



Powys Cysylltiadau Gwyrdd
Green Connections Powys

Feasibility Study:
Developing collaborative land management actions in Breconshire

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Introduction

This feasibility study has been commissioned by the Green Connections Powys project (the project). The project operates across the county of Powys and is collaboration between Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust (RWT) and the Brecknock Office of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales.

The project has worked with community groups, small businesses, landowners and statutory organisations to take local action to address climate change and biodiversity loss and create a nature recovery network across the county.

Since starting in April 2021, the project has surveyed and mapped wildlife, advised on habitat management and nature-based solutions, helped people encourage more wildlife into their communities and offered opportunities for upskilling and volunteering.

The project is funded through the Welsh Government's Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing Grant. It will run from April 2021 to March 2023 with Radnorshire Wildlife Trust as the project lead. The Trusts see this project as a springboard to help landowners and communities begin to take action, develop projects and seek funding for future activity.

Background

Following on from a previously commissioned feasibility study, 'Exploring Collaborative Habitat Land Management in Powys'. MAES Services were commissioned to build on the results of this study and provide one-to-one facilitation for small landowners and land management contractors within Breconshire. With the aim of creating sustainable relationships between services and service providers to bring about better habitat management.

Methodology

Following an inception meeting with members of the project team. Contact was initially made by phone and email to known landowners and farmers in the Breconshire area. Contacts were provided (with permission) from project staff and from those that taken part in the 'Exploring Collaborative Habitat Land Management in Powys' feasibility study and had chosen to be informed of future work. Where possible, site visits were undertaken, and additional landowners were engaged from contacts that MAES Services had previously spoken or engaged with.

Work Undertaken

- Three site visits undertaken.
- 13 landowners/commoners spoken with.
- Engaged with three officers from different environmental public bodies.
- Attended a Powys Nature Partnership focus group.
- Attended a meeting of the North Brecknock Wildlife Friendly (NBWF) Landowners Group
- Identified and liaised with a cattle grazer who undertakes conservation grazing.

Actions Delivered

- Disseminated a variety of information to the co-ordinator of the NBWF Landowners Group
- Signposted three individuals to the co-ordinator of the NBWF Landowners Group as potential new members.
- Provided five individual landowners with a variety of information (advice, links, points of contacts, grazier contact details, LWS etc) following visits/discussions.
- Details of the Welsh Government Farm Liaison Service circulated. They provide free help to landowners needing to register on RPW Online etc in order to access grants & comply with livestock movement regulations.
- Disseminated habitat management flow charts to landowners I engaged with.

Key messages from engagement

1. **Signposting of grants** – A recurring topic of conversation with landowners is the lack of awareness of what funding is available for land-based projects/work.

Recommendation: Project staff should encourage all land holders they engage with to subscribe to Welsh Government Gwlad newsletter. This update includes information relating to farming and forestry such as news, grants and policy updates - [Subscribe to farming and forestry news \(Gwlad\) | GOV.WALES](#) .

However, subject to staff resources, there is an opportunity to have an internal conversation (potentially including all Trusts in Wales) regarding future communication with landowners. From experience, WTSWW sends out, *Wild Monthly* (Annex A), a monthly email newsletter sent to members and non-members which contains latest news, volunteering, fundraising opportunities etc. A Wales wide version of *Wild Monthly* targeted at landowners that Trust staff have collated contact details for over the years (subject to GDPR requirements) or asked to sign up, could be a streamlined process for the sharing of grant information and general advice landowner that want to manage land in a nature friendly manner.

Another example of a monthly update regarding grants from a different sector (although there will be overlap) can be located at Annex B. NRW have previously sent out a very thorough update regarding funding opportunities and the Wales Biodiversity Partnership monthly update email also includes relevant signposting of available grants (if this is still active).

Adopting a periodic newsletter targeted at landowners could showcase the wide range of funding available and not just WG funding which the Gwlad newsletter focuses on. This newsletter could over time, include short articles or advice regarding seasonal land management activities and other useful information. For example, in the February newsletter, there could be an article referring to 'last opportunity to undertake hedge laying or hedge management'.

- 2. Applying for funding** – Several individuals expressed the need for support in applying for WG Agri environment funding schemes due to them having no knowledge of systems such as Rural Payments Wales.

Recommendation: Due to limited staff resources, it is unlikely that project staff will be able to provide support on a case-by-case basis to individuals. However, if a ‘Contractors & Consultants directory’ were created, individuals and groups could be signposted to an agent or facilitator who could apply for a grant on their behalf or undertake a ‘hand holding/checking service’ to help them through the RPW process for the first time.

If staff do have capacity, then it should be focused on emerging groups such as the North Brecknock Wildlife Friendly Landowners Group where there is synergy for likeminded landowners to work together.

- 3. Machinery hire, loaning of equipment and machine rings** - During conversations, the hire, loaning and the idea of a machine ring were discussed.

Recommendation: There are several well-known examples where machinery rings have started but unfortunately many have not survived. Landowners engaged during this study generally require smaller, and often niche equipment which is not often available for hire at typical agricultural dealers/depots.

