecknock Collaborative Stakeholders Report

No.	Collaboration with other projects and organisations	Initial verbal habitat advice	Written habitat advice	Training	Site survey	Activity	Practical work on site	Toolkit or advice pack	Given nest/insect boxes/signs	Talk given	Attended event/meetings	Interpretation/wildlife signs	Article for local newsletter
1	Beacons Water Group					✓	✓				✓		
2	Nature Friendly Farming Network										✓		
3	Canal & Rivers Trust - Canal Communities & Wellbeing Project	✓									✓		
4	Brecon beacons National Park - pine Marten Project						✓						
5	Powys local Wildlife Sites and SINCS group										✓		
6	BBNPA SINCS Project										✓		
7	Powys Nature Partnership										✓		
8	One Voice Wales										✓		
9	Brecknock Conservation Advisory Group	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	8	0	0

Appendix 2 - Green Connections Case Studies

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1. CASE STUDY - ABERMULE WITH LLANDYSSIL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Introduction

A small Community Council with eleven Councillors, covering Abermule, a key settlement in the Unitary Development Plan, Llandyssil, a small village, and the surrounding area which includes small settlements such as Green Lane and Llanmerewig, as well as scattered farms and rural dwellings.

The Council is part of the Vale of Montgomery Rural Cluster of Councils (VMRC), which includes Montgomery Town Council, Berriew Community Council, Forden with Leighton and Trelystan Community Council and Kerry, Dolfor and Sarn Community

The Project

In November 2021, a Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT) staff member attended a VMRC meeting, where they introduced the Green Connections Powys project to the Councillors. Three Councillors from Abermule/Llandyssil were present, one of which was very keen to have advice and guidance from the Trust to help improve biodiversity across the Community Council area.

In January 2022, MWT staff visited several sites in Abermule and Llandyssil with one of the Councillors, offering advice on how to improve the sites for biodiversity, but also with people in mind. There were concerns that if some areas were left to “grow wild” that it may be seen as untidy or that dog owners would be more likely to leave behind dog mess.

MWT staff also held a Swift Day event at Llandyssil Church for members of the church and community, where participants constructed Habi-sabi flat pack swift boxes and gave a brief talk about swifts and how they can help swifts in the village.



Habi-sabi swift boxes assembled and ready to go up in the village © MWT

Community Council striving on

The Community Council started to implement some of the advice they were given in 2022. Areas of longer grass were left in the park in Abermule and fruit trees were planted. Members of the community embraced these areas of longer grass; no complaints were made about the area looking untidy. A wildflower area was created in Llandyssil using a grant from National Lottery Community Fund, and the local Peter Warlock Society also donated some money. Over 200 plants were planted by volunteers and a tree was planted to celebrate the Queen’s Jubilee. In June 2022, Iolo Williams, who lives near the village, officially opened the meadow.

The Community Council really want to help make a difference in the area for wildlife, whilst also keeping the community in mind. MWT staff have been supporting the Council with their biodiversity action plan. In the future the Council would like to plant a small native hedgerow along a pathway leading to a park and reduce the regularity of mowing in some areas of the churchyards and graveyards.



The new wildflower area in Llandyssil being planted up by volunteers ©County

Project Outputs

Activity	Engagement
Councillors engaged	3
Biodiversity action plan	Advice given
Fruit trees and wildflowers planted	200+
Swift Event	10
Swift boxes made	10

MWT engaged with local Councillors to bring about a better understanding of how the Councils could improve the biodiversity of the area.

MWT assisted by organising a fruit tree and wildflower planting event, attended by Councillors and the local community.

Project Outcomes

- MWT provided advice and guidance for the Council’s on improving biodiversity and is helping them formulate a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The BAP will provide a framework within which to develop habitat management in the future.
- Habitat improvements in Abermule and Landyssil involving the local community in tree and wildflower planting has increased participation within the local community, providing an army of volunteers to support the ongoing development of the BAP.

2. CASE STUDY – WAUN CAPEL PARK

Introduction

Waun Capel Park in Rhayader has a significant quantity of amenity grassland, regularly cut by Powys County Council (PCC). The park is situated next to the river Wye and bordering woodland and is part of an important wildlife corridor running through Rhayader and along the Wye connecting countryside to the north of the town with that in the south. In order to create more wildlife rich areas, to link the park with adjacent habitat and bring wildlife closer to the people of Rhayader, Green Connections worked with the Park Trustees to create a management plan which would increase wildlife rich long grass areas and as a consequence help to reduce PCC time and expense by reducing routine grass cutting.



Wildlife Corridors

A wildlife corridor can be formed by rivers, woodland or hedgerows. These corridors provide important routes for wildlife to spread and colonise new areas. Fauna and flora all benefit from being able to move within the safety of the corridor. Waun Capel, outlined in red, is an important part of this corridor.

The Project

Hopes were to convert mown amenity grassland areas within Park into more wildflower-rich areas, reduce grass cutting to provide all year round longer areas of grass for invertebrates and other wildlife. Large wooden planters with flowering herbs and pollinator friendly plants to be installed as an entrance feature at the Castle site, and a bee hotel, and 'wild for nature' signage to let users know areas are being managed for wildlife. Thus, creating important habitat for wildlife and bringing wildlife closer to the people of Rhayader.

Green Connections staff organised an initial community launch event in August 2021, with wildlife information stalls to engage local people about the project and an evening bat walk. The event was also a recording event and local people found and identified 57 species on the day.

Site meetings and discussions were held with Park Trustees, a Cadw officer and PCC grass cutting officer to agree project work, discuss the new mowing regime for the grass areas and tree works to be undertaken by PCC.

