

Ceredigion Local Nature Partnership Meeting



Minutes

Date:	21/07/26
Location:	Tregaron Memorial Hall – Hybrid Teams

Present

Eryl Evans (Chair)	EE	County Councilor Llangybi , Ceredigion County Council
Gillian Clark (Minutes)	GC	Coordinator, Ceredigion Nature Partnership
Fiona Moran (Online)	FM	Biodiversity Assistant, Ceredigion Nature Partnership
Jake Rayson	JR	Biodiversity Assistant, Ceredigion Nature Partnership
Chris Harris	CH	Biodiversity Assistant, Ceredigion Nature Partnership
Norman Birch	NB	Trees and Hedgerows Officer Ceredigion County Council
Alex Muir	AM	National Trust
Alicia Leow-Dyke	ALD	Welsh Beaver Project
Alison Heal	AH	Former Senior Ecologist, Ceredigion County Council
Angie Polkey	AP	Purposeful Permaculture
Bob Jacques (Online)	BJ	Pencoed Top
Carys May	CM	WWBIC
Chris Worker (Online)	CW	Retired WG Biodiversity Officer
Claire Hannington	CHa	National Trust
Mara Morris	MM	Hafanau Heddwch Project Officer
Paul Taylor	PT	County Recorder, Butterfly Conservation
Rebecca Wright (Online)	BW	Natural Resources Wales
Rosie Hemsley	RH	Ceredigion Badger Group
Sian Jones	SJ	Translator
Tim Strang	TS	Farmer, Bwlchllan

1	Apologies: Jo Swannell, Liza Zanoni
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2	Notes of last meeting and matters arising
3	No matters arising from the previous meeting. No Minutes produced at last meeting.

4	Introductions from attendees
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5	Dates of Future Meetings
	Caerwedros Memorial Hall – Tuesday 20 th October

4	Coordinators Update
	GC reported that the Ceredigion Nature Festival had been a success despite road closures, hot weather and several late exhibitor cancellations. The event had outgrown the current venue and a move to Aberaeron is being considered for next year. A refundable deposit scheme for exhibitors may be introduced to reduce late cancellations. GC wanted people to be honest about late cancellations to assist with mitigation at future events. Procurement for wildlife infrastructure works including ponds, swift towers and other wildlife features is now underway.
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5	Member Updates and Discussion
5.1	PT reported an exceptionally busy butterfly season with large numbers of records across Ceredigion. The Big Butterfly Count is underway, and information leaflets were available for members. White-letter Hairstreak continues to produce encouraging records from new locations, together with good numbers of Purple Hairstreak. There has been a notable influx of Painted Lady butterflies this year together with high numbers of Clouded Yellow, particularly in north Ceredigion. Marsh Fritillary monitoring has also been positive, including a newly accessed privately-owned site where extensive populations were found. Following discussions with Natural Resources Wales, larval web surveys will begin earlier than usual this year
5.2	

	because development is more advanced. Volunteers are welcome to assist with survey work. Paul also advised that Butterfly Conservation Wales continues to experience recruitment difficulties.
5.3	CH reported that a new NRW management agreement is now in place at Coed y Bont covering habitat management, volunteer work and education activities. Monthly volunteer work parties continue alongside annual volunteer events. The organisation is investigating additional fundraising through its 100 Club as insurance and operating costs continue to rise. Work with the Red Squirrel Partnership also continues and further funding opportunities are being explored.
5.4	CHa provided an update on the National Trust's new ten-year strategy, explaining that following a significant organisational restructure, the Trust is now focusing its work around three key themes: Inspire, Restore Nature, and Access. Responsibility for species monitoring and engagement has largely been incorporated into the Access programme.
5.5	While habitat restoration remains a priority, there is now a much greater emphasis on ensuring that everyone can access and experience nature. Particular attention will be given to engaging young people and those on restricted incomes, recognising the impact of the current cost of living. Partnership working will become a greater focus over the coming years. The Trust intends to work more closely with local organisations and communities and is developing projects such as community allotments and other initiatives that encourage local involvement in nature conservation. Alex, the Trust's gardener, will also be supporting this work.
5.6	They will be exploring opportunities to work with local organisations, including Aberaeron Angling Club, to develop partnership approaches to river management. There is discussion about the Club taking responsibility for administering fishing licenses on a section of river in return for assisting with habitat management and engaging local young people in conservation activities. CHa also reported that the successful Flowers and Butterflies project came to an end in March. Although dedicated funding has now finished, efforts are continuing to maintain the community engagement established through the project by building on existing partnerships and making greater use of volunteers. They are reviewing how people use their sites and services. Feedback from visitors is being sought to better understand what people want from their visits and how sites can be managed to improve accessibility and visitor experience.
5.7	Further discussion took place on the Wildlife Trust's proposed partnership approach to river management. Members sought clarification on the location of the river section referred to and how the proposed fishing license arrangements would operate. It was explained that, although fishing rights would remain in place, the licensing process is now largely managed online, making it easier for anglers to obtain the necessary permits. The Trust is also considering the future use of QR codes to improve visitor engagement
5.8	

