



## Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership Newsletter

Spring 2024

### LNP Supporting and Networking

Since the relaunch of the Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) last summer, we have been working to support a range of projects and groups across the county making a difference for nature.

We have continued to respond to applications for Keep Wales Tidy's local places for nature package schemes and welcome these small projects at schools and community hubs which can make a huge difference to small spaces.

[Greener Primary Care Wales](#) is an award scheme designed to support primary care services such as GP surgeries, dentists, and opticians with reducing their environmental impact and improve their sites for biodiversity. There are several practices signed up to the scheme in Monmouthshire and the LNP have been supporting them with advice and ideas for improvements they can make to achieve the goals of the scheme. We have visited two sites in Abergavenny and suggested potential biodiversity enhancements for the practices such as installation of bird and bat boxes, creation of bug hotels, as well as suggested native planting of wildflowers and trees to encourage pollinators where the space allows.

If you have an idea for a project or are a community group looking for some support or advice around biodiversity, please get in touch at [localnature@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:localnature@monmouthshire.gov.uk)



Wildflower meadow at Severn Crescent, Chepstow



In Monmouth, the 'Friends of Monmouth Cemetery' group has been relaunched by a group of keen local volunteers. The group will be working to improve biodiversity at the site and tidy up some of the graves to allow more people to visit safely. Alongside the MCC cemeteries officer, grounds team and the LNP, a management plan will be developed for the site so that the Friends can coordinate and maximise their actions to improve the site for wildlife and for wellbeing. First steps will be to establish the meadow areas around the older sections of the cemetery and manage some sprawling sections of bramble. Future actions could include tree and hedgerow planting and creation of habitat piles for invertebrates and wildlife. There have been previous records of glow worm on one of the grass banks here, so hopefully improving meadow management will also enhance the area for glow worms too and they will be spotted more frequently over the summer months.



Monmouth Cemetery



## Local Places for Nature

Monmouthshire County Council has been awarded Welsh Government Local Places for Nature Funding to deliver 'Nature on the Doorstep' of residents and visitors. For 2023/24 the Green Infrastructure Team have been focussing on delivery in Abergavenny with a study to identify sites and opportunities for enhancements for nature and people to create Community Nature Spaces. A thorough public consultation was undertaken, including webpage, flyers for residents, press releases, pop up events, and engagement with stakeholders; both within MCC and outside, including the Town Council, local community groups and Abergavenny residents. The sites that are currently being delivered are Lower Monk Street Verge, Major's Barn play area, St Helen's Close play area, green spaces at Dan y Deri, the Bus Station and Croesonen Parc.

Alongside the Community Nature Spaces project, MCC was awarded funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund, via the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, to continue developing 'The Green Corridor Green Infrastructure Project' which covers Monmouthshire's main settlements. The aim of the project is to identify small to medium green spaces for biodiversity enhancement, located within mapped 'Green Corridors' which criss-cross our urban settlements. Not only will they act as 'stepping stones' for wildlife travelling through to the larger landscapes (on the edges of our settlements), but they will increase the ecological resilience of these Green Corridors and enhance community well-being.

The Local Places for Nature funding has funded implementation of some of the projects: Old Hereford Road (Abergavenny), Redwick Rd Park and Newport Rd verges (Magor), Hendre Close/Rockfield Avenue & Watery Lane/Rolls Avenue (Monmouth), Rogiet Playing Fields, Starling Close (Rogiet) and Rogiet Station Rd verges and roundabout.

Both projects are providing 'nature on the doorstep' for residents and visitors, as well as increasing the ecological resilience of green corridors across our settlements maximising outcomes for biodiversity and community well-being.

The MCC north and south grounds teams have been working hard over the last two months preparing the ground, planting and seeding to start bringing the spaces to life. In total the Community Nature Spaces project will plant 286 hedgerow whips, 11 specimen trees, 12 heritage variety orchard trees, 540 wildflower plugs and 85 decorative bedding plants. The Green Corridors project will plant 3963 hedgerow whips, 222 shrubs, 126 specimen trees, 39 heritage variety orchard trees, 50 decorative bedding plants and 4245 spring bulbs. In addition, a total of 1290m<sup>2</sup> of wildflower turf will be installed and 13.2 kg of native wildflower seed will be sown across the sites. Wildlife boxes for bats, birds and invertebrates as well as benches and community food growing planters are also being added to some of the spaces. We are also installing 3 benches for the community to enjoy access to the increased biodiversity on their doorstep.

