

Issue No. 53

November 2018

Annual General Meeting The AGM will be held on Tuesday, 27 November 2018 at 7:30 pm in St Paul's Methodist Centre. Following the AGM there will be a talk entitled *On the Right Path – Managing Public Access?* given by our guest speaker Eifion Jones, Public Rights of Way Officer for Ceredigion County Council. All are welcome to attend. If you have views about your local nature reserve and community woodland, this is an opportunity to have your say.

Changes to the PNP Support Group Committee

The Support Group lost its long-serving Chairman with the death of David Adamson in May. David had been one of the founding members and only the second chair, a post he had accepted rather reluctantly. Nevertheless, his experience and sound advice were valued by the Group. The Committee stood in silence at the Viewpoint during its spring outdoor meeting as a mark of remembrance for all that David had done for the Parc. A new Chair will be elected at the AGM.

During the year resignations were received from Judy Johnston and David Kirby, both of whom have been very active members of the Committee. However, we have also welcomed two new members; Andrew Mitchell was elected at the 2017 AGM and Paul Evans (Grounds Manager, Aberystwyth University) was co-opted on to the committee in January.

Project Funding During the year £1,090 was received from Aberystwyth Town Council to improve the link from the main path to the Viewpoint. The work was arranged to be carried out in November by students from Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers (ACV) under the supervision of Peter Drake.

PNP Management Plan, 2018 – 2023 Preparation of the fourth management plan for the Parc is to be completed by the end of November. The main changes from the previous plan are an updating of the description of the legislation affecting the Parc and Local Nature Reserve within the Ceredigion Local Development Plan and incorporation of the new extension to Brynymor Road into the document. Designation of the extension as part of the Local Nature Reserve still needs to be formally completed and approved by Natural Resources Wales.

The broad management objectives for the Parc remain unchanged, namely 'to provide recreational use while safeguarding conservation and landscape quality'. The Local Nature Reserve is described as being in generally good condition while at the same time there is potential for improving structural

PARC NATUR PENGLAIS SUPPORT GROUP

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, 27 November 2018, 7:30 pm
St Paul's Methodist Centre,
Queens Road

Followed by a talk
**'On the Right Path –
Managing Public Access?'**

by
Eifion Jones
Ceredigion County Council

All Welcome

diversity through the ongoing encouragement of natural regeneration and thinning or coppicing in some parts of the woodland. Management will also seek to restore more of the open scree within the upper quarry area by controlling the encroachment of woodland scrub and the spread of gorse. This will have the additional benefit of creating fire-breaks. Management of the extension will aim to maintain the more open areas of grass and bracken habitat but will also take account of the wildlife value of the existing areas of scrub.

PNP Jubilee Walk Over 45 people joined the Jubilee walk and talk on 15 April 2018 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Parc. The walk was organised and led by David Kirby who stopped at various points along the route to speak about the history and features of PNP.

The first stop was at the site of the old Penglais Cottage at the top of the new steps from Coopers Corner and the group then progressed along the main path with further stops at the Beech Glade and at the Well. We then turned back to the quarry and



Participants listen to a presentation by David Kirby at the start of the Jubilee Walk in April. (Photo Paul Evans)

through the new Parc extension to finish near the Brynymor Road exit where the then Mayor of Aberystwyth, Cllr Steve Davies, planted a horse chestnut tree and Ceredigion MP, Ben Lake, unveiled a new information board.

Autumn Tree Planting Earlier this year two generous donations were made to the PNP Support Group to plant trees in the Parc in memory of people with links to the town.

The late Professor David Bateman had walked through PNP to and from his work at the University on most days and he had been an active volunteer on many of the workdays set up to care for the Parc over the years. The family had requested that donations made in his memory should be given to the PNP Support Group.

A second donation came from a lady in Yorkshire, whose mother Mrs Mair Whitby (née Williams) had been born in Aberystwyth and had died earlier this year aged 96 years. Though Mair had left the town as a small child her daughter valued memories of walks through our bluebell wood on return visits.

Before deciding what to do with these bequests, the Support Group consulted a number of local experts. The consensus was that as the Parc was not just a local nature reserve but also a community woodland to be enjoyed by all, there was scope for planting a few examples of species such as sessile oak and Scots pine. The plan devised after a site visit in September was to plant a number of standard trees in gaps close to the main path. In addition, three or four places were identified where sycamore saplings have grown up and were tending to dominate: these would be

cut down to create further small clearings. A number of standard trees will be planted in the spaces that have been cleared, together with groups of smaller fruiting trees like hazel, rowan, crab apple and hawthorn. The planting will take place on a workday in late November.

