

## Newsletter Issue No. 54 November 2019

**Annual General Meeting** The AGM will be held on Wednesday, 27 November 2019 at 7:30 pm in St Paul's Methodist Centre. Following the AGM there will be a talk entitled *O'r Mynydd i'r Mor - Summit to Sea*, given by our guest speaker Siân Stacey who is Community Engagement Officer for the Summit to Sea project. The project aims to restore flourishing ecosystems and a resilient local economy in an area stretching from the top of Pumlumon down to the Dyfi estuary and out into Cardigan Bay. Come and hear about the project, including the latest updates and plans for the next 12 months.

All are very welcome to attend.

### Changes to the PNP Support Group Committee

At the 2018 AGM Robert Griffiths was elected as Chair for the year. He thanked Len Kersley for standing in as Acting Chair over the previous 18 months. The Committee also welcomed new members; Chris Woodfield, who was appointed at the AGM and Brina Evans and Mark Carter who were co-opted during the year.

**Project Funding** A grant of £1,340 was received from Aberystwyth Town Council to carry out a number of maintenance jobs in the Parc (see page 3). The Support Group also received a donation of £20 from a couple who had spent their honeymoon in Aberystwyth and were now celebrating their Golden Wedding anniversary.

**Easter Egg Hunt** A charity Easter Egg Hunt organised by Radio Bronglais was held in PNP in April and was well-attended by parents and children.

**Habitat Survey** Ceredigion County Council undertook a phase 1 survey of the Brynymor extension during August. The survey identified four distinct habitats in this area: semi-natural broadleaved woodland, dense scrub, semi-improved neutral grassland and continuous bracken.

Of particular interest are the areas of neutral grassland and continuous bracken. Parc Natur Penglais is essentially a woodland reserve and includes relatively few open areas of grassland vegetation. Trying to retain some of

### PARC NATUR PENGLAIS SUPPORT GROUP



### Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday, 27 November 2019, 7:30 pm**  
St Paul's Methodist Centre,  
Queens Road, Aberystwyth

The short business session will be followed  
by a talk

**O'r Mynydd i'r Mor - Summit to Sea**  
by

Siân Stacey (Community Engagement  
Officer, Summit to Sea Project)

**All Welcome**



*Meadow brown butterfly. (Photo Ben Williams, Butterfly Conservation)*

these areas will be of benefit to wildlife species. For example, grasses in these areas such as the fescues (*Festuca sp*) and meadow grasses (*Poa sp*) are the caterpillar food plants of butterflies such as the meadow brown and gatekeeper.

In the absence of grazing, it is neither practical nor desirable to try and halt the natural process of woodland succession that is happening in the former scree slope areas and across the slopes toward Brynymor Road. However, with the help of survey information, targeted management via manual and mechanical cutting can help to maintain areas of habitat to the benefit of certain species, especially insects. This work can also be combined with tasks to increase the widths of paths, establish firebreaks and maintain open aspects and vistas where benches have been provided.

**Bird Nest Box Records for 2019** It proved to be another poor season for the birds breeding in the nest boxes in PNP this year. There was a lot of wet weather and the egg laying was rather later than in earlier years. It was obvious that there was going to be a mismatch between the timing of the chicks' greatest demand for food and of the peak abundance of caterpillars. In addition, the heavy rain would have washed caterpillars and other invertebrates onto the ground where they would not be found by birds that naturally forage on the trees and bushes.

Only 18 out of 28 boxes were occupied: six by great tits and 12 by blue tits. It is difficult to get exact figures for success since chicks which die early are removed by parents and some later chicks fledge before others in the same nest and apparently disappear. However, the volunteers were able to record that great tits laid 35 eggs, of which 29 hatched but apparently a maximum of only 15 chicks fledged. Two dead adults and 11 dead chicks were found in the boxes. Blue tits laid 79 eggs, of which 52 hatched and 39 chicks were believed to have fledged. Six dead chicks were found in the boxes. Lack of condition in the females after a poor winter could account for the fairly low brood numbers and starvation is the most likely cause of the failures in the nest.

Great Tit			Blue Tit	
Year	No. boxes occupied	No. young fledged	No. boxes occupied	No. young fledged
2017	5	20	18	45
2018	5	15	14	87
<b>2019</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>39</b>

*(With thanks to Moira Convery)*

**Moth Mornings** Local moth enthusiast Mark Carter held a moth trapping event in PNP on two successive Saturday mornings in August with the intention of getting members of the public enthused about a part of the natural world on their doorstep that they may know little about. On

both occasions he had set up a light-trap overnight in a secluded spot within the woodland and in the morning moved it to an open area near the Viewpoint ready for those attending to discover what had been captured during the night. The trapped moths settle among sections of broken up egg boxes in the base of the trap and these were carefully removed in turn to examine and identify the moths present. There were good numbers in the trap on both mornings even though the weather had been quite different on the two nights. On both occasions there were about ten species present, all of which were typical of this woodland habitat, the majority being identified as large yellow underwing and lesser yellow underwing but also including chequered fruit-tree tortrix, treble bar, dusky thorn, double-striped pug, brimstone and flounced rustic.