5.9 6.0 6.1 6.2 6.3	and gather feedback on how sites are being used and what visitors would like to see. Attendees discussed opportunities for wider partnership working within the Teifi catchment, including links with the Teifi River Catchment initiative. It was recognised that the Wildlife Trust manages land within the upper catchment, including peatland and bog habitats, and could play an important role in supporting landscape-scale catchment restoration. CHa confirmed that the Trust would welcome opportunities to work collaboratively with other organisations and local stakeholders. The discussion also focused on the challenges of managing Himalayan Balsam. It was acknowledged that complete eradication is not currently achievable due to the scale of infestation throughout the river catchment. Instead, the Trust is prioritising key locations where management efforts can have the greatest impact, with a particular emphasis on preventing the spread of the plant into woodland habitats. Members heard that the Trust is working with local communities and neighbouring landowners to gradually tackle the problem by coordinating management efforts further upstream. Members recognised that effective control of invasive species will require a long-term, collaborative approach involving multiple landowners and organisations across the catchment. CHa encouraged members to submit records of invasive species through LERC Wales or Aderyn, explaining that recording occurrences helps monitor the distribution and spread of invasive species and supports future management decisions. In response to a question regarding wildlife surveys, attendees were advised that most surveys are undertaken during the winter months, when reduced leaf cover improves visibility and survey conditions. Further survey work is planned during the coming winter. RH apologised to members for not yet following up on suggestions made after the previous meeting regarding promoting the Partnership and improving the recording of badger setts across the county. Attendees were advised that these discussions would be revisited once current work commitments allowed. During discussion, members considered badger behaviour following an observation of a badger seen during daylight hours. It was noted that, although badgers are generally nocturnal, daytime activity is not uncommon and may occur for a variety of reasons, including increased foraging activity. Attendees discussed the ecological importance of badgers, highlighting their role in seed dispersal through their movement across the landscape. It was recognised that, alongside their well-known ecological functions, badgers can contribute to the natural spread of plant species. Concern was expressed about the current situation for badgers in Wales. Members were encouraged to support petitions and campaigns relating to badger conservation where appropriate. EE also referred to recent reports of badger activity in a residential area, where concerns had been raised after badgers entered gardens. Discussion followed regarding the appropriate response to such incidents and the legal protections afforded to badgers. It was noted that where disease
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6.4 6.5	investigations are required, appropriate veterinary procedures and testing protocols must be followed. The discussion concluded with general agreement that continued public awareness, accurate species recording and partnership working remain important in supporting badger conservation and wider biodiversity objectives. TS provided an update on a collaborative farming and biodiversity recovery project that he and a neighbouring landowner have been developing over the past two years. Together, the partnership manages approximately 300 acres and is exploring how productive farming can be combined with large-scale biodiversity recovery. The project has successfully secured funding from Rewilding Britain to undertake a comprehensive ecological baseline assessment. This work will enable future monitoring of habitat condition and biodiversity gains while informing future land management decisions. A range of specialist ecological surveys has already been completed. Ornithological surveys, undertaken over six visits during the breeding season, have recorded approximately 38 bird species, including the successful nesting of Red Kite within the project area. Botanical surveys have also identified around 190 vascular plant species on TS's holding and over 200 species on the neighbouring farm. To provide a long-term record of environmental change, aerial photography, drone imagery and filming have been commissioned to establish a visual baseline. These surveys will be repeated periodically to monitor changes resulting from future management interventions. The project is committed to demonstrating that biodiversity recovery and sustainable food production can work together. Unlike some rewilding initiatives, there is no intention to cease farming activities; instead, the aim is to integrate farming with ambitious habitat restoration and nature recovery. At the request of the project, Natural Resources Wales commissioned a detailed eco-hydrological assessment of the peatland and SSSI within the site. The project includes approximately 20 acres of SSSI together with a larger adjoining SSSI extending across neighbouring land. The peatland forms an important part of the upper catchment, with water flowing into tributaries of the Afon Aeron, and the hydrological assessment has identified opportunities for restoring natural water movement and improving peatland condition. TS advised that several neighbouring farmers and smallholders have expressed an interest in becoming involved, with the intention of developing an informal landscape-scale cluster to consider collaborative habitat and water management across the wider catchment. Discussions have already begun with the West Wales Rivers Trust regarding opportunities for integrated catchment management. Two farm walks are planned for August to demonstrate the work being undertaken and encourage wider participation. One visit will focus on the management of marshy grassland and Molinia-dominated habitats, while also discussing the hydrological challenges associated with restoring degraded peatland.
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The eco-hydrological assessment highlighted the historical modification of the peatland through peat extraction and drainage, resulting in significant changes to water levels across the site. Attendees heard that the peat deposit remains exceptionally deep in places and that relatively modest hydrological interventions may offer opportunities to improve peatland function. However, any future restoration work would require the support and cooperation of neighbouring landowners.

