



## Newsletter Autumn 2024



*Autumn in Wentwood*

### Welcome

Welcome to the new look newsletter for Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership. Most of you will already know that Catherine Hunter left Monmouthshire County Council earlier this year to return to ecological consultancy. Catherine was a key part of our team; coordinating LNP efforts, delivering Local Places for Nature and starting an eco-schools' network for MCC staff and Keep Wales Tidy. We wish her well in her future career. We hope that Local Nature Partnership funding will be confirmed in the next few weeks to allow us to recruit a similar role in the meantime, Jane Clarke GI Project officer has been helping us with community engagement.

*Kate and Sali*

### Contents:

- Page 2: Celebration of Nature and Sustainable Food Event
- Page 3: Monmouthshire Local NRAP
- Page 4: Mill Common Restoration Project
- Page 5: Feature Article; Beyond the Seawall
- Page 7: Gwent Green Grid  
BioTapestry
- Page 8: River Gavenny Partnership
- Page 9: News and Events





## Celebration of Nature and Sustainable Food Event

*Kate Stinchcombe, MCC Nature Recovery and Land Use Manager*

On Friday, 27 September, Monmouthshire County Council hosted a celebration at County Hall, Usk, highlighting its work in nature and sustainable food.

The event brought together practitioners of nature recovery and local food production to showcase their work and foster future collaborations.

As part of the celebration, students from classes 3 and 4 at Usk Church in Wales Primary School participated in pollinator-based activities and performed their Pollinator song.

In opening the event, Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby, Leader of Monmouthshire County Council, emphasised the council's commitment to eco-friendly initiatives: "As a council, we are diligently working with partners from sustainable land management and the local food economy to mitigate the impact of climate change here in Monmouthshire."

Throughout the day, guests were treated to a series of engaging talks by Sam Bosanquet, Dan Smith, Derrick Jones, and Damon Rees. In addition, guests were given the unique opportunity to be involved in creating the Monmouthshire panel of the Bio-tapestry being created by the Gwent Green Grid (see Page 8), further highlighting the collaborative spirit of the event.

We would like to extend a big thank you to all members of the LNP who were involved in the day.



