

## **Minutes of Action Plan for Pollinators Taskforce Meeting - 14 November 2019, Newtown**

### **Attendees:**

Abi Lowe	National Botanic Garden of Wales
Andrew Lucas	JNCC
Clare Dinham	Buglife
Francis Gellatly	Animal Plant Health Agency
Gary Mitchell	Tyfu Fyny /Social Farms & Gardens
Gemma Barron	National Trust
Jan Miller	Wildlife Trust
Kathleen Carroll	Welsh Government
Keith Davies	North Wales Wildlife Trust
Lucy Witter	National Botanic Garden of Wales
Mark Cleaver	Monmouthshire County Council
Sam Lloyd-Williams	Welsh Government
Simon Bilsborough	Welsh Government
Sinead Lynch	Bumblebee Conservation
Suvarna Punalekar	Aberystwyth University

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Kathleen Carroll opened the meeting by welcoming the members. Introductions were made. Minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

### **2. Managing Local Authority Land for Pollinators: a Review from Denbighshire County Council**

Joel Walley explained that Denbighshire County Council took their responsibilities under Section 6 of the Environmental Act seriously. They have taken on an additional staff member to help them meet their duty. They have specific targets set out for sand lizards, black grouse, adders, little terns and bees. Their verge policy aims to benefit biodiversity by cutting all non-principal roads (78% of their network) once per year, after the 1st August, as part of a "Biodiversity Cut". Joel identified a number of problems in managing council owned grasslands and he proposed some solutions. He highlighted the benefits of being part of the Bee Friendly Scheme and how their Wildlife Growing project has been a useful engagement tool. The Wildlife Growing project is a collaboration between Denbighshire County Council, the Woodland Skills Centre and Life on the Verge

Group. From a modest budget of £600 they have successfully produced over 1,500 high quality, healthy and robust local wildflower plants.

Presentation sent to Taskforce members on 13 Oct 2019.

### **3. Living Wales: Making Satellites Work for Wales**

Suvarna Punalekar (Aberystwyth University) gave a presentation on the remote sensing land classification project, Living Wales. The Living Wales Project aims to capture the state and dynamics of Wales' landscape, in near real time, historically and into the future through integration of earth observation data, supportive ground measurements and process models.

Living Wales is mapping forests, canopy cover, crops, semi-natural habitats on annual bases. This information can be useful for:

- Quantifying environmental outcomes
- Estimating diversity of landscape
- Estimating habitat fragmentation
- Proposing plans for habitat connectivity
- Wide range of spatial analysis for understanding correlation between human interventions (for example farm practices, urban development, road maintenance) and pollinator diversity and distribution
- Supporting regulatory bodies to identify areas with discrepancies between declarations and actual land cover (although this may be bit tricky).
- Identifying areas more prone to biodiversity losses (for example prone to flooding)

EarthTrack mobile app has been developed to collect supportive ground measurements. The app has the facility to collect information on flower-rich grassland, pollinator-rich habitats, flower-rich road verges, bees, butterflies, arable habitats, and invasive species. Living Wales welcomes discussion with others on how to achieve its goals to measure landscape attributes for pollinators. Goals include:

- identifying the main plant species and habitats that are most relevant for pollinators and which have greatest potential to be resolved from 3-25 m resolution satellite sensor data;
- determining the environmental variables that can be targeted to identify these species and habitats, such as start and end of flowering, dominant species and the connectivity of habitats.
- identifying the best information to collect using EarthTrack and how EarthTrack can be used to provide information for databases associated with existing apps and vice versa.

If you would like to discuss further with Living Wales you can find their contact details on the presentation.

Link to presentation:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hjvqN9LhDaCeAQNSbYscNhDbsJBDIFSt>

#### **4. Sustainable Farming and our Land Consultation**

Simon Bilborough gave an overview and took questions on the Sustainable Farming and our Land Consultation (<https://gov.wales/reviced-proposals-supporting-welsh-farmers-after-brexite>). Arising from a discussion meeting in September, a draft response had been prepared by Gary Mitchell, Andrew Tuddenham (NT), Sinead Lynch and Francis Gellatly (draft sent to Taskforce on 13 October). There was a discussion on each of the suggested responses, and comments and amendments to the responses were noted. Kathleen Carroll requested that any additional text be sent to her by the end of the week so a final draft (attached) can be shared with the Action Plan for Pollinator Taskforce group. Andrew Lucas and Gary Mitchell would compile the final response to be sent before the deadline of 30 October.

#### **5. Newtown Community Garden**

Gary Mitchell gave an introductory talk on the history of Social Farms and Gardens and the work carried out at Newtown Community Garden. This was followed by a tour of the garden.