TS also reported that the partnership has produced its first project newsletter and established a WhatsApp group to improve communication with local stakeholders. Additional baseline surveys are being arranged, including bat and butterfly surveys, together with a comprehensive hydrological survey of the wider site covering streams, ponds and other waterbodies.

Members welcomed the project and recognised it as an excellent example of collaborative, landscape-scale conservation that balances agricultural production with nature recovery. In response to a question regarding peatland restoration, **TS** confirmed that restoring the peatland is a key long-term objective, although any significant interventions will depend on further engagement with neighbouring landowners and agreement across the wider catchment. Attendees were encouraged to attend the forthcoming farm walks to learn more about the project.

CM provided an update on the Wild Watch events being delivered as part of the Your Wild Patch project. Since the previous meeting in April, 11 Wild Watch events have been held, attracting a total of 55 participants, with several attendees returning for additional sessions.

The next phase of the project will encourage participants to adopt their own local wildlife recording area. Participants will receive maps of their chosen area together with information on species that have previously been recorded there. Annual updates will then be provided to demonstrate how their records contribute to a better understanding of biodiversity across Ceredigion and to highlight the value of local biological recording. One planned event had to be postponed because of the exceptionally hot weather but has since been rescheduled.

CM thanked everyone involved in organising the Ceredigion Nature Festival, commenting that it had been an excellent event. Around 10 new subscribers signed up to the Centre's newsletter during the festival, and many additional members of the public visited the stand to discuss local wildlife recording and the Centre's work. Members welcomed the positive public engagement achieved through the event.

AH reported that she owns an area of ancient woodland and has been undertaking management work, including work relating to Larch trees. She also advised that she is a member of the Welsh Beekeepers of Ceredigion, which had a stand at the Ceredigion Nature Festival to promote beekeeping and raise public awareness. **AH** passed on apologies from Rachel Auckland, who was unable to attend the meeting, and conveyed Rachel's thanks to everyone involved in organising the festival.

In response to a question about identifying Yellow-legged Hornets, **AH** advised that their distinctive yellow legs are one of the key identifying

features. She explained that a single Yellow-legged Hornet can destroy an entire honeybee hive and stressed the importance of reporting suspected sightings. Members were informed that a dedicated telephone helpline and QR code are available to enable members of the public to seek advice on the appropriate next steps. **AH** also advised that a Yellow-legged Hornet nest had been discovered in Wrexham and had subsequently been destroyed.

CW was struggling with sound quality online but did not have an update to give.

BJ provided an update on the woodland restoration work being undertaken on his site through the Woodland Investment Grant. The project is focused on restoring a former Sitka Spruce plantation to a more diverse and resilient landscape by creating a mosaic of native woodland, open glades and heathland habitats.

BJ explained that contractors are due to begin work during August to remove regenerating Sitka Spruce from areas identified for restoration. The long-term aim is to improve habitat quality, increase structural diversity and enhance the site's value for a wide range of wildlife.

As part of the project, a borehole is being installed to provide a reliable water supply for conservation grazing. Grazing animals will play an important role in maintaining open habitats, controlling scrub regeneration and preventing the restored areas from reverting to dense woodland. Baseline ecological surveys have already demonstrated the biodiversity value of the site, recording a wide range of species and providing evidence that restoration work will build on an already important ecological resource. The project will continue to monitor changes over time to assess the benefits of the habitat management programme.

BJ advised that discussions are continuing with neighbouring landowners to explore opportunities for extending habitat restoration beyond the project boundary and creating greater landscape connectivity. The project is intended not only to restore woodland on a single site but also to contribute to wider nature recovery across the surrounding landscape through collaborative working.