With the help of local Park gardeners and other volunteers, the grassland areas were scarified, wildflower seed sown and plug plants planted

'Wild for nature' signage was installed, along with two large wooden planters filled with peat-free compost and bee-friendly plants at the Castle entrance. A bee hotel and interpretation signage were also installed.

To ensure future management continuity GC staff wrote a 5-year biodiversity enhancement plan for the Park.

Project Outputs

Event	Attendees
Wildlife Day	80
Pollinator day	7
Pollinator day	7
Bat Walk	12



Photos: Janice Vincent

- A Wildlife Day to introduce the project to the community attracted 92 visitors.
- A bioblitz at the same event identified 57 species and provided a baseline survey on which to build future records.
- A bat walk on the evening of the Wildlife Day found 3 species of bat,
- Two pollinator identification days were delivered.
- One kilo of wildflower seed sown, and 70 wildflower plug plants planted.
- Two large wooden planters with pollinator plants and a bee hotel installed.
- Installed five 'wild for nature' signs.



Photo: Janice Vincent

Project Outcomes

- Park Trustees empowered to continue to enhance the park for wildlife and people, with 5-year biodiversity enhancement plan as a guide to follow.
- An agreement with PCC to cut only half wildflower grass areas each autumn as per the biodiversity action plan.
- Agreed that PCC routinely cut a wide grass path through longer grass area of Castle site for people to use and be within the wildflower area without trampling it.
- Empowered Park gardeners and volunteers to undertake annual raking of half the wildflower grass areas each autumn and compost it. Park gardeners and residents living next to the park to look after and maintain the plants in planters.
- 'Wild for nature' signage has educated park users to the creation and long-term management aims to encourage wildlife.

3. CASE STUDY – NORTH BRECKNOCK LANDOWNERS GROUP

Introduction

As part of the Green Connections project the Brecknock office of the WTSWW, arranged a meeting of landowners to see if there was any interest in forming landowners' group. The meeting was held at a 42-acre farm in Llysdinam and was attended by 12 people representing 7 landowners. The guests were treated to tea and cake in the orchard and were given a tour of the farm.

The Project

At that initial meeting it was agreed that a group should be formed and two people volunteered to administer the group, a smallholder and an ecologist. The two volunteers organised the first group meeting at a small holding in Llysdinam to set out the aims and objectives of the group. They also composed an introductory email and GDPR statement which was sent to all members. The agreed purpose of the group is to offer its members a friendly and informal way of sharing ideas, expertise and experiences related to land management for wildlife on a whole variety of scales from gardens to large farms. The emphasis of the group was friendly face to face encounters, visiting each other's properties once a month.

At the first official group meeting it was mutually agreed that members would take turns hosting the monthly meetings. The administrators agreed to arrange group visits to places of mutual interest, to seek out opportunities for relevant training from the Wildlife Trusts and other sources and to invite guests with specialist knowledge. The group also considered sharing equipment, offering land for grazing, grazing animals including sheep, cattle and horses and space for food growing to other members. A special guest from Green Connections, who has been commissioned as a facilitator to work with land owners and contractors to develop sustainable relationships in order to



Photo: Gina Llewellyn



Photo: Caroline Gellor

Annual Knawel growing in the middle of a track.

Andrew Shaw from the Rare British Plant Nursery showing the group Annual Knawel, a rare species in Brecon and Radnorshire that has only been seen recently at a couple of locations. It is in steep decline nationally.

Project Outputs

A landowner's group was developed, and 20 landowners joined. Each of these landowners includes family members, spouses, partners, parents, and children who are also welcomed to the group, especially as they represent the future caretakers of the natural world. Regular updates are sent to group members and several group members have already booked dates to host the monthly meeting.

The North Brecknock Landowners Group was also able to do a presentation at the Green Connections Landowners Roadshow in Beulah through which they were able to recruit 2 more members.



Field grasshopper found by a member's young son.

Photo: Caroline Gellor

Project Outcomes

- One landowner group formed.
- 40+ people, including children, and 20 properties committed to wildlife friendly land management.
- Sustainable relationships created between landowners and contractors.
- The formation of the Landowners group has resulted in a much wider engagement with the Wildlife Trust.
- Going forward a supportive community helping each other create, improve and manage good quality habitat to support local wildlife, with on-going support from the Wildlife Trust.



The Landowners Group tour the 42-acre farm in Llysdinam. Photo: Darylle Hardy



The farm pond, surviving the drought. Photo: Darylle Hardy

4. CASE STUDY – CRADOC GOLF CLUB

Introduction

Brecknock Wildlife Trust (now WTSWW) had previously worked with Cradoc Golf Club regarding habitat for Great Crested Newts. The club was approached, as a follow up, and were very keen to encourage more biodiversity on their site. The current directors were working towards On Course Accreditation which including a section on environmental management and biodiversity. The aims identified were to establish an example wildflower area, clear overgrown laurel and interpretation to 'educate' club members and visiting players of the wildlife value of the course grounds.

The Project

- Written advice including map identifying potential areas for work
- Provided wildflower plugs and bulbs, wildflower seed, 2 apple trees
- Above were planted with volunteers from Cradoc Golf Club and Brecon Local Group
- Employed contractors to cut and chip overgrown laurel
- Replant with native broadleaf trees by volunteers
- Sampled hill for waxcaps and other grassland fungi using eDNA analysis
- Designed and purchased interpretation signs about Great Crested Newts and Penoyre Wood

Project Outputs

- 70 m² sown with wildflower seed & planted with wildflower plugs.
- 2 apple trees planted by established tree and under planted with 150 bulbs (50 each of wild daffodils, snowdrops and bluebells).
- 11 volunteers involved with planting.
- Appx 200 m² woodland cleared of invasive non-native laurel.
- Replanted with 60 native broadleaf whips.
- 2 interpretation signs mounted in hardwood frame.
- 30 species of grassland fungi were identified, of which 7 were waxcaps. 6 species of grassland fungi were classed as vulnerable, 3 of these were waxcap species.