**Fixed-point Photographs** The fixed-point photographs that are taken every few years in spring were taken this year by Colin Johnston. These provide a valuable photographic record of changes in the appearance of PNP over the years. The images below show an area above Bryn Road that was a bare scree in 1992 (left) and is now covered in gorse (right). The dense growth of gorse and bramble in the lower quarry area prevented Colin from taking photographs at three of the fixed-points because the positions were no longer accessible.



**Tree Planting** The PNP Support Group organised a tree planting session in the Parc in January 2019. The planting was made possible by generous donations that had been received in the previous year from the families of Professor David Bateman and Mrs Mair Whitby (née Williams). A good turn-out of volunteers planted eight standard trees (Scots pine, elm, lime) and over 90 young saplings (crab apple, oak, hawthorn, hazel) in areas above the main path between the Beech Glade and Well. These open areas had previously been cleared of sycamore saplings by the Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers (ACV). The planting was supervised by Peter Drake. Most of the trees appear to have established well during their first summer in the Parc, though one pine had to be rescued from a hawthorn tree that had fallen onto it.

**Work Days and Maintenance in PNP** Work earlier in the year included repairs to the kissing gate at the Cae Melyn entrance to the Parc by students on the University's Countryside Management Course and Practical Estates Skill Project. The former kissing gate was replaced by a new gate constructed in the workshop with timbers clefted from a chestnut tree that had been felled near the Cae Melyn entrance.

The rope barrier that was put up after work in 2010 to allow regeneration of the vegetation within what was previously a severely trampled area adjoining the Beech Glade has finally been removed.

We are grateful once again to Aberystwyth Town Council for a grant towards maintenance work in PNP this autumn and winter. The work will be aimed at making the many steps on the paths up and down our steep hillsides safe and easier to use. A survey earlier this year had identified 26 steps that are in need of repair or replacement. Once again Peter Drake will be in charge, with two



'Steps Saturday' work days planned for late November and early December in the woodland, when he will be supervising students from the ACV to help with the work. On another 'Steps Saturday' work day in early November, volunteers from the local community used fine grade hardcore to infill the eroded treads on many of the steps on the path in the new extension from the Brynymor Road entrance through the quarry to the slate steps near the viewpoint.

The PNP Support Group has been very fortunate for many years to be able to employ Peter Drake to lead our Work Days. As a Rural Contractor and Volunteer Trainer, Peter not only has appropriate skills for the work, but importantly, he also has the necessary insurance cover to supervise volunteers. With Peter's help over more than two decades it has been possible to use volunteers from both the student and local communities to look after PNP in a very cost-effective way. Aberystwyth's bluebell wood owes a great debt to him.

Further work days with ACV this autumn and winter, supervised by Paul Evans (Ceredigion County Council), have been arranged for October, November and early December to clear gorse in the quarry area, particularly alongside the paths, together with coppicing and bramble clearance where required. Tasks will also include cutting back the vegetation by approximately two metres to widen the path between the boundaries of the gardens and the woodland edge above Danycoed.

Although the green space adjoining the Coopers Corner entrance is not part of PNP, people entering the Parc from this direction should in future enjoy some extra springtime colour following the planting of Welsh Daffodils here by Ceredigion County Council at the end of October.

**Access for All** Following the recent path improvement work to improve access to Pen Dinas Local Nature Reserve, the PNP Support Group Committee discussed what might be done to make it easier for wheelchair users and people with pushchairs to enjoy PNP. Although many of the paths within the Parc are clearly unsuitable it was felt that the path from the Student Village or Penglais Hill entrance along to the Beech Glade presented fewer obstacles to improvement. Much of this route would be on land owned by the University, who would need to be involved in any further developments.



*Aberystwyth Conservation  
Volunteers clearing brambles in  
November. (Photo David Kirby)*

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With thanks to those who delivered the printed copies to local houses, Laurie Wright for putting the newsletter on the Greener Aberystwyth Group website and the PNP committee for their contributions and proofreading.

The newsletter will be available bilingually on the GAG website at <http://www.aber-gag.org.uk/>