Attendees welcomed the update and noted the potential for the project to complement other landscape-scale conservation initiatives being undertaken across Ceredigion. **CW** also highlighted the importance of retaining suitable conifer habitat and maintaining woodland connectivity to support future Red Squirrel conservation.

BW provided an update on behalf of **CF** who was unable to attend the start of the meeting. She advised that the Ceredigion Environment Team has been preparing Designated Site Management Plans to support the implementation of the Sustainable Farming Scheme. **BW** also reported that a new Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notification, covering species-rich neutral grassland, acid grassland and marshy grassland approximately five kilometres north-east of Lampeter, is currently progressing through the confirmation process.

	BW confirmed that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) officers have continued to work with PT on Marsh Fritillary conservation, including discussions relating to survey work and habitat management. Members were updated on the newly launched Living Teifi – People and Nature Together partnership, which has secured over £1.4 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for an initial two-year development phase. The project is being coordinated by NRW in partnership with the West Wales Rivers Trust, the Mining Remediation Authority, Strata Florida Trust, Mentera, Ceredigion County Council, the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. BW explained that the project will combine scientific evidence with local history, lived experience and creative engagement to support landscape-scale restoration while ensuring that people living and working within the catchment play a central role in shaping future work. BW advised that NRW is continuing to develop its strategic approach to nature recovery through its corporate wellbeing objective, Nature is Recovering. Current work includes strengthening resilient ecological networks, accelerating the programme of SSSI notifications and contributing towards the Welsh Government's commitment to protect and effectively manage 30% of land and sea by 2030 in line with the Global Biodiversity Framework. Members also heard that NRW is implementing a refreshed terrestrial monitoring strategy to improve understanding of the condition of protected sites and to assess progress towards restoring sites to favourable conservation status. Locally, NRW has begun working with the charity Plantlife on a new grassland project in the Tregaron area. The project is currently in its early stages and will focus on working with farmers to improve the ecological condition and resilience of priority grassland habitats. BW also highlighted forthcoming Community Flood Volunteer Network training opportunities for community groups and residents interested in flood preparedness, advising that further details would be circulated. Members were also informed that Nature Networks Fund Round 6 is now open for applications for large-scale projects valued at over £250,000. BW confirmed that details of future funding opportunities would continue to be shared through the Partnership newsletter where appropriate. An attendee asked whether the Living Teifi – People and Nature Together project would include the conservation of historic buildings and heritage features associated with the river corridor, or whether its primary focus was on river restoration. BW explained that, although she was not directly involved in delivering the project, the available information indicated that its primary aims are to respond to climate change, biodiversity loss and declining river health through catchment-scale restoration and by reconnecting people with nature. She noted, however, that the project also contains a heritage element and undertook to share further information with members.
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BREAK

7	STAFF UPDATES
7.0	NB introduced himself and explained that he had recently taken up the role of Tree and Hedgerows Officer at Ceredigion County Council. He outlined his statutory responsibilities, which include the administration and enforcement of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), the protection of trees within Conservation Areas and the enforcement of the Hedgerow Regulations. In addition to his statutory duties, NB advised that he is leading the establishment of a new Ceredigion Tree Warden Network in partnership with The Tree Council. The initiative aims to recruit volunteer Tree Wardens from communities across the county to champion trees, encourage community involvement and support local tree-related projects. The initial phase of the project will involve inviting Community Councils to nominate representatives, although membership will also be open to interested individuals.
7.1	NB explained that The Tree Council will provide training, advice and grant funding to support local projects. While tree planting remains an important aspect of the initiative, he stressed that greater emphasis is needed on the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, as many planting schemes fail due to a lack of aftercare. He noted that the network could also support educational activities, community engagement projects and a wide range of local conservation initiatives. Further information on the Tree Warden Network will be circulated through the Partnership newsletter.
7.2	NB clarified that his role within the Local Nature Partnership is separate from his statutory planning responsibilities. He explained that hedgerows have been protected under the Hedgerow Regulations since 1997 and that the removal of protected hedgerows requires notification to the Local Planning Authority. His principal statutory role remains the protection and management of trees and hedgerows through planning legislation. During discussion, attendees advised that they are working with Ceredigion County Council to identify mature elm trees that may warrant protection. NB confirmed that he had already been in contact with people regarding potential elm records and welcomed the offer of additional information. He requested that details of potential veteran elms be forwarded to him in spreadsheet format to assist with future assessments. NB explained that Tree Preservation Orders are primarily intended to protect trees that provide significant public amenity value. While biodiversity value is an important consideration, the principal criterion is whether a tree is visible and contributes to the public landscape. He noted that trees situated on Council-owned land are generally unlikely to be protected by Tree Preservation Orders, as the Council would effectively be regulating its own land management. However, privately owned trees that make an

