

Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership - 2017 Achievements

The Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership is a partnership of organisations and individual ecologists primarily concerned with the conservation of the county's species and habitats and the enhancement of the resilience of our natural environment. It is facilitated by the Council's Biodiversity Officer and has been established for almost 20 years.

The natural environment of Wales supports an amazing variety of wildlife. In Carmarthenshire the range of habitats, from coast to mountains and woodlands to meadows, all contribute to our experience of living here and also to economy of the county, the health and well-being of our citizens, the provision of food, clean water and air and to our local culture.

A healthy natural environment is a vital part of a sustainable, resilient and distinct Carmarthenshire. We know that some habitats and species are declining, habitat connectivity has reduced, and the condition of some habitats declined. This means that their capacity to provide ecosystem services and benefits may be at risk.

[State of Natural Resources Report](#) (SoNaRR) has been produced by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The report sets out the state of Wales' natural resources. It assesses the extent to which natural resources in Wales are being sustainably managed, and recommends a proactive approach to building resilience. The report links the resilience of Welsh natural resources to the well-being of the people of Wales and considers how pressures on Wales' natural resources are resulting in risks and threats to long-term social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being, as set out in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). The report looks at the key issues, as well as opportunities for integrated solutions that provide multiple benefits.

The work of the partners, and the projects they undertake, deliver outcomes that help to conserve and enhance our natural environment often delivering multiple benefits that improve the well-being of the people that live here. Their work contributes to objectives and outcomes of a number of national and local plans with goals for the natural environment. These include:

- The [Nature Recovery Action Plan](#) is the national biodiversity strategy and action plan for Wales working to reverse the decline in biodiversity in Wales and build the resilience of our ecosystems.
- [Carmarthenshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan](#)
- Carmarthenshire County Council's Well-being Objectives and the Carmarthenshire Public Service Board's Well-being Plan.

In addition [The Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) puts into place a process to plan and manage our natural resources. This includes a duty to require all public bodies, when carrying out their functions to seek to 'maintain and enhance biodiversity' where it is within the proper exercise of their functions and seek to 'promote the resilience of ecosystems'. The Council has prepared a Forward Plan to evidence how it will integrate this legislation into the delivery of its services.

Local Nature Partnerships are a key delivery mechanism that can help provide local focus and delivery of all these objectives.

Local people can make a difference as well and it is a role of all the partners to raise awareness and work with communities on projects that benefit biodiversity – and the people involved!

This is a summary of some of the achievements of the partners in 2017, often working together, to conserve and enhance Carmarthenshire's diverse range of habitats and species.