Pink Waxcap (*Porpolomopsis calyptriformis*) classed as vulnerable
Photo: Pauline Hill

Project Outcomes

- Invasive non-native laurel removed from woodland habitat .
- Wildflower area created as educational tool for club members to understand that the golf course can have space for wildlife.
- Group now have key skills and knowledge to create additional wildflower areas in the future and to manage the woodland.
- Interpretation signs will enable club members, visiting players and residents of Penoyre House to learn about Great Crested Newts and understand why the woodland has been managed in the way that it has.
- The waxcap eDNA report provided shows the value of the hill as a rare habitat. Their current management appears to be working.
- Partnership with WTSWW to engage club members with the wildlife on their course with future events.



Planting wildflower plugs



Planting apple trees Photos: Pauline Hill

5. CASE STUDY – MEN’S SHEDS

Introduction

Men’s Sheds are community spaces where men and women can connect, converse and create. Set up to help to reduce loneliness and isolation, many have turned into small businesses, creating joinery items such as bird nest boxes and other wildlife habitats. There are 550 Men’s Sheds in the UK. In this project the Green Connections team worked with three Men’s Sheds, Knighton, Llanfyllin and the Brecon Shed.

The Project

As part of the Green Connections (GC) commitment to improving biodiversity, Men’s Sheds were enlisted to create a range of boxes including swift nest boxes, bug houses, bat boxes and homes for small mammals such as hedgehogs. As part of the Swifts in Powys project GC worked with the Sheds to refine the design of a swift box which could be fixed under the eaves of buildings. A total of 219 boxes and habitat features were built.

Radnorshire

RWT commissioned the Knighton Men’s Shed to build a large variety of animals homes including 57 bird boxes and 12 bat and bug houses, and 15 habitat features including planters, nature trail signs and one hay baler. The bird and bat boxes were distributed across Radnorshire to landowners, community groups and businesses. The hay baler was used during the hand powered hay making feasibility study, The planters were planted up with native wildflowers and sited at Waun Capel Park and the Newbridge on Wye Area for Wildlife.

Brecknock

WSWWT worked with the Brecon Men’s Shed to build swift and dormouse boxes. They made 11 swift boxes and altered 50 dormouse boxes by replacing nails with screws to hold the wire keeping the lids in place, cutting lengths of wire and cutting notches in the lids to stop them slipping out of place.

Project Outputs

Men’s Sheds:	Brecon	Knighton	Llanfyllin	Total
Swift boxes	11	27	45	83
Bird nest boxes	0	25	0	25
Owl boxes	0	5	0	5
Bat boxes	0	6	10	16
Bug houses	0	6	15	21
Hedgehog homes	0	0	4	4
Dormouse boxes	50	0	0	50
Habitat features	0	15	0	15
Events	Title		Attendees	
Llanfyllin	Build a box day		29	

Over the course of the project Men’s Sheds made 204 animal homes and 15 habitat features including nature signs, planters and a hay baler. An MWT collaborative event with the Llanfyllin Men’s Sheds was attended by 29 people.

Montgomeryshire

MWT worked with the local Llanfyllin Men's Shed to build the perfect swift box. Men's Shed members took the lead and continued to tweak their design over the next year until the ideal swift box was ready to go into production.

Providing Llanfyllin Shed with the opportunity to build these boxes over the last year or so has been truly beneficial to the group as they haven't had many other orders. It has kept them busy and in "business". It has also helped them to learn new skills, and to upskill new members with these skills. One committee member mentioned how important our collaboration has been for them, particularly a new member who is rurally isolated and hasn't left the house much since Covid. When he joined the shed, he got stuck in with making the boxes and learning new skills.

MWT also ran a collaborative event, Build a Box Day, with Llanfyllin Shed helping to promote the work they do in the local area. Members of the shed made flat packs of bird boxes, bat boxes, and mini bug houses for people to put together on the day. Twentynine people were attracted to this lovely community event. It really helped to promote the shed and the work they do. Two people were interested in becoming members, and a couple of people were interested in placing an order from them.



Planter Photo: Phil Ward



Bat box



Swift box

Photos by
Lottie
Glover



Hedgehog box Photo: Google

Project Outcomes

- 204 new homes for wildlife will be in use for years to come, improving survival rates, improving biodiversity and making animal communities stronger.
- Members of Men's Sheds taught new skills to help wildlife in the future and able to pass on those skills to existing and new members.
- A new community able to take action to help wildlife.

6. CASE STUDY – IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY FOR RARE BUTTERFLIES

Introduction

Montgomeryshire has six of the remaining nine sites known to support the rare, endangered Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly (PBF), making it the most important area for the species in the whole of Wales. Five of these sites form a metapopulation, meaning that the sites are so close together that the butterflies can move between them, making the whole population stronger. Given the importance of the population, as well as growing threats from land use and climate change, it has become increasingly important to not only manage the known sites, but also improve the quality and connectivity of the surrounding land.



Pearl Bordered Fritillary Photo: Philip Precey

The Project

As part of the Green Connections project, staff from Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust visited seven land holdings in the vicinity of the known PBF sites, to understand current management practices and provide advice on actions which can be taken for the benefit of the butterfly and other wildlife. A Recording Day was held on one farm and habitat management was carried out on breeding habitat on two sites, to ensure the habitat remained in good condition for the species.