Another feasibility commissioned by this project focused on ‘Green Hay and meadow seed harvesting and spreading’, similarly, Brecon Beacons Local Nature Partnership (BBLNP), led by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA), commissioned a consultant to produce a Feasibility Study into Wildflower Seed Harvesting Operations within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Both studies focused on grassland habitats and although it was never the intention to focus on machinery, both studies refer to machinery in some shape or form. It is highly unlikely that a Wildlife Trust or a public body such as the BBNPA would consider hiring of equipment for private landowners to use, even if it was primarily for nature conservation reasons. However, if a commercial partner had a suite of machinery that aligns to the needs of smaller landowners, then this service could be advertised. A commercial business who already undertakes hiring of machinery will be ideally placed to lead on such a scheme. A similar model was adopted but by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water for a weed wiper hire scheme they undertook. In this case they partnered with Daltons ATV who undertook the day-to-day management of the hiring and logistics of loaning a weed wiper.

A private business could be appointed as the preferred operator of a ‘Nature Friendly Landowner Equipment loan service’. In the Brecon areas alone there are two businesses that offer loaning of machinery that could be approached; Hopkins Machinery, Kubota, Club Car, South West, South Wales, Event Equipment Hire, Machinery for Sale | PFS Brecon.

Another option is to partner with an organisation such as BBNPA and create a framework where appointed and trusted contractors can utilise a pool of centrally located machinery for nature friendly landowner projects. A similar model has been adopted by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in the operation of the cut and collect adapted Pisten Bully. The machine is owned by NRW but the operated by a contractor.

- 4. Establishment of a South Brecknock Wildlife Landowner Group** – Individuals located in the South Brecknock area expressed an interest in the creation of a southern group although no one identified themselves as a lead point of contact.

Recommendation: Further work and facilitation is required to support the creation of a South Brecknock group. This should be explored when staff resources allow, although this group may naturally occur as membership of the North Brecknock group increases.

- 5. Land Engagement officers/further facilitation** – A strong theme raised during engagement with landowners was the desire to have a single point of contact for a longer period who could undertake an initial survey of a holding, produce a management plan which incorporates themes such as nature, access, heritage etc and identify funding sources.

Recommendation: Explore the idea of funding an engagement officer (potentially in partnership with an organisation) that takes an holistic approach to land management which incorporates work nature recovery, health & wellbeing, heritage etc.

Lesson Learnt / Feedback

1. Due to the short period of the contract, it has been difficult to engage with a wide audience. For example, there have been cases when landowners have been away and have asked to be contacted in two weeks' time, by which point the contract would have ended.
2. A discussion was held with a 'commercial' farmer who turns stock out onto a small common. Due to the busy period within the farming calendar, it was difficult to speak with this farmer at length and arrange a site visit.
3. There is a network of small commons west of Brecon in the Usk catchment. It has proven difficult to obtain contact details for these commons.
4. An initial engagement started with a grazier who grazes a WTSWW nature reserve. Unfortunately, the grazier became ill and no further engagement was possible.
5. Feedback from landowners engaged has been positive and they have appreciated the support/advice they have been given.

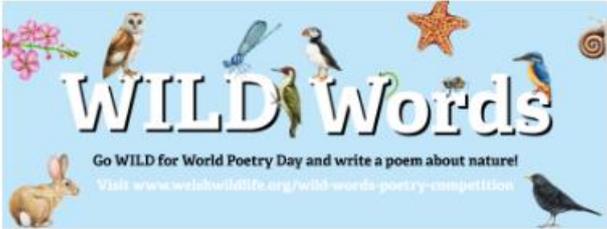
Annex A

[The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales \(campaign-archive.com\)](http://campaign-archive.com)



Ymddiriedolaeth Natur
De a Gorllewin Cymru
Wildlife Trust of
South & West Wales

Wild Monthly



WILD Words

Go WILD for World Poetry Day and write a poem about nature!
Visit www.welshwildlife.org/wild-words-poetry-competition

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Enter our WILD Words poetry competition!



Vote for Skokholm Island

We're spoilt for incredible wildlife spots here in South & West Wales, so it's no surprise that our very own Skokholm Island is one of BBC Wildlife Magazine's top 60 UK wildlife spots and is nominated for the title of the best wildlife spot in Wales! [Read more...](#)



Join our Skomer Island Team

We're hiring a Skomer Visitor Officer! If you've dreamt of living on Skomer Island and working to engage visitors with the island's incredible wildlife, [Apply now...](#)



Celebrating Women in Science - meet the women protecting Welsh Wildlife

To celebrate the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, on 11th February, we want to showcase some of the incredible women who make up our

Annex B



Community Foundation Wales – Fund for Wales

Grants of between £500 – £2,000 will be awarded to small, volunteer-driven community organisations whose applications aim to deliver the following outcomes:

- Improving people’s chances in life
- Building stronger communities
- Improving rural and urban environments
- Encouraging healthier and more active people and communities
- Preserving heritage and culture

Grants can support full or partial costs of, for example: projects costs, small capital items & equipment, core costs, activities and programmes (e.g. room hire, transport costs, volunteer expenses, insurance, tutor fees, community events).

This Fund is open to constituted community-based charities and organisations (e.g. associations, social enterprises and clubs):

- whose beneficiaries are all in Wales
- with an income of less than £100,000 in the latest reported financial year
- which are volunteer-driven and have no more than one full-time equivalent member of staff throughout the year.

For further information and the grant application [Fund for Wales - Community Foundation Wales](#)