7.3	important contribution to the public landscape may be suitable for designation. In response to questions from members, NB explained that Elm populations have been in long-term decline since the arrival of Dutch Elm Disease during the 1960s, making surviving mature specimens increasingly uncommon. He emphasised that Tree Preservation Orders are not restricted to particular species and may be applied to any tree that satisfies the relevant planning criteria. NB encouraged members to continue submitting requests for trees to be assessed for Tree Preservation Orders, explaining that any individual may request that a tree be considered for protection. The Local Planning Authority is required to assess each request against the relevant planning criteria. Further information and contact details are available on the Ceredigion County Council website, and members were encouraged to contact NB directly with any future enquiries or potential tree records. CH responsible for the Council's Local Nature Reserves provided an update on management activities across a number of reserves in Ceredigion. Regular volunteer sessions continue to play an important role in maintaining the sites, including habitat management, invasive species control and practical conservation work. Ongoing issues with fly-tipping, litter and unauthorised camping were highlighted, with regular clearance work continuing where necessary. CH reported that volunteer work has been undertaken at Bryn y Mor and Parc Natur Penglais with support from Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers (ACV). Work has included scrub clearance, path maintenance and habitat management, with further volunteer days planned for the autumn and winter. Invasive non-native species remain a significant management challenge across several reserves. Extensive work has been undertaken to control Snowberry, Rhododendron and Japanese Knotweed through a combination of manual removal and herbicide treatment. Members heard that long-term management will be required over a number of years to achieve effective control. Particular care is also being taken to prevent invasive species spreading into sensitive habitats. Badger surveys have been carried out at several reserve sites in partnership with the local Badger Group. Although no active setts were identified during one survey, evidence of badger activity was recorded, contributing to a better understanding of species distribution across the reserve network. CH advised that new interpretation boards are being installed at a number of sites to improve visitor information and encourage responsible behaviour, including messages relating to litter, camping and dog control. Work is also progressing to improve accessibility and visitor facilities at several reserves through path improvements and replacement infrastructure. At Parc Natur Penglais, habitat management has continued alongside surveys for butterflies, badgers and other wildlife. Members heard that the
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	reserve supports a diverse range of species and that further monitoring will continue. In New Quay, restoration work has continued within a former cottage garden reserve, where overgrown vegetation has been cleared and plans are being developed to increase community involvement through tree planting and wildflower creation. Monitoring of bird and bat boxes has also confirmed that several are now being used by wildlife. CH concluded by advising that reserve management remains focused on balancing habitat restoration, invasive species control, visitor access and community engagement, with much of the work being made possible through the support of volunteers and partner organisations. FM provided an update on a number of projects being delivered through the Dyfi Biosphere and the National Forest for Wales programme. Recent work has focused on developing collaborative woodland and catchment management plans for landowners within the Dyfi Estuary, bringing together organisations and private landowners on a voluntary basis to improve woodland management across the landscape. FM also reported on support being provided to Ceredigion County Council's nutrient management work through the development of a citizen science water monitoring project. The project aims to monitor water quality within rivers and, in time, extend into the marine environment. Members heard that there has been considerable public interest in participating, reflecting growing concern about river and coastal water quality. The project will also work alongside the Wildlife Trust to explore the use of environmental DNA (eDNA) monitoring and underwater camera technology to improve understanding of marine biodiversity. Further work has involved supporting students from the Centre for Alternative Technology to develop designs for wildlife-friendly structures within the built environment. The project is intended to encourage future architects and designers to incorporate biodiversity features into new developments. During discussion, an attendee asked whether the water monitoring project would adopt a whole-catchment approach rather than focusing solely on pollution indicators. FM explained that, while the current project is necessarily limited by available funding, the long-term aspiration is to contribute towards a broader understanding of river catchments by combining water quality monitoring with wider environmental data. Information gathered through the project will help build a better understanding of river and marine ecosystems and support future catchment management decisions. Members welcomed the update and expressed interest in hearing the results of the monitoring work as the project develops. JR provided an update on work being undertaken to support the Local Nature Partnership. They thanked all partners for their continued contributions to the Partnership, highlighting the collaborative approach that underpins many of its projects and recognising the considerable work
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	undertaken to organise meetings, produce newsletters, coordinate events and support the Partnership's day-to-day activities. JR reported on the successful completion of Stori Wyllt, an arts and wildlife project involving four primary schools across Ceredigion. The project culminated in an exhibition at the Ceredigion Nature Festival and was described as an excellent example of combining environmental education, creative arts and species identification to encourage children to engage with nature. The project has generated a number of ideas for future activities, including further opportunities to expand outdoor learning. Reflecting on wider Partnership activity, the attendees emphasised the growing importance of citizen science in supporting long-term monitoring and habitat management. They noted that many organisations and volunteers across the county are already undertaking valuable conservation work, and that one of the Partnership's key roles is to connect these activities, share knowledge and promote collaborative working. Attendees were informed that work is continuing on the Ceredigion Local Nature Partnership website. A key priority is the development of an interactive map showcasing Partnership projects, important sites and partner organisations across the county. This will help raise the profile of local conservation work, improve public awareness of projects taking place and encourage greater participation from communities and volunteers. JR outlined progress with a QR code fixed-point photography project, which will enable visitors and volunteers to upload repeat photographs from designated locations. The project will support long-term monitoring of habitat change while simultaneously promoting Partnership activities and providing a valuable photographic record for the website. Further work is being undertaken to develop educational resources that combine species identification with the Welsh language. Using photographs and translated species names, digital learning materials are being created to help schools and community groups learn Welsh, English and scientific names alongside wildlife identification. JR advised that they have recently completed the first year of a part-time Master's degree in Sustainable Planning and Environmental Policy at Cardiff University and are now beginning work on a dissertation. They indicated that they intend to develop research that has practical value for the Partnership and wider conservation work within Ceredigion. GC informed that the Nutrient Management Board has invited representation from the Local Nature Partnership. Rather than relying on a single representative, it was proposed that the Partnership should draw upon the collective expertise of its members, with attendees contributing to discussions according to their areas of knowledge and experience. This flexible approach would enable the Partnership to provide informed input on a wide range of topics, including farming, woodland management and biodiversity, and requests for assistance would be circulated through the Partnership newsletter as required. Additional update from TS
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	TS informed attendees that, following discussions with Richard Lucas at Aberystwyth University, he had begun exploring an innovative research programme that uses satellite imagery and remote sensing technology to monitor environmental change and assess the long-term impacts of habitat restoration and landscape management. TS explained that the project uses historical and contemporary satellite imagery to model how different environmental interventions may influence river systems and surrounding habitats over time. Referring to examples from Australia, he described how the technology has been used to assess the potential impacts of restoring riparian woodland and natural river processes, enabling researchers to evaluate likely effects on flood mitigation, water quality and wider ecosystem health. He noted that increasingly frequent and higher-resolution imagery now allows environmental change to be monitored almost in real time, providing an evidence base to predict the outcomes of future restoration measures. TS commented that this approach has particular relevance to landscape-scale nature recovery projects, where the objective is often to allow natural processes to guide habitat restoration with minimal intervention. He advised that the project, known as Living Wales, has significant potential to support evidence-based decision making and environmental planning, and that he hoped to provide a more detailed update to the Partnership as his understanding of the project develops. TS also highlighted EarthTrack, a complementary citizen science platform that enables members of the public to upload photographs and environmental observations. Although still in its early stages, the platform has the potential to generate a substantial environmental dataset by combining satellite imagery with information collected by local communities. In addition, TS reported that he had recently discussed community mapping and wildfire risk with researchers at Aberystwyth University. He observed that combining remotely sensed data with observations collected by local communities closely reflects the principles underpinning many Local Nature Partnership initiatives, including fixed-point photography and wider citizen science projects. Bringing together technological innovation and local knowledge was considered to offer significant opportunities to improve environmental monitoring and support future conservation work.	
Actions		

