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‘WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE’ FINAL PROJECT REPORT

MARCH 2020

MONTGOMERYSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

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SUMMARY

Allbynnau a canlyniadau Outputs & Outcomes	Allbynnau a gytunwyd / Agreed Output	Cyflawniadau hyd yma / Achievements
No' of Networks Established	3	3
No' of Pilot Activities Undertaken / Supported	3	3
No' of Stakeholders Engaged	500	19
No' of Participants Supported (awareness events only)	60	256
No' of Jobs Created	1 FTE	1 FTE
No' of Communities Benefitting	6	6
No' of Businesses Benefitting	12	3

Delivered between November 2017 and March 2020, the Where the Wild Things Are project aimed to:

- Overhaul the existing system by which LWS are assessed and selected to ensure that this process is easily workable and fully embedded within the planning system into the future;
- Build a legacy of supportive community ownership and engagement with Powys' LWS by providing people with volunteering opportunities which will improve their local area for the benefit of people and wildlife;
- Develop and implement LWS survey and sustainable land management methodologies suitable for landowners, farmers, and volunteers;
- Support enhanced access to existing and future LWS to ensure maximum health and well-being gains for local people;
- 'Value' the role that the LWS network plays in the health and well-being of our social and ecological communities;
- Utilize existing and novel digital media platforms to expand community awareness of and access to the LWS network.

Against these objectives, the following was achieved:

- The production of a new Powys LWS criteria, completed in January 2020;
- 69 individual volunteers, contributed over 1,000 hours of their time, valued at nearly £15,000;

- 25 events run;
- 199 surveys completed;
- Data collated on 300 sites;
- Responded to 5 consultations, promoting LWS;
- Undertaken an ‘Enabling a Natural Capital Approach’ (ENCA) assessment on LWS;
- Reached an average of 652 people per post on Facebook and 1,454 per tweet on Twitter, raising awareness of LWS.

Networks Established:

1. Steering Group – evidence: terms of reference, aims & objectives, meeting agendas & minutes
2. Montgomeryshire landowner group – evidence: members list, draft constitution
3. Brecon local group – evidence: members list, minutes of inaugural meeting

Pilot activities:

1. Local Wildlife Sites: a material consideration in Local Authority planning process
2. Burial grounds as Local Wildlife Sites
3. Local Wildlife Sites as a venue for educational delivery

Stakeholders engaged: 95, comprising Steering Group members, volunteers, landowners/managers; evidence: Steering Group minutes, volunteer timesheets, and stakeholder questionnaires.

Participants supported: 239, at events and talks; evidence: participation sheets/attendance lists.

Jobs created: 1FTE Project Coordinator post.

Communities benefitting:

1. Newtown community – evidence: letter from Newtown Town Council
2. Hyssington Church community – evidence: letter from church warden
3. Biological recording community – evidence: letter from Biodiversity Information Service (BIS)
4. Volunteering community – evidence: letters from three volunteers
5. Smallholding community – evidence: Letters from two smallholders
6. LWS owners community – evidence: none

Businesses benefitting

1. BIS – evidence: letter from BIS

No other letters of support received.

INTRODUCTION

Local Wildlife Sites are sites of substantive nature conservation value. They are the most important places for wildlife outside statutory designated sites and the linkages they provide in a local context, are of vital importance to the whole biodiversity resource within a given area.

The origins of biological Local Sites systems stretch back to the 1970s, when wildlife trusts in the UK wished to protect and encourage the management of the whole biodiversity resource within a given local government area. The idea behind this was to provide an inclusive system of sites to support and re-enforce the features of statutory designated sites.

There has been a LWS system in Powys since 1999, although many sites of value for wildlife were identified and listed on a register as early as the mid-1980s. As the criteria approached their 20th anniversary, it was time they were reviewed, to be brought in line with modern policy and strategy. Following the production of the 1999 system, the amount of work done on LWS varied across Powys; as the system relied almost primarily on the wildlife trusts for implementation, this was impacted by resources and capacity. Some minor reviews of the criteria were completed in some vice counties, but not others. Despite being part of the Powys planning system for 20 years, a lack of resources and awareness has often resulted in the statutory protection policies required to ensure long term resilience of the LWS network being inconsistently and inadequately applied. It was time to bring it all together, across Powys once again.