Clwb Adar Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire Bird Club



					WG Nature Recovery Plan Objective				
Partner/Update/Five ways of working					Engagement	Species and habitats	Resilience	Tackling key pressures	Evidence and monitoring
<p>The National Botanic Garden of Wales proactively conserves biodiversity on its estate and positively engages with visitors about actions they can take to conserve our native wildlife and plants. The Garden has carried out research on pollination, improving our understanding of the foraging habits of honey bees. This is linked to public activities such as a major science–art exhibition ‘Cross-pollination’, family activities and beekeeping demonstrations. The Garden has an active conservation volunteer group that carries out a wide-range of biodiversity tasks including wildlife monitoring and recording, seed collecting, and providing bilingual guided walks. Their night-time camera footage of badgers, foxes, otters and deer has received considerable social media coverage and provided confirmation of the movement habits and family dynamics of some of our more secretive creatures. The Garden’s biodiversity-themed events, such as Fungus Day and Wildflower Day provide public engagement for the widest possible audience. The floristic and fungal diversity of its Waun Las NNR hay meadows and pastures is developing successfully, a consequence of its biodiversity-focused and organic farming approach.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>Our coastal sand dunes help protect large low-lying areas from marine flooding. In addition, the dunes at Pembrey Burrows Local Nature Reserve are a nationally important stronghold for many invertebrates. Under threat from scrub encroachment, CCC has undertaken management of the dunes (in collaboration with Plantlife and NRW and assisted by a grant from WREN), which has meant that large areas of invasive sea buckthorn regrowth have been treated to prevent it from outcompeting the rare sand dune flora and fauna. Replacement fencing should ensure the long-term sustainability through grazing. The dunes provide a habitat for specialist pollinating bee, fly, beetle and moth species in the hot and dry conditions found in the dunes. Volunteer surveys have contributed significantly to confirming the presence of three key dune specialists including the rare strandline beetle for which log refugia have been placed on the beach to provide additional safe habitat. In addition the volunteer ranger found the rare dune tiger beetle. So, the scrub clearance seems to be benefiting biodiversity, but it will also help people enjoy the special character of the sand dunes by allowing greater access to this wild and windswept landscape.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>Plantlife continues to manage its grassland reserve near Cwmann, Lampeter. This site is a remnant of the flower-rich grassland once abundant in Wales. More than 160 flowering plant species have been recorded on the reserve. A number of volunteers helped carry out the annual plant survey and orchid count. Both butterfly-orchid species continue to do well with a total of 1530 greater butterfly-orchids and 792 lesser butterfly-orchids recorded. Plantlife also provide valuable support to the Carmarthenshire Meadows Group and organised two subsidised scything courses (supported by Welsh Government funding) on the reserve. This not only helps members better manage their meadows but as one participant commented it will help them ‘get fit as well!’</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					



					WG Nature Recovery Plan Objective				
					Engagement	Species and habitats	Resilience	Tackling key pressures	Evidence and monitoring
Partner/Update/Five ways of working									
<p>The Caeau Mynydd Mawr Project began in 2013 and is successfully mitigating the impacts of development on the protected marsh fritillary butterfly and the habitat that supports it in the Cross Hands area. Funded by developer contributions, the project is essential to the delivery of the Council's Local Development Plan, securing sufficient habitat to support the butterfly population in the area. The project was highly commended in recent Royal Town Planning Institute Planning awards. It provides management agreements to landowners in the area and funding for work that improves the habitat for the butterfly such as the reintroduction of stock to graze neglected sites, mowing rank areas of grassland and scrub management. Devil's bit scabious (the only larval food plant of the marsh fritillary) has also been planted in several sites and the project has assisted with the translocation of suitable habitat to two receptor sites. There are 22 sites in management, a total area of 125 ha, including 42 ha owned by the project. The project continues to seek opportunities to increase the area in management.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>The introduction and spread of invasive non-native species (INNS) is an increasing problem and they can be difficult and expensive to eradicate. The impacts of INNS on biodiversity and loss of ecosystem services (food, tourism and water provision) can be significant. Natural Resources Wales is collaborating with an international research project, Aquainvad-Ed, looking at the application of new environmental DNA technology for the early detection of selected freshwater invasive species. Some of this work has been centred around the ponds in the Millennium Coastal Park at Burry Port. Another NRW initiative Taclo'r Tywi aims to improve the health of the River Tywi catchment. Work this year has included liaison events with the agricultural sector, collaboration with DC/WW to reduce herbicide use in the catchment, and a partnership with Carmarthenshire Fisherman's Federation on Himalayan balsam mapping and control. Improving water quality is essential to support the river's biodiversity.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>In July, the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC) helped launch a new public access species database for Wales in Carmarthen - Aderyn. The 'What's in my area' module allows anyone to obtain a list of species which have been seen around their home. This will be useful for individuals, schools and community groups to find out more about the wildlife recorded nearby. The has been developed with record centres across Wales and holds over 10 million biological records, boosted in no small part this year by the addition of the Carmarthenshire county plant dataset of over half a million records received from Richard and Kath Pryce, our volunteer county plant recorders. WWBIC continues to support the growth of this significant evidence base and held biological recording days at sites in the county and organised wildlife identification training. WWBIC is represented on the steering group of Carmarthenshire Meadows Group, providing support for their events and continues to promote biological recording wherever opportunities arise.</p>					✓	✓			✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					