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7.1 7.2 7.3	In addition to his statutory duties, NB advised that he is leading the establishment of a new Ceredigion Tree Warden Network in partnership with The Tree Council. The initiative aims to recruit volunteer Tree Wardens from communities across the county to champion trees, encourage community involvement and support local tree-related projects. The initial phase of the project will involve inviting Community Councils to nominate representatives, although membership will also be open to interested individuals. NB explained that The Tree Council will provide training, advice and grant funding to support local projects. While tree planting remains an important aspect of the initiative, he stressed that greater emphasis is needed on the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, as many planting schemes fail due to a lack of aftercare. He noted that the network could also support educational activities, community engagement projects and a wide range of local conservation initiatives. Further information on the Tree Warden Network will be circulated through the Partnership newsletter. NB clarified that his role within the Local Nature Partnership is separate from his statutory planning responsibilities. He explained that hedgerows have been protected under the Hedgerow Regulations since 1997 and that the removal of protected hedgerows requires notification to the Local Planning Authority. His principal statutory role remains the protection and management of trees and hedgerows through planning legislation. During discussion, attendees advised that they are working with Ceredigion County Council to identify mature elm trees that may warrant protection. NB confirmed that he had already been in contact with people regarding potential elm records and welcomed the offer of additional information. He requested that details of potential veteran elms be forwarded to him in spreadsheet format to assist with future assessments. NB explained that Tree Preservation Orders are primarily intended to protect trees that provide significant public amenity value. While biodiversity value is an important consideration, the principal criterion is whether a tree is visible and contributes to the public landscape. He noted that trees situated on Council-owned land are generally unlikely to be protected by Tree Preservation Orders, as the Council would effectively be regulating its own land management. However, privately owned trees that make an important contribution to the public landscape may be suitable for designation. In response to questions from members, NB explained that Elm populations have been in long-term decline since the arrival of Dutch Elm Disease during the 1960s, making surviving mature specimens increasingly uncommon. He emphasised that Tree Preservation Orders are not restricted to particular species and may be applied to any tree that satisfies the relevant planning criteria. NB encouraged members to continue submitting requests for trees to be assessed for Tree Preservation Orders, explaining that any individual may request that a tree be considered for protection. The Local Planning Authority is required to assess each request against the relevant planning criteria. Further information and contact details are available on the Ceredigion County Council website, and members were encouraged to contact NB directly with any future enquiries or potential tree records.
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CH responsible for the Council's Local Nature Reserves provided an update on management activities across a number of reserves in Ceredigion. Regular volunteer sessions continue to play an important role in maintaining the sites, including habitat management, invasive species control and practical conservation work. Ongoing issues with fly-tipping, litter and unauthorised camping were highlighted, with regular clearance work continuing where necessary.