Being privately owned, the LWS system has always focussed on simply identifying and selecting sites and working with their owners/managers to ensure good habitat management. Given the increasing challenges from climate change, development, agricultural intensification and so on, leading to continued biodiversity losses and ecosystem collapses, it is time for new ways of thinking to increase ecological resilience. People are the problem, but they are also the solution. It was time to engage with and inform the people of Powys about these special, often unnoticed wild places which surround them, giving them a reason to leave their living rooms and step into a whole new world often just round the corner or down the street; the ‘Where the Wild Things Are’ project was born.



A Wild Daffodil wood in spring, April 2018

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Where the Wild Things Are project ran from November 2016 to March 2020. A central Project Coordinator was appointed, hosted by Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT) and was supported by the expertise of all three Powys wildlife trusts. The project had the following objectives:

1. Overhauling the existing system by which LWS are assessed and selected to ensure that this process is easily workable and fully embedded within the planning system into the future
2. Building a legacy of supportive community ownership and engagement with Powys' LWS by providing people with volunteering opportunities which will improve their local area for the benefit of people and wildlife
3. Developing and implementing LWS survey and sustainable land management methodologies suitable for landowners, farmers, and volunteers
4. Supporting enhanced access to existing and future LWS to ensure maximum health and well-being gains for local people
5. 'Valuing' the role that the LWS network plays in the health and well-being of our social and ecological communities
6. Utilize existing and novel digital media platforms to expand community awareness of and access to the LWS network



Getting people interested in nature

Objective 1 – Powys LWS criteria

Overhauling the existing system by which LWS are assessed and selected to ensure that this process is easily workable and fully embedded within the planning system into the future

Approach

For a Local Site system to succeed and be given due recognition, it is important that rigorous criteria be produced for the selection of a ‘Local Wildlife Site’. The system can then demonstrate why a particular site has passed or has not met the criteria for being a ‘Local Wildlife Site’, making it a justifiable process.

In 1999, the wildlife trusts in Wales published biological guidelines and criteria for the selection of LWS. Three systems were developed, covering North Wales, Powys and the south and west of Wales. After 20 years, the need for a review of the Powys criteria has become increasingly urgent. The number of currently selected Local Wildlife Sites in Powys is relatively low and is not deemed to truly reflect the wildlife value of the area. At the same time, the pressures on our landscape continue to grow and there has been no let-up in the net loss of nature. Potential LWS are being lost before they are even known about, through changes in land management and development, leading not only to a loss of habitat and biodiversity, but also connectivity across the landscape. We are now becoming increasingly aware of the impact this is having, not only on nature, but also the human race. LWS have a critical role to play in not only halting biodiversity loss, but also in mitigating climate change.

In order to review the Powys LWS criteria, it was necessary to bring together a discrete group of experts to work through the process. A Task & Finish Group was set up and first met in April 2017. The group consisted of staff from the three Powys wildlife trusts, Natural Resources Wales and local expert, Ray Woods.

The Task & Finish Group first considered the genesis of the 1999 Powys LWS criteria and what local updates had been made since. They considered the first principles - what is the purpose of the system and how does/would it function – and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the 1999 system. It was decided that the new system should follow the 2008 Wildlife Sites Guidance Wales, using some elements of the 1999 system and in discussion with a wide range of organisations and local experts.

The 2008 Wildlife Sites Guidance Wales are a set of guidelines which were developed in response to Action Point 38 of the first action plan of the Environment Strategy for Wales, through discussion and consultation with a wide audience that included experienced ecologists, LBAP officers, county recorders and local naturalists over a period of years. It is accepted as the best source of guidance for setting up a LWS system in Wales and the Powys 1999 system was considered as part of the process.

Having made this decision, some time was spent assessing a range of sites which had been surveyed as part of the project, as case studies, to work out how the system could work in practice. By September 2018, we were ready to start writing the criteria document. This process took 14 months to complete, with completed sections circulated round the Task & Finish Group and relevant local experts, for comments, amendments and further discussion. The final version was produced in electronic form in January 2020, but has not yet been published.