*Photos of the Celebration of Nature and Sustainable Food Event*





## Monmouthshire Local NRAP

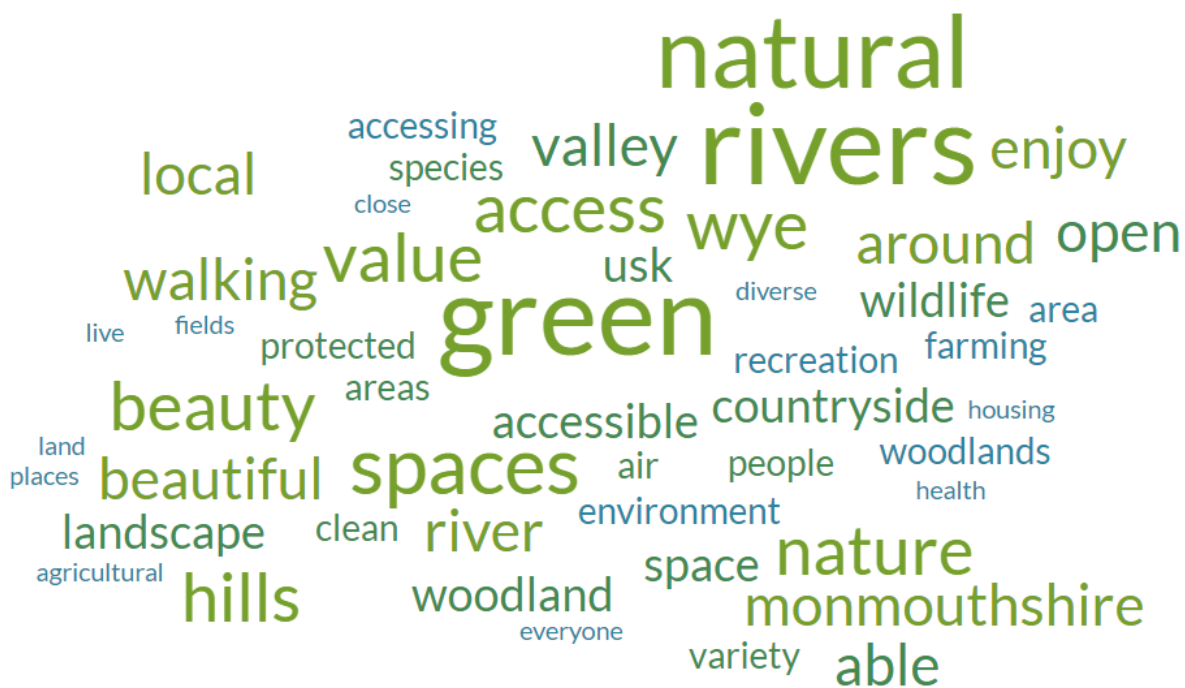
*Sali Palmer, MCC Biodiversity Officer*

At the Usk Show on 14th September, MCC launched a consultation on the Local NRAP and Green Infrastructure Strategy which ran until the end of October. LNP Chair Sorrel Jones supported MCC Staff to speak to over 40 members of the public who completed questionnaires about what nature and the environment means to them and what they think the Local Nature Partnership should be prioritising. Thank you Sorrel for all your hard work on the day!

The main consultation was both online and promoted in local libraries and hubs, where hard copies of the surveys were available. In total 53 people responded to the main consultation including 17 people providing feedback on the Local NRAP specifically. We will be providing a breakdown of the consultation responses and publishing the final Local NRAP Part 1 Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy soon.

The next step of the Local NRAP process will be producing Habitat and Species Action Plans, we would still like to hear from any members that are interested in being involved with this, either by producing plans or members of a Task and Finish Group. Please get in touch via the usual channels.

*Word cloud of responses to "What do you value most about the natural environment and landscape of Monmouthshire?"*





## Mill Common Restoration

*Elliot Waters, GGG Nature isn't Neat Officer*

Mill Common, a cherished woodland in the heart of Magor and Undy, is set to undergo a transformative restoration project aimed at enhancing its ecological health, accessibility, and community value. This initiative, supported by The Woodland Investment Grant (TWIG) administered by the National Heritage Lottery Fund on behalf of Welsh Government, will serve as a flagship site for the National Forest for Wales and promises to rejuvenate this vital green space for future generations.

Mill Common serves as a crucial green corridor for the local community. However, it faces significant challenges, including extensive ash dieback, overcrowded veteran trees, and degraded paths and steps.



*Mill Common, Autumn 2024*

Monmouthshire County Council will undertake woodland management to remove diseased ash trees and thin dense tree stands which are overcrowding the canopy and preventing sunlight reaching the understory. Following tree removal some areas will be allowed to regenerate naturally and others will be replanted with native species.

Several and veteran trees, which have stood on the site for over 100 years will be protected by sensitive arboreal management. We will help protect the areas around veteran trees and regenerating vegetation by dead hedging around them to protect them from the negative effects of high footfall and compaction. The main pathway and steps through the site will be resurfaced for better accessibility for walkers and a safer route to school for local children. New benches, signage, and a sculpture trail designed by the local community, will bring the woods to life.

The plans have been formulated with public consultation to gather feedback from residents through an online survey and in-person sessions. The goal was to understand how people use Mill Common, their concerns about its current state, and their support for the proposed restoration efforts. It was clear that Mill Common is a well-used and important site for local residents. The next phase of the project will begin with tree work in the new year. Monmouthshire County Council will provide updates as the project progresses, ensuring residents are kept fully to date. Community involvement remains a cornerstone of this initiative, with numerous volunteering opportunities available, please get in touch if you would like to get involved.





## Feature Article - Beyond the Sea Wall Project

*Sam Willmore, Living Levels Partnership*

This year, one of our key initiatives has been Beyond the Sea Wall, an exciting citizen science project delivered in collaboration with Gwent Wildlife Trust. Funded by the Welsh Government's Local Places for Nature: Marine and Coastal Capacity Scheme and administered by WCVA, the project aims to highlight the importance of the intertidal zone of Môr Hafren (Severn Estuary and the Bristol Channel) - a vital and dynamic habitat that plays a crucial role in coastal defence and combating climate change.

Even though it's surrounded by cities and large towns, the Severn Estuary retains a sense of wilderness and remoteness. Twice a day, as the tide ebbs, the muddy waters of the estuary drain away to reveal around 100 sq km of intertidal habitat, a complex mosaic of saltmarsh, mudflats, sandbanks and rocky foreshore.