The present Newtown Community Garden is situated on a 2.5 acre growing site adjacent to Newtown College. The land is rented for a token amount from the College.

The Newtown Community Garden was relocated 5 years ago from the industrial estate. Fruit trees, raised beds and a round house were all successfully transferred to the new site. The site has a horticultural demonstration and research growing areas. It has cropping areas that feed into the Cultivate shop and a veg box scheme. It also has small allotment plots where people can learn and practise horticultural skills. Its rain harvesting system provides sufficient water for the whole of the site. A simple stop cock system allows baths and various containers, spread out across the site, to be used as watering points. It has communal spaces including a fire pit, round house, BBQ, open lawn areas and wildlife pond.

A large shed houses a project called 'Bike to the future'. Bikes are reconditioned using salvaged working parts from old bikes donated to the scheme. They have a specific programme that works with young people who have difficulty in engaging in school. Through the programme they gain confidence, learn team-work, practical and time management skills in a non-school environment. 'Bike to the future' also provides affordable bikes for young people/families.

An onsite bungalow which was used as a hub for the volunteers is presently being refurbished after flood damage. A LEADER funded project to develop recycling initiatives has funded five lorry containers. These have been converted

and used for upcycling and repairing clothes, recycling and reusing plastics and a kitchen office space.

## **6. Action Plan for Pollinators Taskforce updates**

### **Women's Institute, SOS for Honey Bees update provided by Jean Hurrell**

#### Ceredigion Federation

Ceredigion Federation held an Environment Day on the 30 March in Aberystwyth which was open to members and non-members. The day incorporated a talk on the danger of losing bees and hedgehogs.

#### Henllan WI, Clwyd Denbigh Federation

Henllan WI organised an Open Day on Saturday 12 October to showcase Henllan Bee Garden. Janice Vincett MSc, Entomologist, gave a presentation on the 'Health of the Bees in our Village'.

The garden, created by Henllan WI, in partnership with other organisations in the community, was opened 5 years ago. The garden has been cared for and maintained by dedicated volunteers and has been used by local community groups over the last few years for both leisure and educational purposes.

The WI invited Janice Vincett to undertake a short survey of the bee garden. Janice has visited the garden three times and presented her findings at the Open Day.

A number of federations have informed Jean that members continue to take action as individuals to help bees.

### **Welsh Government – Department for Economy and Transport provided by Samantha Harris**

#### Road Verges for Wildflowers Initiative

WG is continuing to deliver against this Initiative with additional verges being brought into more favourable management and some seed sowing being undertaken.

Project - In August, a display of wildflowers, endemic to Llanwrst, was created in advance of the Eisteddfod along the A470 (covering approximately 3.2km of the Cambrian Way). The diversity of existing verges was enhanced with supplementary planting, weed spraying, and a cut and collect was also undertaken. A number of packets of wildflower seed were also handed to members of the public showing interest in the Initiative at the NMWTRA stand at the Eisteddfod.

#### Road Verge Guidance – Work with Plantlife

Transport officials have been working with Plantlife, taking part in a UK-wide working group looking at improving road verge maintenance. Other group

members include Highways England, Transport Scotland, the Trunk Road Agents, local authority representatives, principal highways contractors and other stakeholders. The purpose of the working group was to produce comprehensive best practice guidance for those who manage road verges such as local authorities and others. This work has now concluded, with the guidance published and launched by Plantlife in September ( <https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign/management-guidelines> ).

#### Ash Dieback

A strategic plan has been developed jointly by Network Management Division, the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agents, and the South Wales Trunk Road Agent in accordance with the sustainable development principle (under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015), to assess and manage risks and impacts on the Strategic Road Network. Regular workshops are being held to facilitate this work.

#### Green Corridors (GC) and Wales Way Audit

An initial audit of the Coastal Way has been undertaken by Visit Wales and Network Management. The scope of criteria to include in the audit for GC followed the GC themes of place building and landscape improvements on the existing network, enhancing habitats and improving connectivity (resilience of ecosystems) and Action on Species and identification of appropriate maintenance. Further audits of the Cambrian and North Wales Way will also be undertaken.

#### Gateways

Additional bulb planting is being carried out by TRAs at gateway sites.

### **7. Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting is due to be held in April. Kathleen asked attendees if they wanted any particular topic to be included. Keith suggested inviting Plantlife to give a presentation on their meadow restoration in Conwy valley.

A site visit to N Wales ([Ffarm Moelyci, Tregarth, Gwynedd](#)) to see research into making of briquettes from grass cuttings was also suggested. Although this would mean people from south Wales would have additional travel expenses, it was felt that this may be beneficial for the Taskforce. A Doodle poll for dates and location options for a meeting in April will be circulated by Kathleen.