The Powys LWS criteria are considered to be appropriate for the selection of quality habitats and species, but should not be seen as being set in ‘tablets of stone’. Nature is dynamic and policies and legislation change. It is anticipated that it will be a living document which is regularly updated as and when changes are needed.



Rare, threatened wildlife (in this case Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly) are one reason for LWS selection

Results

The final set of criteria has been designed to be easy to use. It is intended that anyone, who possesses the necessary information, could assess a site. If it passed the criteria, it would then be put forward for selection and a panel, the Powys LWS Partnership, would make the ultimate decision.

To try and get the new LWS system fully embedded in the planning system into the future has proved more challenging. In many parts of the UK, the Local Authority runs the Local Wildlife Site system, with the support of the local wildlife trust(s). Where this is the case, sites selected, but lacking an agreed management plan (as landowner contact has not commenced or is in the early stages) are typically known as Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs). In Powys, this system does not currently exist. The LWS system is predominately run by the wildlife trusts.

The Where the Wild Things Are project has been working with Powys County Council (PCC) to explore the introduction of a SINC system. PCC was initially interested in the idea, but unfortunately, concerns about resources, as a result of severe and sustained cuts, has meant that we have been unable to complete this work.

In the absence of this new system, we must rely on PCC planning policy. The Local Development Plan (LDP) was produced part way through the project. Indeed, the project was able to work with PCC on this element of the policy. Whilst the final LDP fails to mention LWS or SINCs specifically, it does refer to locally important sites, which are then detailed in the Biodiversity and Geodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), meaning that they remain a material consideration in the planning process.

The Powys LWS criteria was completely reviewed during the project and a new set of criteria has been written. It took longer than anticipated to complete this element of the project. The delay was partly brought about by the need to use real-world data and partly by the extensive consultation which was carried out. There is still an element of testing to check that the criteria are fit for purpose, but preliminary results look promising and the document is intended to be regularly updated in any case. Whether the criteria are easily workable remains

to be seen; it has been written with that very much in mind, but only time and use of the system will tell if we have been successful.

H6.2) UPLAND HEATHLAND

Wet and dry upland heathland is generally found above 250-300m, above the upper edge of enclosed agricultural land and is widespread in Powys. Upland heath in 'favourable condition' is typically dominated by a range of dwarf shrubs such as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) and Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*). They are structurally diverse, containing stands of vegetation with heather at different stages of growth. Wet heath in 'favourable condition', should be dominated by mixtures of Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Deergass (*Trichophorum germanicum*), Heather and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), over an understorey of mosses, often including carpets of *Sphagnum* species.

The following sites should be considered for selection:

- **all undesignated dry or wet upland heathland $\geq 5ha$;**
- **all undesignated degraded upland wet or dry heathland $\geq 5ha$ with $\geq 10\%$ cover of dwarf heath species, comprising three or more of the following:**
 - ***Calluna vulgaris* (Heather)**
 - ***Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry)**
 - ***Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath)**
 - ***Erica cinerea* (Bell Heather)**
 - ***Ulex gallii* (Western Gorse)**
 - ***Vaccinium myrtillus* (Bilberry)**
 - ***Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (Cowberry)**

An example of the completed Powys LWS criteria

Unfortunately, the LWS selection process and new SINC process remain incomplete. The intention is that potential sites (passing one or more criteria) should then be put forward to a partnership, known as the Powys Local Wildlife Sites Partnership, to be considered for selection. The partnership would likely be made up of many of those already involved in this project, the wildlife trusts, NRW, PCC and BIS (the Local Environmental Record Centre), with support of local experts as required. However, this has not been finalised. Similarly, we have been unable to finalise the SINC process. Both these elements, are interlinked and require further development.

Ultimately, our aim has been to make the protection for LWS in the planning process about the ecology of the site, rather than whether or not it is selected. The wildlife trusts have had cases in the past where the wildlife value of a site has been ignored; even though it was likely to be considered of LWS quality, it hadn't been selected, so we were told there was nothing which could be done. Our Planning Process pilot, undertaken during this project, investigated whether a site could be protected from potentially harmful development in this way. Initial results were positive, although the case we followed is currently under appeal. We hope to ultimately have the LWS criteria 'embedded' in the Powys LDP SPG, which may be possible when the LDP is next reviewed. We are encouraging PCC to put the onus on developers to gather data and prove the site does not qualify as a LWS, just as Monmouthshire County Council already does.