Project Outputs

Advisory visits were conducted in 2021 with landowners at two large gardens, three smallholdings and two organic farms; written follow up advice was provided. Both farms were surveyed; at one, the whole farm (c57ha) was mapped to identify current potential and what improvements could be made. The other farm (c55ha) hosted a Recording Day, attended by four people, the aim of which was to record as much wildlife as possible, as well as provide on-the-job training to help upskill volunteers; 200 species records were made during the day. In 2022, we undertook soil sampling at this farm to assess soil carbon and the value of an area of grassland for fungi.

In February 2022, the project funded 2.5ha of habitat management – bracken and scrub

Project Outcomes summary

Our land management advice has provided 14 landowners with information and inspiration; all pledged to take what action they could for the benefit of the PBF and other wildlife. We know that at least two have already made changes to habitat management because of this, and three attended our end of project landowner celebration event in February 2023.



Habitat management work underway at one of the PBF sites, February 2022 Photo Tammy Stretton

The habitat and species information gathered provides an important baseline against which future anticipated improvements can be measured, as well as providing landowners with the information they need to plan future habitat management work. The raw data increases our understanding of the current biodiversity value of the area.

Despite the low attendance at the Recording Day, it was a great opportunity for peer-to-peer learning, as well as encouraging further biological recording outside of formal events.

The habitat management carried out on the two PBF sites has ensured the habitat remains suitable in the short term, whilst more sustainable solutions are sought. The 2022 PBF flight period was rather mixed, in part due to poor weather, hampering survey efforts, but PBFs were seen on both sites; numbers were sufficient on one site to pass the Common Standards Monitoring threshold set.

This work, funded by Green Connections Powys, was just the beginning of further work to improve the landscape for wildlife around the Welshpool PBF metapopulation. Ultimately, we hope to work with all the landowners in the area, but this case study provided a great opportunity to trial our approach and move forward more effectively in the future. A tiny snowball has just started rolling down the hill; in time we hope it will get very big indeed, ensuring a much more stable future for the PBF.

Photos: Tammy Stretton



Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly

Participants at the Recording Day



7. CASE STUDY – SWIFTS IN POWYS



Photo: Stefan Johansson

Introduction

Swifts in Wales have declined by 69% since 1995 and in 2021 they were added to the Red List of birds requiring special protection measures. This decline is thought to be due to a combination of loss of nest sites and a decline in insects.

The project

Teams from the three Powys Wildlife Trusts have recruited and trained volunteers to identify swifts and locate existing nest sites. These volunteers will form Swift Groups to promote and monitor swifts.

A series of three, well attended, swift talks were arranged, two by Edward Mayer, from Swift Conservation, who delivered a talk about the threats and challenges faced by this charismatic summer visitor and gave advice on what everyone can do to help swifts. Sarah Gibson, Communications Officer at the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and author of *Swifts and Us: The Life of the Bird that Sleeps in the Sky*, gave an inspiring talk on swift behaviour and swift studies.

Project Outputs

These are the fantastic results of this project.

Trust	Swift events	Attendees	Boxes donated	Nest sites found
Radnorshire	10	43	42	15
Brecknock	12	69	13	20
Montgomeryshire	10	115	25	60
Swift Talks	3	249		



A grand total of 32 walks, 3 talks, 476 people engaged, 80 swift boxes donated, and 95 nest sites identified.