Work Days and Maintenance In December 2017 on the final workday of the year, students from ACV and Support Group members, under the supervision of Paul Evans (Ceredigion County Council), cut back brambles from alongside the path between the Beech Glade and Principal's Gate and then in January cleared growth from around the saplings that had been planted between the Well and Beech Glade in 2012. The guards are being removed from these trees this autumn/winter.



The recently completed flight of steps on the path up to the Viewpoint. (Photo David Kirby)

On a workday in February, students from ACV, members of the Support Group and local residents repaired the steps and coppiced holly at the top of Cae Melyn. Further work was carried out on these steps in October. In June Peter Drake constructed a bench on the knoll above the Viewpoint, replacing the Mathur bench that had decayed to the point where it was no longer usable.

The students from ACV were again busy in October and November under the supervision of Paul Evans (CCC) and Peter Drake removing sycamore saplings to create small clearings ready for the tree planting later in November, as described in the previous item. Peter also supervised work by ACV and others in November on a project funded by Aberystwyth Town Council to construct steps to improve the link from the main path to the Viewpoint.

These steps largely complete the improvements that have been planned for the main routes

through the Parc. Steep slopes mean that steps are needed in some parts of the Parc but there should now be little need for any additional ones. This should please those who feel that steps detract from the natural appearance of the woodland and also please the less able-bodied, to whom steps can sometimes be a hindrance.

Beech Glade Regeneration In 2010 work was carried out with funding from Environment Wales to improve the condition of the ground in an area on the NE edge of the Beech Glade where excessive treading over the years had compacted the soil and destroyed most of the vegetation. A rope was hung around the perimeter of the restored area along with explanatory notices requesting that people did not walk there while it recovered.

These measures have allowed a gradual improvement to take place and it is now thought that there has been sufficient regeneration for the rope to be removed, with the hope that the vegetation that has re-established will be enough to discourage visitors to the Parc from trampling through the area.

Previous Plantings The two trees, a wych elm and a small-leaved lime, that were planted near the main path in October 2016 are growing well. These were donated by the parents of Lizzie Tyson, a recent student at the university, to mark her happy associations with Aberystwyth, including time spent working with ACV in the Parc.

Bird Nest Box Records A team of four has continued to monitor the 28 bird boxes in the Parc. Moira Convery has produced the following summary of results for this year:

“We were all aware that it was not a very good year, starting so late after the very wet spring. Great Tits were particularly hard hit. I had one where the adult sat for a month but I never saw anything to show for it. Four others had broods and fledged only 15 young between them; an average of under four per nest. My guide book says there are usually 8 to 13 per nest.

We had 14 Blue Tits who fledged 87 chicks, averaging 6.2 per nest. The guide suggests 7 to 12 so this is not quite so bad. Blue Tits usually nest a bit later than the Great Tits so the females might have had a bit longer to regain condition. It was good to see one nest which fledged 10 young and there were also two with 8. We cannot always know how many eggs were laid but I noticed a number of records showing unhatched eggs after the nest was vacated but no records of dead birds. The results have been entered into the new BTO database where they are available when required.”



A small-leaved lime, one of the two trees donated in 2016, looking well this autumn.

| | Great Tit | | Blue Tit | |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| | No. boxes occupied | No. young fledged | No. boxes occupied | No. young fledged |
| 2017 | 5 | 20 | 18 | 45 |
| 2018 | 5 | 15 | 14 | 87 |

New Leaflets A revised version of the Two Woods Walk leaflet describing the circular walk linking PNP and Coed y Cwm is almost ready for printing. The map will now show the additional option for walkers of following the route through the PNP extension to Brynymor Road.

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With thanks to the ‘posties’ for delivering the printed copies, Laurie Wright for putting the newsletter on the Greener Aberystwyth Group website and the PNP committee for their contributions and proofreading.

The web address for the PNP Facebook page is: www.facebook.com/ParcNaturPenglais

The newsletter will be available bilingually on the GAG website at <http://www.aber-gag.org.uk/>
With thanks to Jeff Smith for the Welsh translation.