Objective 2 – volunteering and community

Building a legacy of supportive community ownership and engagement with Powys' LWS by providing people with volunteering opportunities which will improve their local area for the benefit of people and wildlife

Approach

Volunteering has been shown to improve mental & physical wellbeing. Participants have also reported enhanced levels of positivity, health, nature relatedness, pro-environmental behaviour, levels of physical activity and increased contact with greenspace (University of Essex 2017). So the benefits extend beyond the individual, where their actions benefit other people, as well as wildlife.

Working with volunteers was critical to the success of the Where the Wild Things Are project, not only in terms of practical delivery, but also in order to achieve our people engagement goals. The wildlife trusts have an existing network of dedicated volunteers and systems in place for recruitment and valuing those volunteers. We are also in contact with local species experts and groups, such as flora groups. We were immediately able to utilise these networks and systems to recruit volunteers for the project.

The project recruited volunteers for four roles:

- **Surveyor** - attend sites as required, identify and record flora and fauna (specialist knowledge), manage other volunteers as required, mentor / train other volunteers, as appropriate, responsible for work on site during visit
- **Survey Assistant** - assist surveyors with wildlife site surveys as required, identify and record flora and fauna identified, provide support as requested, receive basic training
- **Biodiversity Data Officer** - entry of biological field data in to excel-based site species recording system, data validity checks, provide other office-based support as requested
- **Researcher** - provide evidence and information, as required, to support the LWS criteria review process, undertake & present research

The project also looked for opportunities to work with LWS owners and the local community, to facilitate the creation of a local volunteer task force to help with habitat management. Only one possible opportunity was identified and it was decided to focus on the educational opportunities at this site instead.

Throughout the project, we sought opportunities to work with a range of communities. The following communities were identified:

- Newtown – worked with local people and the Town Council on the planning process pilot
- Hyssington – worked with the local community on the churchyard LWS pilot
- Biological recording – provided opportunities & promoted recording
- Volunteers – provided volunteering opportunities & training
- Smallholders – carried out surveys on their land & provided advice & support
- LWS owners – carried out surveys on their land & provided advice & support

Results

In total, 69 individual volunteers were involved in the project. Collectively, they contributed over 1,000 hours of their time, which was valued at nearly £15,000. Volunteers helped identify, collect and digitise tens of thousands of biological records, vital information for LWS assessments. They also provided research and advisory services which were critical to the review of the LWS criteria. In some cases, the project facilitated new relationships between volunteers and their local LWS landowners/managers.

All the volunteers reported that they were grateful to the project for the help and support, as well as the opportunities we were able to provide. Some particularly welcomed the opportunity to visit private sites which they otherwise would not have had access to. They also enjoyed meeting like-minded people and sharing their skills with others. A few testimonials:

“I have now started my own project to try and identify and record all the species present on our own land”

“I have gained an interest in wildlife and been able to use my office skills, whilst also making many new friends.”

“I do hope funding can be extended for this very worthwhile Project”



Volunteers surveying

Momentum has been generated by this project within the volunteering community; volunteers are keen to continue, particularly with the surveys and we hope to build on this momentum in future projects. Volunteers have also been inspired to practice and further develop their skills outside the project. This is a great legacy.

Although we were unable to explore the setting up of local volunteer task forces as part of this project, we still believe this to be a feasible approach to solving some habitat

management challenges, as well as generating opportunities for local people ('Green Gym', social gatherings, building community). The main stumbling block is likely to be around insurance, but this could be overcome, perhaps through affiliation with an insured charity, such as a wildlife trust.

We reached our target of six communities benefitting from the project, although we had problems gathering definitive evidence from LWS owners. We are not entirely sure why this has proved difficult; in theory this community should be more engaged with wildlife. Perhaps we did not allow enough time or left it too long between our engagement with the owners and the request for evidence. It is also possible that the individuals we asked felt prohibited by a lack of sufficient IT skills, or maybe they did not wish to share their contact details with a third party. One way to overcome this in the future, would be to draft a suitable generic letter which LWS owners could then sign and add a note to during the visit.