Brecon Swift Group



Swift nest boxes installed on the Sennybridge Pumping Station

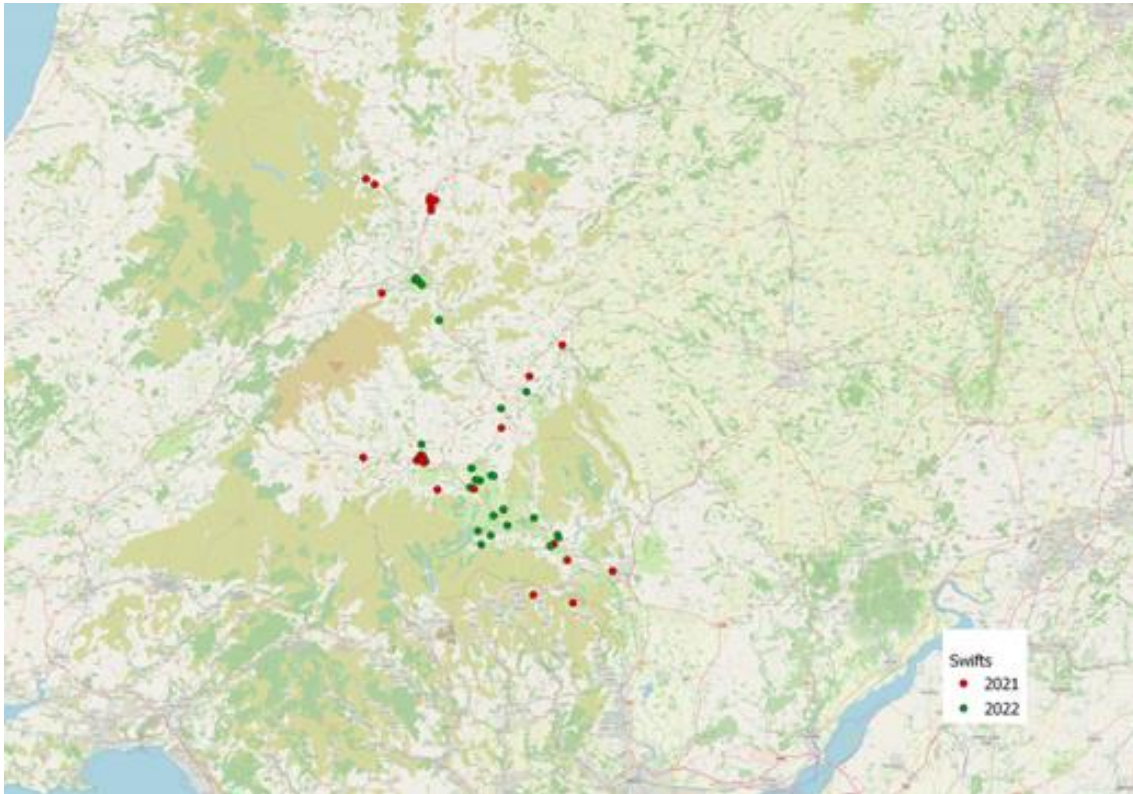
Photos: Pauline Hill

Project Outcomes

The newly trained Swift volunteers are carrying on the good work, leading new groups of people, discovering more nest sites, and training more leaders. They will be able to recognise when swift and nest numbers decline, and this will help conservationists take action to prevent further decline.

In Brecknock, with the help of Biodiversity Information Service, (BIS), a new swift data map, below, clearly shows the impact of installing new swift boxes and increasing swift monitoring. Future data can be added to the map allowing conservationists to see the bigger picture. As Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire volunteer swift groups collect and submit more data, BIS can develop swift data maps for them, providing valuable information about swift populations in Powys.

The map clearly shows the positive impact of the project, highlighting the increase in sites where swifts were recorded. In addition, four new volunteer swift groups were formed across Powys. All the data gathered at the Swift events has been recorded on the BIS website/LERC app.



Brecknock Swift Data Map 2021/2022 Map: BIS



Helping swifts

Swifts like to leave their nests by dropping into the air from the nest entrance. This is why they choose to nest in the eaves of houses and other buildings. During home renovations or when insulation is fitted, old nest sites can be blocked. New builds often do not include space for nesting, whether that be eaves or specially designed nest boxes.

Volunteers and members of Men's Sheds have built 80 swift boxes which have been donated to building owners willing to put a swift box under the eaves.

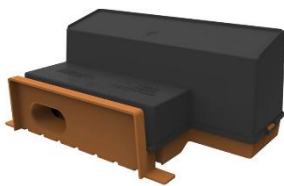
The Trusts' teams have been working with local authorities and Construction companies to encourage swift friendly building schemes, incorporating swift bricks where possible and erecting swift boxes if not. One company has already agreed to incorporate a swift brick into their new build.



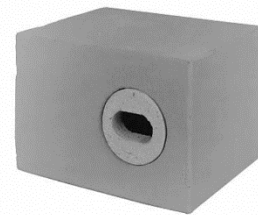
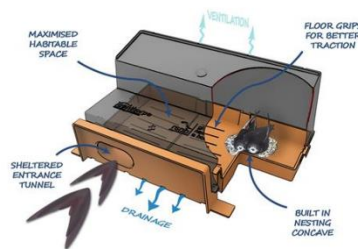
Swift box

Swift bricks

A swift brick is a preformed nest box designed to be incorporated into the eaves of the house during the building process. Swift bricks cannot be added after a house is built. There are many types of swift bricks and as builders use several different building methods it is not possible to find one size that fits all. The pictures below show some of the different types of swift bricks available.



The Manthorpe Swift brick



The Schwegler Swift brick

Swift facts

These magnificent birds complete an amazing migration feat each year, flying an incredible round trip to Africa of 22,000km (14,000miles).

Swifts do everything on the wing, except building a nest, laying eggs, and feeding young. They feed, drink, sleep and mate on the wing, catching insects in flight and swooping over lakes and ponds to scoop up water. A young swift completes the annual migration to Africa four times before finally mating and landing to building a nest. Adult swifts return to the same nest sites year after year.

8. CASE STUDY – FRIENDS OF DIAMOND PARK

Introduction

WTSWW request from a previous WTSWW conservation volunteer to advise on setting up a group, primarily to manage Himalayan Balsam in The Diamond Park and encourage better management of the park for biodiversity. The group were trying to be informal but had not followed the correct procedure with the Ystradgynlais Town Council who own and manage the park. The aim was to formalise the group and set up a working relationship with Ystradgynlais Town Council to enable control of Himalayan Balsam, and work towards improving the management of the whole park for biodiversity and people.

The Project

At the initial meeting, advice was given to set up a constituted group with public liability insurance and contact Ystradgynlais Town Council to secure permission to work in the park. The advice was supported by providing links and contacts. To enable the group members to measure the improvement of biodiversity three training workshops were held. First aid equipment, tools, surveying equipment and FSC identification guides were provided. First Aid training was offered. Advice and support given to aid the development of a draft management plan for The Diamond Park which has been submitted to Ystradgynlais Town Council for discussion. A phase 1 habitat survey for The Diamond Park has been completed.

Project Outputs

Event	Volunteers trained	Species recorded
Himalayan Balsam Pull	8	n/a
Botany intro	11	8
Bug Identification	10	20
Stream survey	8	16



Oak sapling Photo: Pauline Hill

- 30+ trained volunteers to recognise Himalayan Balsam and distinguish from other plants and how to deal with the pulled plants.
- Health and Safety discussed, and advice given to become constituted and get insurance, write risk assessments.
- 3 discovery days learn to identify species and record on the LERC app including Japanese Knotweed locations to pass on to the town council for treatment.
- Liaised with group and Ystradgynlais Town Council to develop working partnership.
- 3 meetings with the group committee to draft a management plan to identify where aspects of the park's management could be altered to increase biodiversity. Including 1 with a town councillor.
- Provided first aid kit, tools, FSC identification guides and survey equipment.