					WG Nature Recovery Plan Objective				
Partner/Update/Five ways of working					Engagement	Species and habitats	Resilience	Tackling key pressures	Evidence and monitoring
<p>Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are havens for wildlife and are open to all to experience the peace and quiet of the natural world. Carmarthenshire County Council, with support from Welsh Government funding, is managing its Local Nature Reserves as part of a commitment to conserve biodiversity and improve access to natural spaces for local people. These are great sites to manage with the help of volunteers and are sites where gentle exercise in a natural area can enhance physical and mental wellbeing. They are good sites to engage with school children to provide meaningful interactions in the natural world and enhance their connection to it. At Morfa Berwig LNR, the volunteer ranger has developed a project with Bynea School to help monitor bird boxes on site for key species and to record the breeding success of the birds. Meadow management is ongoing at Ynysdawela Nature Park, Mynydd Mawr Woodland Park and Morfa Berwig LNR, whilst new signs are also planned for the reserves.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>Whilst marsh fritillary butterfly continues to decline in NW Wales, evidence that Carmarthenshire has a significant resource of potential habitat is being demonstrated by Butterfly Conservation's (BC) continuing field survey work outside of the known major Mynydd Mawr metapopulation. In 2017, once again volunteers (with limited staff support) have put in significant survey effort, with follow up visits to sites identified in the 2016 study and several new sites for the butterfly have been found. Most are on smallholdings or sites outside of intensive agriculture. Volunteer-led work parties have taken place to help owners manage these. BC continues to advise and support the Caeau Mynydd Mawr Project. In its sixteenth year of brown hairstreak egg surveys, 20 regular sites are visited each year, plus another 20 or so new sites this year. Again most of the stronger populations are on smallholders' or community fields and BC carry out specialist management, which aims to keep populations intact, despite the butterfly's dramatic and continuing decline in modern agricultural regimes.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales manage 10 reserves within the county, six of which are designated for their importance for nature conservation. Due to the complexity of the site the Trust focuses a lot of its time on Carmel National Nature Reserve. In 2017 willow clearance has helped increase water levels and limit woodland encroachment. Hedge-laying has improved the potential for hedgerow species and increased connectivity. Many competitive species have been controlled optimising biodiversity, including clearing brambles from woodland glades and the quarry floor, scything and raking soft rush from the species-rich grassland, treating cotoneaster with herbicide on the limestone grassland, and rolling bracken on the heathy ridge. Much of this work was carried out with volunteers. The Trust has also carried out litter picks and fixed gates and fences. Conservation grazing has been carried out and a hay cut has been taken from the hay meadows as a crucial part of their restoration. Monitoring has included vegetation surveys of the grassland and regular dormouse checks.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					