For the other communities, the benefits (aside from those covered under volunteering above) identified were:

- Free access to information, including habitat management advice
- Greater understanding of the breadth of biodiversity on land
- Support for events
- Information on the importance of Welsh wildlife & sites
- Increased knowledge of the distribution of flora & fauna in Powys
- Support with working with less engaged members of the community
- Reinforced messages provided by others

Events

Another way we sought to engage people with LWS was by running a series of events; in total 25 events were run or attended. Presentations about the project were also given at five external meetings/events. 239 individual participants were supported through this work. Examples of the events run are given below:

- Where the Wild Things Are – event for LWS owners, presentations in the morning, guided walk & discussions on management in the afternoon;



- Open Farm Sunday – attendance at farm event with information about LWS & the project, plus related activities for children;
- Magic Meadows – celebration of meadows to tie in with National Meadows Day, which included a guided walk round a LWS by the owner;
- Plant survey/ID – collaborative training & awareness raising event with Caring for God’s Acre in a churchyard, aimed at local community;



- Bee ID – collaborative training event with BIS, aimed at members of the public, volunteers, landowners/managers;
- Project celebration – aimed at members of the public and anyone involved in the project; included presentations, habitat management demonstrations & discussions, ID training.



Objective 3 – LWS surveys, landowner/manager engagement

Developing and implementing LWS survey and sustainable land management methodologies suitable for landowners, farmers, and volunteers

Approach

The wildlife trusts in Powys have a long history of undertaking surveys on LWS and engaging with landowners/managers towards appropriate habitat management. The project recruited a Surveyor and Community Engager post for each vice county in Powys, within the relevant wildlife trust. The target for each year was 20 sites surveyed in each vice county.

To ensure strategic and efficient project delivery, a project Steering Group was set up. Members of the Steering Group comprised MWT, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust (RWT), Brecknock Wildlife Trust (later becoming Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales (WTSWW)), NRW, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Service (FWAG), Severn Rivers Trust (SRT) and Powys County Council (PCC). The Steering Group first met on 27th February 2017 and continued to meet quarterly throughout the project.

The Steering Group agreed how surveys should be conducted. Given the number of surveys required and limited time and budget, it was agreed that a list of species for each site was appropriate, with additional notes made on management and any changes, in the case of existing LWS. For potential new sites, the habitats were also roughly mapped and separate lists made for different parts of the site, if appropriate.

Landowners/managers received verbal and/or written feedback, following the survey. Where possible, a discussion was held with the landowner/manager, regarding management and recommendations made. In some cases, landowners/managers received a report, which included a site citation, map(s) and species list.

In addition to the Steering Group, the project sought to create two new networks, namely a landowner group in Montgomeryshire and another in Brecknockshire. The ultimate aim of these groups are to be networks similar to the existing Radnorshire Wildlife Habitats Group, an affiliated group of RWT, which, although supported by RWT, is run by the landowners, for the landowners.

Results

In total, 199 surveys were conducted across Powys. Information about additional sites (existing LWS not surveyed this time or potential LWS) was also brought together, meaning that a total of 300 sites were collated during the project.



LWS survey on blanket bog, 22nd August 2017

Of the sites surveyed, final reports have only been written for 15. The late completion of the criteria review meant that the window for writing these reports was very short. Although an important part of the site assessment and landowner feedback process, the production of these reports was not an output for the project, meaning that time had to be prioritised to those elements which were. The budget for staff time, outside of the Project Coordinator, was too limited budget to allow for other staff to support the task. It is also difficult to assess sites and write reports about them, when you do not know the site or have enough detailed information.



LWS surveys provided a great opportunity to learn from each other

Three networks were established as part of the project, although the level of evidence required by Arwain proved too difficult for the two landowner groups.