Project Outcomes summary

- A constituted group with committee and public liability insurance.
- Working relationship with Ystradgynlais Town Council.
- People empowered to pass on training to remove Himalayan balsam.
- Training/liaison has enabled participants to improve their habitat management.
- 30+ people have key skills and knowledge to identify and record a variety of species and to find other experts to extend their knowledge.
- A draft management plan submitted to Ystradgynlais Town Council.

Himalayan Balsam

Introduced as a garden plant in 1839 Himalayan Balsam soon escaped and became widespread along riverbanks and ditches. The plant has explosive seed pods which can spread 4 metres in every direction. Because the plant grows near water it is easily spread. Growing to at least 2 metres in height it out competes many native plant species and breaks up the soil structure with its shallow roots. It is now considered an invasive species, forming dense stands that are difficult to eradicate due to sheer numbers.



Pulling Himalayan Balsam

Invertebrate Discovery Day

Photos: Pauline Hill



9. CASE STUDY – DOLYDD GOBAITH

Introduction

Fferm Goedwig Gymunedol Dyffryn Tanat Valley Community Forest Farm Community Interest Company (CIC) was established in September 2020. Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT) have supported the group as part of the Green Connections Powys project.

The Project

In 2019, 42 acres of land came up for sale in Penygarnedd. Over a year and a half, funds were raised by the group to buy the land; the sale went through in February 2021. An adjacent area of 10 acres were also bought by neighbours to manage with wildlife in mind. A competition was held to name the land, and 'Dolydd Gobaith', meaning 'Meadows of Hope', won!

The land had been grazed by sheep for years, but part of the land is very steep, so little agricultural improvement was possible there.

Dolydd Gobaith has received funding from a range of organisations including National Lottery Heritage Fund, Powys County Council and Hafren Dyfrdwy. The ultimate aim of the group is to become more self-sufficient and less reliant on grant funding.

MWT have supported the group by offering advice, training and surveys to help the group learn more about the wildlife on the land and how to manage it.



Wildflower meadow with a view over the Tanat Valley © MWT/Lottie Glover

MWT first visited Dolydd Gobaith at the start of the Green Connections project, walking around the site and offering land management advice. The group knew they wanted to plant lots of trees; MWT advised that the best places for this would be in the hedges and edges, leaving the main fields to become wildflower meadows.

MWT staff have also conducted several surveys through the Green Connections project such as a baseline habitat survey and a fungi survey, as well as taking soil samples to assess the value of the site for fungi. The site has passed the 2020 Powys Local Wildlife Site (LWS) criteria for multiple reasons, and was recently adopted as a LWS.

Project Outputs

MWT have provided several training days for Dolydd Gobaith volunteers and the local community such as plant identification, fungi and plant monitoring. MWT also supported a Bumblebee Conservation Trust training day.

Training and Events	Attendees
Bee Identification	10
Plant Identification	12
Fungi Identification	22
Plant Surveys	9
Hedgehog Day	16

MWT ran a joint Hedgehog Day event in May 2022 with Dolydd Gobaith, building hedgehog houses and learning how to help hedgehogs at home. Llanfyllin Shed also assisted with the event, providing the wood and tools to make the hedgehog homes.



Left image: MWT staff supporting Bumblebee Conservation Trust training day © Denne, Dolydd Gobaith. *Right image:* MWT staff running a Plant Monitoring Day © MWT.

Project Outcomes

As a result of MWTs input, the CIC now run regular volunteer days, especially throughout winter to help with tree planting and habitat management work. They run several seasonal celebration days throughout the year, bringing volunteers and the local community together. In 2023, they will be running regular workshops, covering a range of topics, such as hedge laying and tree ID. To help them become more self-sufficient, they are charging people to attend these workshops to help bring in some income.

The local community have been involved from the start and continue to be involved. They want local schools and colleges to use the space for learning. The CIC recently completed building a roundhouse which will be used as an outdoor classroom.

The land is now open up to the public, with a small car park and facilities, as well as interpretation signs to help people navigate their way around the site.

More information about Dolydd Gobaith can be found on their website <https://dolydd-gobaith.cymru/> and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/dolyddgobaith/>.

10. CASE STUDY – KNIGHTON COMMUNITY WOODLANDS GROUP

Introduction

Originally part of the Teme Valley Environment Group, the Knighton Community Woodlands Group, known locally as the Woodlanders, work within a private woodland of over 40,000 native broadleaf trees. The Group was interested in learning about surveying the woodland for birds and pollinators with a view to understanding how their woodland management could impact on woodland fauna species.

The Project

Green Connections staff met with the Woodlanders to assess their overall level of competency in bird and pollinator identification and recording methods. This led to two events, a Bird Walk and a Bat Walk and four training sessions. During these sessions participants were taught how to identify birds using visual and audio clues such as colour, behaviour and common bird calls. Participants learned how to set up transects to record birds using the nationally recognised BTO Breeding Bird Survey. This included the methodology of the survey and identifying breeding bird territories. The participants gained confidence and were able to set up transects in the woodland. They checked with Green Connections staff for validation that they were doing this correctly. Training in the identification of pollinator species, including Bumblebees, and how to use a simple National survey scheme, PoMS (UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme) was carried out over two days.

Project Outputs

Green Connections provided one event and six training sessions. A core sub-group attended all the sessions. and advice on the importance of surveying and recording.

Training Sessions	Sessions	Total Attendees	Equipment donated
Bird Walk	1	9	
Bird survey and ID training	2	9	3 tit boxes
Pollinator Survey and Bumblebee ID	2	9	ID guides, PoMS booklets
Bat walk	1	7	2 bat boxes



Feedback

Comments from participant feedback were used to create this informative word cloud. The word cloud reflects a high degree of engagement with the event material and the high quality of the training.