Over the last few weeks, we have been joined by school groups and local residents to help with the planting and seeding activities, creating a great opportunity for local people to get hands on with their local spaces. They have helped with planting a community orchard at Park Close in



Abergavenny, planting trees and hedgerows at Redwick Road Recreation Park in Magor and sowing wildflower seed at Rogiet Playing Field.

Funding continues into the next financial year; we will be looking at sites across the county to enhance for wildlife and local communities via both Community Nature Spaces and Green Corridors projects.



Tree planting at Rogiet playing fields



## Community Planting

As mentioned above we have been joined by local residents and school groups to help with planting and seeding activities at the Community Nature Spaces and Green Corridors sites, the photos below show the great work!



The MCC grounds team helping with tree planting at Redwick Road Recreation space, Magor



Rogiet primary school students sowing wildflower seed at Rogiet playing fields



Students from Cantref primary school helping to plant wildflowers at Park Close, Abergavenny



Students from Pembroke primary school helping plant wildflowers at Strongbow Road, Chepstow

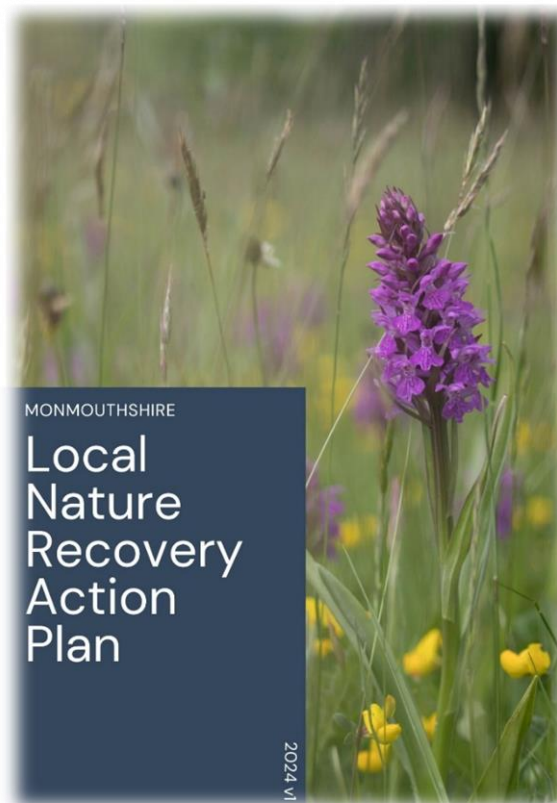


## Monmouthshire Local NRAP

The first draft of Part 1 of the Monmouthshire Local NRAP was sent to LNP members for feedback in February 2024. Thank you to those who provided valuable feedback. We have made some changes based on that feedback and the final draft is ready for MCC cabinet approval and public consultation. The NRAP forms part of the MCC Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy which is also in the process of seeking MCC cabinet approval. The Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy has four interrelated pillars of action including Council Emissions, Nature Recovery, Rivers and Ocean and Communities and Climate. Nature Recovery includes the MCC Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience (Section 6) Action Plan, The NRAP and the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

We would like to set up a working group of LNP members to be responsible for reviewing action plans before they are published and undertake an annual review of actions for monitoring and reporting. Please email [localnature@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:localnature@monmouthshire.gov.uk) if you are interested in being part of the group.

We would also like to include case studies of nature recovery projects undertaken by LNP members, if there is anything you would like to share please get in touch.





## Feature Article – The Gwent Nest Box Project – *Paul Greenfield*

In 2009 a group of keen birders got together with a representative from the BTO to form what is now known as the Gwent Nest Box Project. Their aim was to provide nesting sites for hole nesting birds, particularly in areas where natural holes were limited, and to monitor nesting activity according to the methodology of the BTO's Nest Record Scheme. Around one hundred nest boxes were built and put up in six areas run by the Gwent Wildlife Trust.