1. Project Steering Group – set up February 2017. Final meeting 11th March 2019. All necessary evidence gathered, namely terms of reference, members list, meeting agendas & minutes. Although the function of this network is now complete, it is hoped that many of the members of the Steering Group will ultimately form the Powys LWS Partnership.
2. Montgomeryshire landowner group – this network was formed in March 2017 during the first Montgomeryshire event. Five landowners who had been present agreed to share their contact details to continue to share ideas, management techniques, etc. The group has since expanded and currently has 24 members. However, the group has not yet been formalised, so only has a draft constitution.
3. Brecon local group – the inaugural meeting for this network was held on 25th February 2019. This group is run by wildlife enthusiasts & wildlife trust members, but is in the early stages of development. A program of talks has been held over the winter, with plans for walks, species surveys and trips to places of wildlife interest, during the summer months. Ultimately, it is hoped that a landowner offshoot will organically form from this network. The group currently has 81 members.

In total, the project worked with 95 individual stakeholders. These were staff representing organisations, landowners/managers and volunteers.



Members of the Montgomeryshire landowner group sharing knowledge

Objective 4 – access to LWS

Supporting enhanced access to existing and future LWS to ensure maximum health and well-being gains for local people

Approach

LWS are usually privately owned and their status does not confer any additional access rights. The Where the Wild Things Are project sought to test whether enhanced access could be facilitated and we identified two pilot activities on this theme:

1. Burial grounds as Local Wildlife Sites
2. Local Wildlife Sites as a venue for educational delivery

Results

Given the location of burial grounds, usually in the heart of the community, as well as their value for wildlife, they represent the perfect opportunity for achieving enhanced access for health and well-being. Despite the challenges of working with a broad range of interests, our initial results have been very positive. It is likely that, to really make a lasting impact, we would need to work with each burial ground over a number of years, to help develop new relationships, policies and processes, for managing these sites optimally for nature and engaging local people with those sites.

Having initially identified a suitable site and owner in which to test the educational opportunities pilot activity quite easily, it has proven much harder to link them with one or more educational establishments. Communication has proven to be the main barrier, with the majority remaining unresponsive to our communication attempts. Even where we had a warm contact who was broadly positive, it was very difficult to communicate with the individual. By working with a neighbour of our site owner, who had a child in the scout group, we were able to move things forward, but by then had run out of time to arrange a meeting. We are broadly optimistic that, given more time, a link could have been made.

See individual pilot reports for more details.



Considering opportunities for enhanced access on LWS

Objective 5 – valuing LWS

‘Valuing’ the role that the LWS network plays in the health and well-being of our social and ecological communities

Approach

The Where the Wild Things Are project contributed to Welsh Government (WG) and NRW consultations, where the value of LWS could be promoted.

An assessment of some of the ecosystem services provided by the existing LWS network in Powys was made, using the ‘Enabling a Natural Capital Approach’ (ENCA) (DEFRA 2020).



Woodland LWS can provide many ecosystem services

Results

We delivered a talk about the project to Welsh Government staff in Newtown on 8th June 2017. The project also contributed information about LWS to the following consultation responses:

- Powys Local Development Plan (LDP) - PCC
- Powys LDP Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Biodiversity & Geodiversity - PCC
- NRW Area Statements - NRW
- Sustainable Farming and our Land – WG
- Draft National Development Framework - WG

The results of the ENCA assessment are presented in full in Appendix 1. This is a brief, rough-and-ready assessment, using the existing LWS sites data (pre-2016). A more accurate detailed assessment would be a project in itself, requiring data on the full LWS resource in Powys (in hectares), split by habitat types.

The following is a full list of the ecosystem services which could be provided by Powys’ LWS, along with an estimate of value (per annum), where one has or can be made:

- Regulating services:
 - Air quality – £109,340 (air pollutant removal estimated value for woodland LWS)
 - Carbon sequestration - £141,225 to £419,640 (excluding freshwater)
 - Flood regulation - £116,077 (£69,797 (peat bog LWS) + £46,280 (woodland LWS))
 - Noise / Noise mitigation
 - Temperature regulation
- Cultural services
 - Recreation & tourism
 - Physical & mental health
 - Education
 - Volunteering – £5,000 (3 year Where the Wild Things Are project = £15,000 volunteer time)
- Aggregate/bundled services
 - Amenity
 - Biodiversity
 - Soil health
 - Water quality – £50,052 (water quality improvements by peat bog LWS)
 - Landscape
- Provisioning services
 - Food
 - Timber
 - Water supply
 - Fish