Photo: Janice Vincent

Project Outcomes

Participants gained confidence in National survey techniques for recording birds and pollinating insects. To help the group succeed, publications and further reading were also suggested.

- A core sub-group empowered to continue work to record wildlife.
- People empowered to pass on training to other group members.
- Training and liaison have enabled participants to gain skills which can ultimately benefit wildlife.
- The Group now have key skills and knowledge to record birds and insects using a variety of survey tools.
- By carrying out annual surveys the Group can use the data gained to monitor habitat change, which will, in turn, inform future woodland management decisions.

Castlering Wood

When the Knighton Community Woodland Group took over the management of Castlering Wood, situated near Offa's Dyke was a 35-acre patch of clear fell woodland, no trees, just stumps and needles! Positioned at around 340m high, it has great views, and in the centre of the woodland sits an oval shaped iron age earthwork – Castle Ring. The group cultivated their own tree nursery and planted more than 35,000 hazel and broadleaved trees.

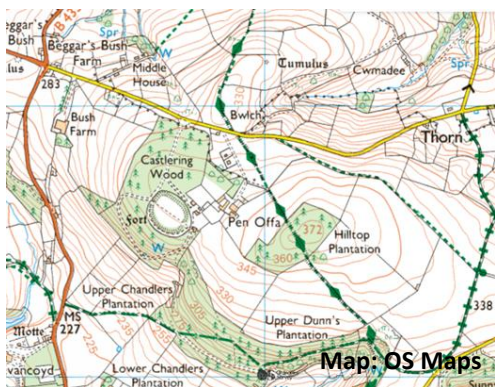


Photo: Janice Vincent

11. CASE STUDY – FRIENDS OF THE LUGG, CITIZEN SCIENCE RIVER MONITORING

Introduction

In the spring of 2021, following the formation of the Friends of the Upper Wye and the Citizens Science project, set up in response to deteriorating water quality in the river Wye catchment, there was concern that an important tributary of the Wye, the river Lugg, had been omitted from the study. The committee contacted Green Connections seeking advice on setting up a Friends of the River Lugg group.

Background

Citizen's Science Project – Investigating water quality in the Upper Wye

Over local concerns for the quality and pollution of the River Wye catchment in Wales, including Herefordshire complaining they are getting 'dirty' water from Wales, potential run off from intensive poultry units, recent algal blooms, low oxygen levels and fish deaths, and the fact that NRW had recognised that certain subsidiary watercourses of the Wye were falling beneath their European Water Framework Directive criteria, a committee of local interested individuals was initiated and the Friends of the Upper Wye (**FOUW**) was formed in 2020. The FOUW set up a Citizen's Science project with the help of Cardiff University (School of Earth & Environmental Sciences). The University provided essential help and support in setting up the protocols for water monitoring and how to engage and train up volunteers. They also produced videos for each monitoring test.



All photos courtesy of Christine Hugh-Jones (CPRW)

Friends of the Lugg (FOL)

Through meetings with the FOUW committee and the Green Connections (GC) team they set up the FOL. Initial concerns from both FOUW and FOL was insurance for volunteers. This was overcome by Radnorshire Wildlife Trust (RWT) providing insurance for all volunteers within the groups.

Both groups applied for various and ongoing funding to buy equipment and supplies to support the ongoing volunteer monitoring.

The aims of the FOL were set up thus:

- To train volunteers in water testing (nitrate, phosphate, turbidity, electrical conductivity, temperature) to provide river monitoring programme over concerns of the deterioration of the river Wye and provide this data to NRW.
- To set up at least a year's length of monitoring of River Lugg catchment, train, support and provide feedback to volunteers throughout the programme.

Monitoring the River Lugg

Throughout the project GC staff worked in partnership with a CPRW (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales) officer and Cardiff University.

The RWT registered all the participants as RWT volunteers, thus providing insurance and provided training sessions in risk assessment, water testing, using sampling equipment correctly and using the online Epicollect app. The GC team also provided follow up, feedback, catchup and discussion with regular zoom sessions to maintain the volunteers' momentum.

Each volunteer was assigned a monitoring station. The GC team provided ongoing support for volunteers throughout the project.

During each in-person training session, GC staff ensured all volunteers were trained up in risk assessment, H & S, and undertook monitoring protocols safely.

In the early summer of 2022, working with the environmental charity River Action, FOUW secured funding to pay for a dedicated Citizen Science Coordinator (hosted by RWT) to continue the work and oversee the project. The GC team was able to hand over the reins, allowing it to concentrate on other projects.