The boxes were monitored weekly during the nesting season and records were submitted to the BTO. Nest recording is an excellent way for our volunteers to get a real feel for what is happening to the bird populations in their area, and to contribute to the BTO's national database. Our monitors are of all ages and backgrounds with a common interest in birds and the natural environment. The Gwent project has grown over the years. We now have around fifty monitors checking over 750 nest boxes at thirty locations across the county: from cemeteries in the northwest to a nature reserve in the northeast, to hospital grounds in the southeast, to an urban location in Newport in the southwest. When we started, our records were submitted on Excel spreadsheets, but today, with around six thousand records generated per season, they are entered directly onto DemographyOnline. We also send copies of our results to the landowners and make them available to SEWBREC.



Female pied flycatcher at a nestbox

A current focus in the project is on the county's pied flycatcher population. There are probably a number of factors affecting the populations of our nesting birds; habitat loss and climate change being two that immediately spring to mind. Over the years, nesting pied flycatchers have been monitored on nine of our rounds, but now we only find them on three or four rounds. On the positive side, the number of nests has remained steady, although they are now more concentrated in the north of the county. This is in line with published national data. The valuable information collected by our monitors over the last fifteen years is allowing us to identify population trends and can also help influence land management strategies. We have now started to ring some of the young which will hopefully add to our knowledge in future years.





To provide additional support when migratory birds arrive back from Africa in April, we aim to provide sufficient boxes so that there is a surplus, over and above the needs of the resident bird population. This year we are trialling blocking the entrances of some boxes which have had successful nests in previous years, until the first pied flycatchers arrive on site. We have also set up a new nest box round above Abergavenny, in deciduous woodland managed by the National Trust. It has a clear understory and we're hoping that pied flycatchers are nesting in the area and will be tempted into our boxes. As I write, five pairs of pied flycatchers have been spotted in the area. It still gives me quite a thrill to find the first wisps of grass in the bottom of a box and a week later to see a clutch of bright blue eggs.

For next season we will continue to identify suitable nesting locations for these birds and hope to contribute to woodland management strategies which can support them.



One of the woodland survey sites



## Celebrating and Supporting Eco Action in Schools

An online survey created to gather information on schools' current actions and activities towards environmental causes has been sent out to primary schools across Monmouthshire in February. We have had a good number of responses so far and will encourage more schools to complete the survey so we can have a full picture of what is happening in schools and how the LNP can support them.

As a thank you to schools for sharing their responses, we are working with the Gwent Green Grid team to offer a free eco themed workshop to schools who complete the survey. This also gives us an opportunity to visit school grounds and see the great work they have been doing with creating wildflower meadows, outdoor learning areas and growing spaces for food which can be used for school meals for the children.

Using the responses from the survey, we are identifying schools that currently don't use the MCC team for their school grounds maintenance. The MCC grounds maintenance teams can offer a wide range of support as well as looking after the schools' green spaces, including providing workshops and activities, and advice on tree care and dealing with complaints. We will be looking at creating guidance documents for headteachers to show what the grounds teams can do to support biodiversity improvements within school grounds.

A staff network within MCC has created, bringing together staff who regularly work with school groups on environmental themes such as climate, biodiversity, litter and pollution. The new network allows staff to share their upcoming workshops and with which schools, so that any schools who are less engaged can be contacted and supported if needed. The network also creates an opportunity for knowledge sharing and identifying common successes and problems.

Moving forwards a teacher network will be set up in order to share opportunities and experiences within schools and for MCC staff to provide support where needed.





## News from Partners

### Monmouthshire Meadows Group – *Steph Tyler*

Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio* is a nationally threatened species occurring in old hay meadows and agriculturally unimproved pastures. In 2012 we showed that there were 20 extant sites for the species in the vice-county of Monmouthshire, centered on the Trellech Plateau especially around Penallt and Trellech with an outlier on the slip road to Usk from the A40.