LWS do not have conservation protection; they can be managed as the landowner/manager wishes. LWS are a material consideration in the Local Authority planning process. LWS are often overlooked, as the poor relative of statutory designated sites. All this puts the sites at high risk of unsuitable/damaging management or neglect or being ignored in the planning process. If their value is not recognised by policy makers, this could easily lead to further destruction/damage. It is important to continue to seek every opportunity to work together with key stakeholders, such as policy makers, Local Authority and landowners/managers, as well as seeking relationships with new ones, such as water companies, insurance companies and recreational users. If LWS are valued by a diverse range of stakeholders, then they may be more resilient to change. Good communication is key to identifying risks and opportunities.

Objective 6 – awareness raising through digital media

Utilize existing and novel digital media platforms to expand community awareness of and access to the LWS network

Approach

The Where the Wild Things Are project made use of the three Powys wildlife trusts existing websites and social media platforms to raise awareness of LWS and the project. MWT also set up a new Instagram account and launched a new website in December 2018.

Results


Social media proved the most effective tool for reaching a wide audience; on Facebook, our average reach was 652 people per post, whilst on Twitter it was 1,454. We didn't post on our new Instagram account as much as anticipated and we don't have reach data for this outlet. Below are a few examples of our social media posts:

Tweet Activity




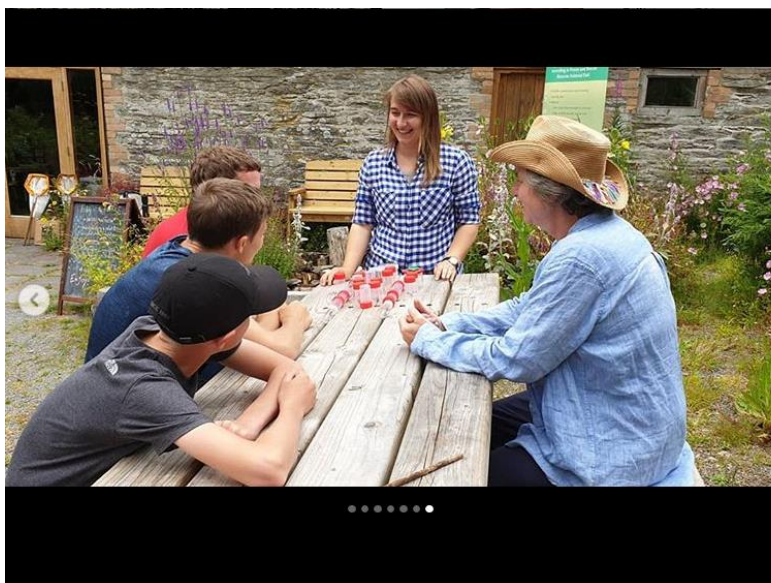
Montgomeryshire WT
@MontWildlife
Without our vanishing
#localwildlifesites our wildlife is at
even greater risk. More:
<http://www.montwt.co.uk/wildlifesites>
<pic.twitter.com/GcdF3doZLK>

Impressions	5,003
Total engagements	53
Media engagements	23
Likes	12
Retweets	9
Link clicks	6
Detail expands	3



Reach a bigger audience
Get more engagements by promoting this Tweet!

[Get started](#)



montwt
Gilfach Nature Reserve

@raonorsnirewiiiretrust
@wildlifetrustsw, BIS & all our
wonderful #volunteers for making it
so special.

#localwildlifesites #people #cattle
#ancientcattleofwales #grazing
#habitatmanagement
#biologicalrecording #wildlife #moths
#mothtrapping #ponds

36w

Liked by alderneywt and 25 others

JULY 17, 2019

Add a comment... [Post](#)

Radnorshire Wildlife Retweeted



Brecknock Local News
@WTSWWBrecknock

Great day at #Gilfach @rwtwales learning & celebrating #powys #local wildlife sites. @MontWildlife @WTSWW



6:08 PM · Jul 16, 2019 from Wales, United Kingdom · Twitter for Android

1 Retweet 6 Likes



Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust added 19 new photos.