CH reported that volunteer work has been undertaken at Bryn y Mor and Parc Natur Penglais with support from Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers (ACV). Work has included scrub clearance, path maintenance and habitat management, with further volunteer days planned for the autumn and winter.

Invasive non-native species remain a significant management challenge across several reserves. Extensive work has been undertaken to control Snowberry, Rhododendron and Japanese Knotweed through a combination of manual removal and herbicide treatment. Members heard that long-term management will be required over a number of years to achieve effective control. Particular care is also being taken to prevent invasive species spreading into sensitive habitats.

Badger surveys have been carried out at several reserve sites in partnership with the local Badger Group. Although no active setts were identified during one survey, evidence of badger activity was recorded, contributing to a better understanding of species distribution across the reserve network.

CH advised that new interpretation boards are being installed at a number of sites to improve visitor information and encourage responsible behaviour, including messages relating to litter, camping and dog control. Work is also progressing to improve accessibility and visitor facilities at several reserves through path improvements and replacement infrastructure.

At Parc Natur Penglais, habitat management has continued alongside surveys for butterflies, badgers and other wildlife. Members heard that the reserve supports a diverse range of species and that further monitoring will continue. In New Quay, restoration work has continued within a former cottage garden reserve, where overgrown vegetation has been cleared and plans are being developed to increase community involvement through tree planting and wildflower creation. Monitoring of bird and bat boxes has also confirmed that several are now being used by wildlife.

CH concluded by advising that reserve management remains focused on balancing habitat restoration, invasive species control, visitor access and community engagement, with much of the work being made possible through the support of volunteers and partner organisations.

FM provided an update on a number of projects being delivered through the Dyfi Biosphere and the National Forest for Wales programme. Recent work has focused on developing collaborative woodland and catchment