By 2023 some 16 new sites had been found. Moreover, at one old site at MoD Caerwent where no flowers were found in 2012, the species was seen in 2016. The new sites are mainly meadows owned by members of MMG where with sympathetic management the landowners had been pleased to discover one or more Green-winged Orchids on their land. Hopefully, numbers will multiply in the future as happened at one site where a few flowers were first recorded in 2009 and by 2012 numbered several hundred. One of the new sites was outside Monmouthshire in Torfaen – at Blaenserchan.

Few sites though support thousands – only the Gwent Wildlife Trust Reserves at New Grove, at Pentwyn/Bush Farms at Penallt and at Brockwells near Caerwent, and at a private site on Cobblers Plain. However, with the right management and the right mycorrhizal fungi the future looks encouraging for the species in Monmouthshire.



Green winged orchids found in Monmouthshire, photos by David Llewellyn and Maggie Hamlen



## The Grange Project – *Tom Constable*

The Grange Project, an 80 acre nature recovery project between Monmouth and Abergavenny, hosted its first 'Community Day' on the 16th of March, 2024. Over thirty volunteers were welcomed to the project and got involved in a range of interventions including:

- Removing internal fences - to allow wildlife to travel more freely and increase the feeling of 'wilderness' across the site.
- Creating three brush piles - both as a protection for the saplings planted and to create a wildlife habitat.
- Planting over 350 native trees to kickstart seed distribution into the centre of the fields.

We also ate a lot of cake! The atmosphere on the day was full of shared purpose, enthusiasm and joy, and we're so grateful to all the volunteers who gave up their time to come and support us. We're already looking forward to the next one (although we may need a little time to recover!) This quote from the day encapsulates our experience well:

'Absolutely love it. It was just so nice to be surrounded by so many people who see what the necessary thing to do is and who are willing to get stuck in... what a wholesome day!' – Feedback from the Grange Project Community Day 1 (Spring 2024).





## Social Media

If you don't already, please do follow us on Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram, where we will share updates and stories of nature activities and opportunities across Monmouthshire.

[Facebook – Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership](#)

[X – Mon LNP](#)

[Instagram – Monmouthshire Inp](#)





## News and Events from Elsewhere

**WORLD CURLEW DAY** - 21<sup>st</sup> April – Details on their [Facebook page](#)

**USK RIVER FESTIVAL** – 1<sup>st</sup> June – Usk Island, Llanbadoc, Usk NP15 1SZ - [River Usk Festival | Gwent Wildlife Trust](#)

**GO WILD** –29<sup>th</sup> June - Pontypool Park - Blaenau Gwent & Torfaen Local Nature Partnership – Further details will be released soon.

**GREENER ABERGAVENNY** – 20<sup>th</sup> October – Abergavenny Market Hall – Details on their [Facebook page](#)

## Funding Opportunities



### Keep Wales Tidy

Keep Wales Tidy is offering Local Places for Nature packages to transform unloved spaces into nature gardens or community food growing spaces.

The pre-paid packages range from small gardening projects to orchards and large-scale makeovers. Each one includes native plants, tools and other materials.

Full details can be found at their website here:

[Local Places for Nature - Keep Wales Tidy](#)

### Save Our Wild Isles Community Fund

Aviva, in partnership with WWF and the RSPB, is giving £1 million to support community groups across the UK to protect and restore nature in their local area.

Read more and apply [here](#)

### Naturesave Trust Grant Funding

The Naturesave Trust funds environmental and conservation projects focusing on small projects for charities, social enterprises and grassroots community organisations. The areas of funding include **nature conservation, sustainable communities and renewable Energy.**

Applications from charities, non-profits, businesses, organisations, community groups and individuals are welcome for grants between £2,500 - £5,000.

Read more and apply [here](#)

**Monmouthshire Local  
Nature Partnership**



**Partneriaeth Natur  
Lleol Sir Fynwy**

### Coetiroedd Bach: Tiny Forests in Wales

A grant scheme intended to create Tiny Forests, as part of the Welsh Government's National Forest.  
Find out more and apply [here](#)

### Woodland Trust Free trees for schools and communities

[Link](#)



## Next Meeting

The next LNP meeting will be held in person during Wales Nature Week, 29<sup>th</sup> June – 6<sup>th</sup> July. Further details of confirmed date, location and agenda will be sent out following this newsletter.



Oaklands Community Nature Space, Monmouth