Like Page

Published by Tammy Stretton [?] · 23 August · 🌐

Yesterday our #LocalWildlifeSite survey team was in action on a fantastic upland peat bog. Over 10 years ago, we were involved in restoring this bog, so it was great to find out how it was doing. Judging by the widespread distribution of rare plants and great diversity of life, the response has been good. 😊



+16

1,103 People Reached

48 Reactions, comments & shares

40 Like 31 On post 9 On shares

3 Love 0 On post 3 On shares

2 Comments 0 On Post 2 On Shares

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CONCLUSION

The Where the Wild Things Are project has successfully achieved all its objectives, although some of the specific targets were not reached. Some further development has been identified in some cases, but without the project they would not have been identified or started, so this is to be seen as a positive outcome.

There was a delay at the start of the project, meaning that we were late in recruiting the Project Coordinator (the 1 FTE post) and commencing the delivery. Ultimately, the project was then extended by three months, which successfully mitigated this.

The main challenges with the project were the ever changing goalposts (fluctuating guidance from WG, with knock on effects on volunteer rates, delivery evidence and budgeting), the level of evidence required and the amount of paperwork. We also suffered a change of Animateur part way through the project, affecting the smooth running of the project, claims and monitoring.

The level of evidence required has led to a seeming lack of delivery and concerns over breaching GDPR (as well as being discouraging to participants).

In total, the project worked with 95 individual stakeholders. This is somewhat below the target of 500, but is due to lack of guidance and the level of evidence required:

- At the Steering Group meeting on 26th September 2019, we believed we had engaged with a total of 761 stakeholders, 504 of which were evidenced;
- However, we were then made aware (verbally) of the definition of stakeholders and participants, which significantly changed these figures;
- We were also made aware (again verbally) that we would need to list each stakeholder to avoid double counting;
- We did not receive written guidance on the outputs, their definitions and levels of evidence required until near the end of the project (4th February 2020), after completing the delivery phase of the project;
- We then needed to contact stakeholders retrospectively to request the necessary evidence and the majority did not reply;
- Had we been provided with the written guidance prior to the delivery, we would have revised our target and ensured we collected the evidence when the engagement occurred.

We were unable to reach our target of 12 businesses benefitting from the project; although the Steering Group wish to make it clear that we believe at least that number have benefitted, we were unable to gather the necessary evidence. We only managed to secure a single letter from one business.

We fared better with the communities benefitting, but still failed to obtain letters from any LWS owners, despite this group being (in theory) more engaged with wildlife. Most likely this could have been overcome by requesting the evidence from the LWS owners more promptly after our visits.

The personal details required to be collected from project participants is deemed unnecessary. None of the organisations involved in the project would normally collect this level of detail

and it certainly put some people off. Although we exceeded our target of 60 participants (239), this was due to many individuals which we thought were stakeholders, being re-classified as participants. Had this been made clear at the start of the project, along with an opportunity to amend the targets on the basis of the written definitions, this would not have been an issue.



Ivy-leaved Bellflower; an uncommon plant which grows in wetland habitats

All that said, we are happy to have been given the opportunity to deliver this project and there are many successes of which we are proud. The criteria review took more or less the whole project to complete; without the funding this would not have been possible. We believe the resulting system to be robust, easy to use and up to date. We have developed some great new momentum around volunteering and made new connections with a wide range of people and organisations, which we plan to build on with future projects. Many more people know about LWS and have a greater appreciation of wildlife in general. We have been able to demonstrate some of the important ecosystem services which LWS can offer, in addition to their value to wildlife. And, we have been able to explore interesting new concepts on how LWS can be used.

On the whole, we have found the Arwain staff to be helpful, supportive and pragmatic. We welcomed the opportunity to meet with our Animateur on a regular basis, to build a good relationship, so essential for working through the challenges. In most cases, communication was good.

We wish to thank everyone involved in the Where the Wild Things Are project, the funders, the staff, the Steering Group, the volunteers, the landowners/managers and anyone else who helped us deliver. It hasn't always been easy and it certainly wouldn't have been possible without everyone pulling together.



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LWS volunteers surveying marshy grassland, 14th August 2017