

## Changes to the Committee

Robert Griffiths (Chair) and Len Kersley (Treasurer) both stood down from their roles at the 2023 AGM. They were replaced by Andrew Mitchell and John Marshall respectively. Olga Olver was co-opted onto the Committee in May.

Another new attendee at our meetings has been Chris Harris who joined the Ceredigion County Council Conservation Team in March as Biodiversity Assistant (Nature Reserves Management) and has responsibility for PNP.

## Project funding and donations

The Support Group has received a grant of £1140 from Aberystwyth Town Council that will provide four days of maintenance work in the Parc this autumn and winter. During the year, the Group received a donation of £200 from a regular user of the Parc and a donation of £250 from the Aberystwyth Round Table when it was disbanded. We are very grateful to the Council for their continuing generous support of PNP and to those who have given donations.

The Support Group is dependent on voluntary donations to cover its day-to-day expenses and anyone wishing to help by making a donation should contact The Honorary Treasurer, PNP Support Group, c/o Cyngor Aberystwyth Council, Neuadd Gwenfrewi, Aberystwyth SY23 2HS, email [gyg08pt@gmail.com](mailto:gyg08pt@gmail.com).



Photo Katy Peat

## Work days in PNP

In January, students from the Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers, supervised by Peter Drake, rebuilt the steps by the pond and in September cleared brambles from alongside the main path. On 5 October they also cut and burnt gorse in the Upper Quarry to improve the habitat for reptiles. There will be a day of general maintenance on 14 December with a further day to be arranged for early 2025.

A bonus during the gorse cutting on 5 October was the discovery of a large spider-like harvestman (*Odiellus spinosus*) (see left): a species that seems to prefer the type of open habitat that the cutting seeks to maintain. This is the first recording of the species in the county.

## Nest box report for 2024 (Moira Convery)

The breeding success of the tits in the PNP nest boxes this year has been very disappointing, no doubt due to the very mixed and poor weather over the winter and spring. Poor winter weather means that the females are not in good condition at laying time which results in small clutches and continuing bad weather means that the parents have difficulty finding enough food for their chicks and themselves.



## Parc Natur Penglais ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

27 November at 7pm

St Paul's Methodist Centre

Including a talk on the  
*Bats in Woodland Project*

by

Naomi Davis (North Ceredigion Bat Group)

ALL WELCOME

There are 27 boxes in the main part of the woodland and ten more in the Brynymor Road extension. Sixteen were occupied by blue tits, seven by great tits and one by a coal tit. I think this is the first time we have had a coal tit nest: they don't usually use nest boxes. They laid four eggs and all the young fledged. It is not possible to be really accurate about how many eggs were laid in the other boxes or how many young survived but my estimates are as follows. Blue tits laid 120 eggs with 82 young fledged. In two nests, with ten and nine eggs respectively, all the eggs failed at the same time, presumably because the parents were lost. Great tits laid 41 eggs and produced 28 young.

### Lower Quarry Path

Following the fire in the Lower Quarry area of PNP last June, the Support Group submitted an application to the Ceredigion Local Places for Nature grants scheme for funding to create a new path through the burnt area. The application was successful and a grant of £4,455 was received for the work, which was started in mid-December. Creation of the 300 metres of new path was completed in March after a lot of work by members of the PNP Support Group and the Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers, all supervised by Peter Drake. The path was officially opened by Cllr Maldwyn Pryse on 18 May in his capacity as Mayor of Aberystwyth (*right*). It has opened up a new area of the Parc for walkers and will become increasingly attractive as the vegetation recovers from the fire, as described in the following item.



(Photo David Kirby)

### Plant regeneration after the 2023 fire in the Lower Quarry (David Kirby)



*Bonfire-moss spreading across the burnt ground in April 2024 (Photo David Kirby)*

Before the fire most of this area was overgrown with dense gorse. Most of the trees that were present were oaks and there were areas where bracken or brambles predominated. The fire killed most of the gorse and the upper branches of many of the oaks; several oaks were killed. However, within a month of the fire, some of the oaks that had lost their leaves were sprouting from their rootstock. Other plants, such as bracken, foxgloves and bonfire-moss, had established themselves by late summer of 2023. A diverse flora was not apparent until June 2024 when the plants were big enough to be identified and many were in flower. In addition to those already mentioned, species included bramble, buddleia, fireweed & other willowherbs, goosegrass,

herb-robert, ivy-leaved toadflax, quaking grass & other grasses, ragwort, sheep's-bit scabious, sheep's sorrel, spear thistle, stonecrop, valerian, wall pennywort and wood sage.

Foxgloves flowered quite early in the 2024 season. As they started to die back, ragwort and fireweed took over. Some of the dead gorse had been cut down but there were still many burnt stems left standing in August 2024. Live gorse has a high content of inflammable oils which usually raise the temperature sufficiently to kill the plant when they burn; however, this legume produces large numbers of seeds which can remain viable in the soil for up to 30 years and new gorse seedlings were widespread by August 2024. Some already had well-developed roots that made them difficult to remove. Some brambles were killed by the fire but in other cases sufficient rootstock survived to produce fresh growth this year.



*Regrowth of rosebay willowherb (fireweed) in September 2024 (Photo David Kirby)*

### **My work with the volunteers in Parc Natur Penglais (Peter Drake)**

During my time of self-employment as a countryside contractor and trainer since 2001, I have had many workdays with the PNP volunteer group and overseeing their work. With their unerring enthusiasm, come sun, wind or rain, and Len Kersley's ceaseless fund-raising, they have been an indefatigable team over the years. Working together with the Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers, many workdays have been completed and much has been achieved. There was a lot of catching up with footpath and site maintenance when I started but with all our combined efforts, this backlog of work has been cleared and many new improvements have been made. The last of these being the no-step access path in the burnt gorse area. Very skilfully surveyed and engineered by Robert Griffiths of the Support Group, it has added a delightful new vista to PNP. It is always heartening to look back on what has been achieved together to keep PNP the gem that it is for local people, students and tourists alike.

### **Reptile surveys in PNP by Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers**

In collaboration with Ceredigion County Council Senior Ecologist Alison Heal and Site Manager Chris Harris, ACV have recently joined the National Reptile Survey in partnership with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and have established a transect route in the Upper Quarry with artificial refugia to monitor species populations on the site. Surveys have been carried out in this area in the past but not in recent years. A report in July stated that during the previous two months ACV had conducted four survey visits and had recorded 18 slow-worms, three common lizards and three common toads.

### **Campers in PNP**

Users of the Parc will be aware of the tents that have recently appeared near the Beech Glade, in spite of the notices forbidding camping and the lighting of fires in the reserve. However, options for getting campers to move on are extremely limited and usually require Court action, which can be costly and take a long time. An additional complication is that if people are made to move on, there is currently nowhere suitable for them to move to. The County Council, together with the Police and Fire Service, are examining what options are available for discouraging campers.

We hope to include a future item on the PNP Facebook page outlining the legal position regarding the removal of unauthorised campers from PNP and similar sites.

With thanks to Aberystwyth Town Council for providing printing facilities and to those who delivered the printed copies of the newsletter to local houses. Thanks also to Maldwyn Pryse for preparing the Welsh translation, which will be available on the PNP Facebook and Greener Aberystwyth Group websites.

Newsletter prepared by Steve Cuttle (email [spcuttle@btinternet.com](mailto:spcuttle@btinternet.com))