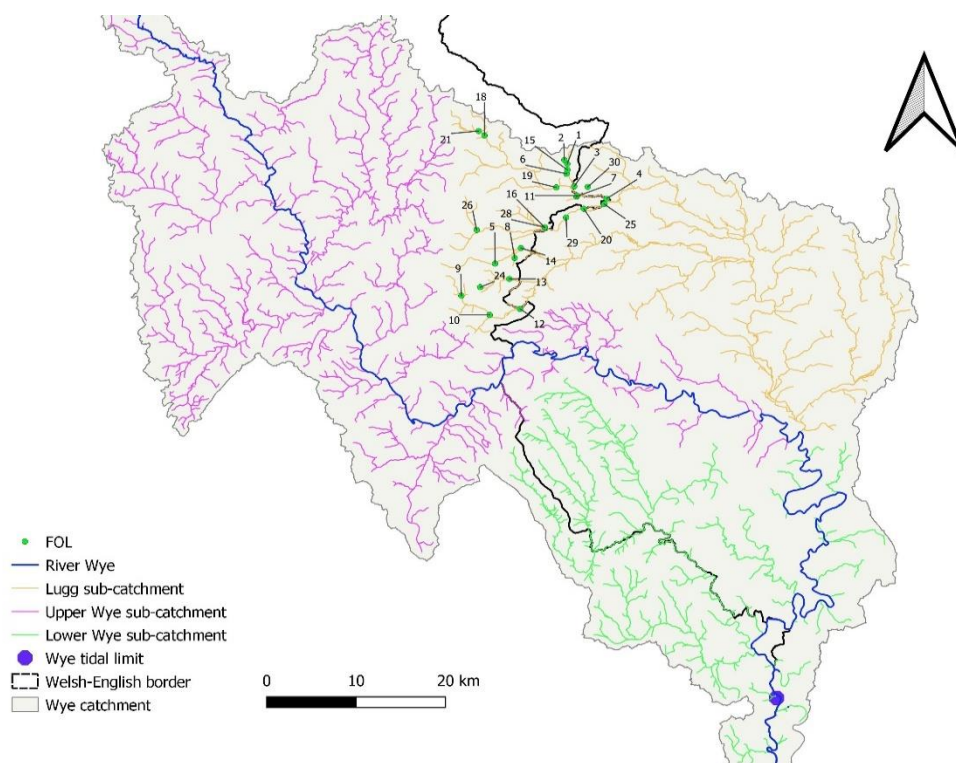
Project Outputs

Over the course of the project the GC team provided:

- 1 online introductory session for volunteers.
- 1 online training session.
- 4 practical in-person half day training sessions.
- Trained 55 volunteers.
- Set up 35 monitoring stations which were sampled weekly over 18 months resulting in the collection of 2,520 data sets over the whole project.
- Monthly evening zoom catchup sessions during first winter.
- Constant email support.
- Regular zoom feedback/discussion sessions were held, and constant email support helped to maintain a high volunteer retention rate.
- Volunteer in-person get together one year after starting, with feedback and catchup.
- Significant press coverage of the project resulted in an enormous increase in awareness of River Wye issues.

Project Outcomes

- A total of 55 people trained and empowered to be able to carry out weekly testing.
- Weekly monitoring has allowed volunteers to play an active role in recording verifiable data, reporting this to the statutory organisations, and contribute something positive towards restoring the river's health.
- Volunteer participation has allowed them to gain a much better understanding of river ecology and pollution issues.
- The FOL group formally merged with the FOUW winter 2022/23.
- The FOL (& FOUW) volunteers continue to monitor the catchment and will continue to do so after the GC project ends in March 2023.



Friends of Lugg sampling sites, courtesy of Cardiff University

12. CASE STUDY – CAMP PLAS

Introduction

Camp Plas is situated just outside the village of Dolanog along the River Vyrnwy. It is a small, working traditional farm with a campsite and venue for events. Camp Plas is part of the Greener Camping Club. Campers set up in the meadow, with pathways mown through the meadow from the main track to the pitch. The number of tents allowed on site is limited, making it a peaceful place to come and stay. Camp Plas also has “The Boatshed”, a small hut, and “Cuddfan Bach”, a bell tent, which people can stay in. There is a large barn, which is used for events such as yoga, music nights and weddings, which usually involve members of the local community.

The Project

Managing the land

Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT) staff visited the site in September 2021. Advice was given about how to improve the campsite and surrounding farmland for biodiversity, such as pond creation, management of wetland areas, removing non-native invasive rhododendrons in the woodland area, and the possibility of using different livestock for grazing, as well as the sheep already on the farm.

Camp Plas have left the wetland area, which even had frogspawn in late winter of 2022, and are managing the majority of the campsite land as a meadow, by restricting cutting and allowing the sheep to mob graze it in early autumn.



Left image: Frogspawn in the wetland area © MWT. Right image: Meadow area ©Camp Plas

Connecting visitors with wildlife

Camp Plas is already a member of the Greener Camping Club, but the site owners wanted to help visitors connect even more with nature.

In February 2022, MWT ran a “Bird Bonanza” event aimed at the local community, but visitors staying in The Boatshed also attended. We built bird boxes and learnt how to look after the birds in your garden at home. We also did a short walk around the site looking for birds. Some of the bird boxes were put up around the site, whilst others were taken home for people to put up in their own gardens.

In August 2022, MWT ran a Bat and Moth Night with Montgomeryshire Moth Group. Nearly 40 people attended the event, over half of which were staying at the campsite, and the rest of the attendees were members of the local community. We did a bat walk, followed by looking at what was caught in the moth traps. Camp Plas have also provided extra engagement activities for visitors such as fishing nets for the children to use in the river, wildlife ID sheets and ideas for nature activities they can do on site.



Left image: Building boxes at the Bird Bonanza event in February 2022.

Right image: Bat and Moth Night introductory talk in August 2022. © MWT

Project Outputs

MWT provided written and verbal advice and ran events at Camp Plas. Events were attended by campsite residents and members of the local community.

Land Management		
Written and verbal management advice provided and acted on.		
Connecting visitors with wildlife		
	Attendees	Boxes made/donated
Bird Bonanza	24	24
Bat and Moth Night	40	n/a

Project Outcomes

- MWT’s liaison with Camp Plas has resulted in a new habitat management regime that has already improved the biodiversity of the site and the visitors’ experience. Visitors will also benefit from learning about the management of the campsite.
- Events run by MWT at Camp Plas empowered a total of 64 people to take action for wildlife including building and erecting 24 nest boxes on site and within the local community.
- Links between Camp Plas and the local community have been strengthened.
- As a result of their Green Connections involvement, the site owners at are getting involved with a new MWT Team Wilder project in the wider area, aiming to create a conservation group with local residents in and around Dolanog.