



Caru Gwenyn  
Bee Friendly



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## Case Study

# Wenvoe Wildlife Group

**The Wenvoe Wildlife Group is a community group consisting of local volunteers.**

We maintain one large meadow, have planted and look after five community orchards as well as watercress beds and a patch dedicated to pollinators.

Around six years ago, we started looking at Bee Hotels, inspired by the initiatives in Northern European parks and decided we needed some. We currently have two large Bee Hotels and around seven small ones.

At the time, there was remarkably little information in the UK on practical issues of hotel design and construction with a lot of focus on small home-made structures, which had minimal durability.

Relatively simple questions such as the ideal length of a bamboo tube elicited minimal or contradictory responses.

Copying European models our first structure combined bee hotel on one side and noticeboard on the reverse.

The structure had a roof to deflect rain. It is important to keep the nesting area dry and protect it from wet winter weather and to prevent fungal moulds from developing.



This combined logs with holes of different sizes, bamboo tubes, cross-sections of Pampas Grass, breezeblocks, ventilation bricks and potters clay. It faced due south to maximise sunshine. In no time, bees were visiting the hotel.

It became clear that bee preferences were for the bamboos first and logs with holes second as measured by the rate of take-up of holes.

The breezeblock was used as last resort and ventilation bricks never.

The clay was expensive to buy and little used. This could be because the clay or earth becomes too hard and dry for the 'mining bees' to penetrate.

The sunnier the better and holes nearer the overhanging roof were ignored. Typically, one would expect to have around 100 filled holes in any year.

The only problem appeared to be finding bamboo tubes removed and lying on the floor, which we attributed (incorrectly) to curious children or adults.

Our second large structure incorporated a number of changes.



Instead of a lot of loose bamboos, small bee hotels were purchased including the bamboos and incorporated on the shelves, which was much less labour intensive. The rest of the space was taken up with logs with holes and a terrace of lacewing boxes. Again, it took little time for the bees to find and start using the holes.



Although the design included less individual bamboos, the same problem appeared with bamboos within the small hotels removed and left lying on the floor.

As this site was very little visited at the time, human intervention seemed unlikely.

It was assumed this was down to the large numbers of crows in the vicinity, which quickly realised that the bamboos contained tasty larval snacks.



Attempts to limit this by covering the structure with chicken wire were only partly successful, as the tenacious crows appeared adept at manoeuvring the bamboos through the gaps in the netting.

This problem is ongoing and we continue to try different strategies to make the sticks more secure.

These first two structures were large and did not come cheap.

Since then we have purchased pre-constructed bee hotels and mounted them on poles.

These have been just as successful in terms of attracting bees and come at a fraction of the cost.

Typically, structures shown on the left can be bought for just under £15 online and with donated stakes located and, if necessary, relocated with minimal expenditure.

They can also be attached to noticeboards which do not have bug hotels on the reverse.

We have found that bee or bug hotels can bring benefits to solitary bees and wasps whether one's budget is limited or large.

However, the larger structures do appeal to the public and are an endless source of fascination to children.

It is important to provide a variety of hole sizes to meet the requirements of both larger and smaller insects.

It is recommended that hole size should not be greater than 8mm.

As with housing anywhere, location is important and our experience suggests south-facing, as sunny as possible and not too close to the ground.

The more successful you are at attracting bees, the more attractive the hotels will be to the free snackers – crows and other corvids we have mentioned but woodpeckers can also create havoc in their determination to drill open the logs for the larvae.

The length of bamboo or other hole we have found to be of little concern although we aim for around 14 cms. The bees are quite capable of checking the length of the hole and laying the appropriate numbers of eggs.