This unique environment supports a rich variety of species, many which are specially adapted to survive in the fluctuating temperature and salinity conditions. The Severn Estuary is recognised internationally for its importance for wetlands bird species, supporting an average of 80,000 wintering birds each year. Despite its significance and ecological importance, the lands beyond the sea wall remain largely underappreciated and unexplored. Many of us have lost touch with the estuarine landscape that lies right at our doorstep.

The aim of the Beyond the Sea wall project is to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Severn Estuary's vast intertidal zone that borders the Gwent Levels. With the help of naturalist Ed Drewitt, we hosted a series of workshops that taught the importance of this unique environment and the incredible biodiversity it supports.



*GWT Youth Group*



*Investigating the intertidal zone*





Equipping participants with the knowledge to identify intertidal species and the skills to survey the habitat themselves.

Wildlife surveying and citizen science plays an essential role in improving our understanding of the current state of nature. Information gathered from surveying offers an insight on how wildlife populations and distributions are changing in response to climate change and habitat loss. The strong turnout of local nature enthusiasts and participation from Gwent Wildlife Trust's youth group highlight the growing interest and willingness to learn about the environment. We're hopeful that the workshops have inspired more people to get involved in wildlife recording across the Gwent Levels.

Interested in learning more about Môr Hafren or want to get involved in citizen science? To help you dive deeper, we have developed a comprehensive resource pack which includes information of the history of the landscape, key habitats and species and a guide to wildlife recording. The booklet is available to download for our website by following the link below

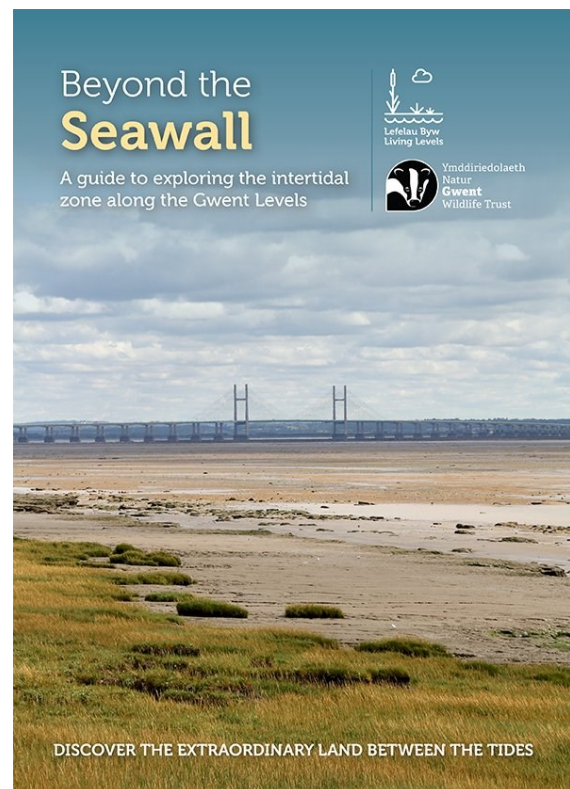


*Saltmarsh from the Newport Wetlands*



*English Scurvy Grass*

## Beyond the Seawall Resources



*Beyond the Seawall Guide*



## Gwent Green Grid BioTapestry

*Colette Mooney, GGG Climate and Nature Recovery Officer*

### Calling all crafters, artists, knitters, sewers, beginners, experts, everyone!

People have always celebrated wildlife that is important to them through art and that's the focus for the GGGP's creation of the Greater Gwent (GG) BioTapestry. It's not a traditional tapestry, rather a multimedia piece which celebrates Biodiversity - the Tapestry of Life which sustains us all. The GG BioTapestry will celebrate the region's connected and amazing Biodiversity.

Once completed it will be 70m long, consisting of 20 panels, depicting iconic species found in the woodland, aquatic, grassland and urban habitats of each county.

In creating it, contributors will be able discover all about our incredible ecosystems and the species living in these fascinating habitats.

Visitors to the Usk Show and Greener Abergavenny were the first to contribute their craft skills. They created hawthorn leaves for Monmouthshire's urban panel, which features cheeky sparrows, transforming the design into stunning reality!

Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment, Cllr Catrin Maby, said: "The Gwent Green Grid Partnership invites everyone to become a part of our shared story; through art, we can celebrate and protect the extraordinary biodiversity of our region."

So if you or your group would like to contribute and be part of the picture, please get in touch now with [colettemooney@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:colettemooney@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

Find out more about the [Gwent Green Grid](#)



*Making leaves*



*Monmouthshire's urban panel underway*





## River Gavenny Partnership

*Jane Clarke, MCC Green Infrastructure Project Officer*

The River Gavenny Partnership was relaunched in July 2024, with a workshop for key river stakeholders, to identify current and planned river restoration activities, and identify priorities for future river restoration. A community engagement plan has been drafted for phased river restoration using feedback from this workshop, and will include volunteer, learning, and training opportunities connected to the River Gavenny. The project aims to highlight the importance of the River Gavenny for biodiversity, climate change adaptation, and community wellbeing in Abergavenny.

To kickstart river restoration activities, a litter pick on 15<sup>th</sup> November was jointly organised by MCC Green Infrastructure and Waste teams, in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy, Groundwork Wales' Healthy Rivers team, and supported by Abergavenny Town Council, Llantilio Pertholey Community Council and local community members.

Ten people joined in the litter pick from Swan Meadows up to the top of Gavenny Meadows. In preparing for the event, we saw two Dippers from the wooden bridge below Pen-y-Fal cemetery, and a grey wagtail decided to join us on the day. Miscellaneous items fished out from the river bank or on surrounding green space included: parts of a doll, a dressing gown, tent poles, a plastic chair, a trainer, paperback books, broken glass, and half burnt book pages from the recent Abergavenny Town Fire. Groundwork Wales also tried out some new equipment with a magnet on the end of a rope, and pulled out a metal pipe from the river.

We hope to be able to return in the summer when the water flows are less powerful and water levels lower, to remove several supermarket trolleys instream. We are also looking into the removal of Himalayan Balsam along the River Gavenny with Partners.



*River Gavenny Litter Pick*



*Team work makes the dream work*







## News and Events

### Protection of Trees and Woodlands

Welsh Government have launched a consultation on proposed changes to the law protecting trees and woodlands in Wales, and seeks views of stakeholders on the principles underlying the new Planning (Tree Preservation) (Wales) Regulations. Further details can be found on the [consultation webpage](#). The consultation closes 14th February 2025

### Nature's Calendar

- 29th Dec 2024 to 1 Jan 2025 [New Years Plant Hunt](#)
- [PondNet Spawn Survey 2025](#) will launch in December
- [The Big Garden Bird Watch](#) will take place between 24-26th January 2025
- The [Big Schools' Bird Watch](#) will take place between 7th January and 14th February
- [World Wetlands Day](#) 2025 is on February 2nd; the theme is Protecting wetlands for our common future
- The [Big Farmland Bird Count](#) takes place between 7th-23rd February

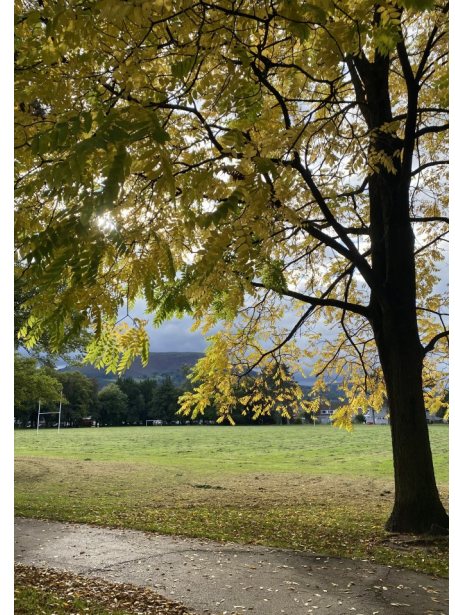
**If you have any news, stories or photographs you would like to include in the next LNP newsletter please get in touch**

### Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be an Teams meeting in January 2025. If you would like to talk about your project at the meeting please contact us.

*If you would like to learn more, or get involved with any of the projects in the newsletter, please email us :*

[LocalNature@Monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:LocalNature@Monmouthshire.gov.uk)



*A tree in Abergavenny's  
Bailey Park*

### Social Media Links