					WG Nature Recovery Plan Objective				
Partner/Update/Five ways of working					Engagement	Species and habitats	Resilience	Tackling key pressures	Evidence and monitoring
<p>Coed Cymru officers from the Council's Conservation Section have been working with Western Power to help landowners affected by the Brechfa Forest Wind Farm Connection carry out small-scale landscape and ecological enhancements. Grants of up to £1500 have allowed landowners to restore hedgerows, plant orchard trees and put up barn owl boxes. Twenty of the 66 landowners directly affected by new poles on their land expressed an interest in the project and most have now agreed a programme of work for this winter. In 2018 the scheme will be expanded to offer a similar grant to anyone with land within 3 km of the powerline. The line runs from Brechfa Forest, near Alltwalis, follows the A485 south to cross the Tywi valley underground just east of Carmarthen, then continues south to terminate near Llandyfaelog.</p>					✓	✓	✓		
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>The Carmarthenshire Meadows Group now has over 70 members and has developed into a group largely run by its members. A range of organisations and local ecologists support the group, hosting site visits and providing talks and training for the members. This, along with the opportunity to get together and share experiences, is giving many small landowners in the county the confidence and knowledge to manage their meadows and contribute to the conservation and enhancement of this scarce habitat. Meadows are not only a habitat to a range of plants and wildlife but part of our cultural heritage, often with locally distinctive Welsh names. In addition semi-natural/unimproved grasslands store carbon and have high invertebrate abundance and diversity and may provide pollination and pest control services to adjacent more intensive agricultural areas. They also allow greater water infiltration rates and enhanced water storage (which should aid flood prevention).</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>Carmarthenshire County Council and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust have been working together and with a local contractor to create wetland features for water voles and other wildlife on council-owned land adjacent to WWT's reserve at Penclacwydd. The creation of ponds and scrapes here will extend and link existing available habitat for the important water vole population here and help to encourage the spread of water voles, increase the size of populations and enhance chance of colony survival against mink. They will also provide a refuge for water voles during flood conditions. This project is part of wider work in the area to work in partnership to improve habitat connectivity and look at opportunities for flood storage and alleviation. Elsewhere, to help water voles NRW undertook habitat improvements to improve ditch habitat at Ashburnam golf course and worked in partnership with the WTSWW, BASC and local landowners to monitor and control mink in the Pembrey area to safeguard the new water vole population at Ffrwd Farm nature reserve.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					



					WG Nature Recovery Plan Objective				
Partner/Update/Five ways of working					Engagement	Species and habitats	Resilience	Tackling key pressures	Evidence and monitoring
<p>A UK-wide initiative has been launched by the National Trust, which focuses on 'Land and Nature' (L&N). The Trust has set a number of UK-wide targets for Nature to help establish a strong and connected natural environment. In Carmarthenshire this has meant an increase the land directly managed by the NT at Dinefwr, allowing the restoration of 15-ha of hay meadow to support the growing White Park Cattle herd and the direct management over 121 ha of the park. At Dolaucothi the felling 10 ha of larch due to <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> has allowed NT to look at replanting with native oak over the next 2–3 years, bringing forward native woodland restoration plans here. As part of Land Condition Assessment work this year in Dolaucothi under the L&N programme a colony of marsh fritillary was discovered on a tenant's fields. This rhos pasture has always been considered as a High Nature Status area due to its flora, but the discovery of a new population marsh fritillaries there this year further highlights the importance of the site.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust continued management work this year, using innovative ways to maintain and enhance wetland habitats and improve conditions for important wetland species. Clearing trees in the Millennium Wetlands has reconnected existing reedbed areas into a larger contiguous area of wetland habitat. Collaboration with PONT has enabled grazing to be undertaken on previously inaccessible areas using Dexter cattle and Shetland sheep. The sheep were transported by boat on to an island one by one and with their help lapwing chicks fledged from the island for the first time in 8 years! A floating pontoon has enabled a tractor to be driven on to the island to mulch stumps and rush to further open up the habitat. After this successful grazing trial WWT are hoping for a larger flock of sheep next year, and for more lapwings! New steep banksides have been provided for kingfishers and dredged ponds and ditches will help water voles in the Millennium Wetlands. As well as helping wildlife this work will improve visitors' enjoyment of the site as well.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					
<p>The Mid Wales Red Squirrel Project now employs a part-time Red Squirrel Officer and Grey Squirrel Control Officer. The project has been working with forest managers to produce a 5-year Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for conifer plantations in and around the Tywi Forest. In the recent past, red squirrels have suffered from loss of key food species and habitat continuity, caused by inappropriate clear-felling. Now forest managers have tweaked some of their plans in the interests of red squirrels. It is intended to update the plan at 5-year intervals, helping to ensure that the Tywi Forest has red squirrel conservation as one of its major objectives for future forest management. The Project could not operate without the input of volunteers, who during the past year have contributed over 2700 hours. Over 75 volunteers with diverse skills have been engaged in various ways such as GIS mapping for the HMP, project promotion, grey squirrel control, Trap Loan Scheme coordination, red squirrel monitoring, and feeder box construction.</p>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement					