	management plans for landowners within the Dyfi Estuary, bringing together organisations and private landowners on a voluntary basis to improve woodland management across the landscape. FM also reported on support being provided to Ceredigion County Council's nutrient management work through the development of a citizen science water monitoring project. The project aims to monitor water quality within rivers and, in time, extend into the marine environment. Members heard that there has been considerable public interest in participating, reflecting growing concern about river and coastal water quality. The project will also work alongside the Wildlife Trust to explore the use of environmental DNA (eDNA) monitoring and underwater camera technology to improve understanding of marine biodiversity. Further work has involved supporting students from the Centre for Alternative Technology to develop designs for wildlife-friendly structures within the built environment. The project is intended to encourage future architects and designers to incorporate biodiversity features into new developments. During discussion, an attendee asked whether the water monitoring project would adopt a whole-catchment approach rather than focusing solely on pollution indicators. FM explained that, while the current project is necessarily limited by available funding, the long-term aspiration is to contribute towards a broader understanding of river catchments by combining water quality monitoring with wider environmental data. Information gathered through the project will help build a better understanding of river and marine ecosystems and support future catchment management decisions. Members welcomed the update and expressed interest in hearing the results of the monitoring work as the project develops. JR provided an update on work being undertaken to support the Local Nature Partnership. They thanked all partners for their continued contributions to the Partnership, highlighting the collaborative approach that underpins many of its projects and recognising the considerable work undertaken to organise meetings, produce newsletters, coordinate events and support the Partnership's day-to-day activities. JR reported on the successful completion of Stori Wyllt, an arts and wildlife project involving four primary schools across Ceredigion. The project culminated in an exhibition at the Ceredigion Nature Festival and was described as an excellent example of combining environmental education, creative arts and species identification to encourage children to engage with nature. The project has generated a number of ideas for future activities, including further opportunities to expand outdoor learning. Reflecting on wider Partnership activity, the attendees emphasised the growing importance of citizen science in supporting long-term monitoring and habitat management. They noted that many organisations and volunteers across the county are already undertaking valuable conservation work, and that one of the Partnership's key roles is to connect these activities, share knowledge and promote collaborative working.
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Attendees were informed that work is continuing on the Ceredigion Local Nature Partnership website. A key priority is the development of an interactive map showcasing Partnership projects, important sites and partner organisations across the county. This will help raise the profile of local conservation work, improve public awareness of projects taking place and encourage greater participation from communities and volunteers.

JR outlined progress with a QR code fixed-point photography project, which will enable visitors and volunteers to upload repeat photographs from designated locations. The project will support long-term monitoring of habitat change while simultaneously promoting Partnership activities and providing a valuable photographic record for the website.

Further work is being undertaken to develop educational resources that combine species identification with the Welsh language. Using photographs and translated species names, digital learning materials are being created to help schools and community groups learn Welsh, English and scientific names alongside wildlife identification.

JR advised that they have recently completed the first year of a part-time Master's degree in Sustainable Planning and Environmental Policy at Cardiff University and are now beginning work on a dissertation. They indicated that they intend to develop research that has practical value for the Partnership and wider conservation work within Ceredigion.

GC informed that the Nutrient Management Board has invited representation from the Local Nature Partnership. Rather than relying on a single representative, it was proposed that the Partnership should draw upon the collective expertise of its members, with attendees contributing to discussions according to their areas of knowledge and experience. This flexible approach would enable the Partnership to provide informed input on a wide range of topics, including farming, woodland management and biodiversity, and requests for assistance would be circulated through the Partnership newsletter as required.

Additional update from **TS**

TS informed attendees that, following discussions with Richard Lucas at Aberystwyth University, he had begun exploring an innovative research programme that uses satellite imagery and remote sensing technology to monitor environmental change and assess the long-term impacts of habitat restoration and landscape management.

TS explained that the project uses historical and contemporary satellite imagery to model how different environmental interventions may influence river systems and surrounding habitats over time. Referring to examples from Australia, he described how the technology has been used to assess the potential impacts of restoring riparian woodland and natural river processes, enabling researchers to evaluate likely effects on flood mitigation, water quality and wider ecosystem health. He noted that increasingly frequent and higher-resolution imagery now allows environmental change to be monitored almost in real time, providing an evidence base to predict the outcomes of future restoration measures.

	TS commented that this approach has particular relevance to landscape-scale nature recovery projects, where the objective is often to allow natural processes to guide habitat restoration with minimal intervention. He advised that the project, known as Living Wales, has significant potential to support evidence-based decision making and environmental planning, and that he hoped to provide a more detailed update to the Partnership as his understanding of the project develops. TS also highlighted EarthTrack, a complementary citizen science platform that enables members of the public to upload photographs and environmental observations. Although still in its early stages, the platform has the potential to generate a substantial environmental dataset by combining satellite imagery with information collected by local communities. In addition, TS reported that he had recently discussed community mapping and wildfire risk with researchers at Aberystwyth University. He observed that combining remotely sensed data with observations collected by local communities closely reflects the principles underpinning many Local Nature Partnership initiatives, including fixed-point photography and wider citizen science projects. Bringing together technological innovation and local knowledge was considered to offer significant opportunities to improve environmental monitoring and support future conservation work.	
Actions		

7	PRESENTATIONS	
7.0	Caring for God's Acre	
7.1	MM delivered a presentation on the Caring for God's Acre Hafan project, a Wales-wide Heritage Lottery funded initiative working with burial grounds of all faiths and denominations to enhance biodiversity, conserve historic monuments and strengthen community engagement. The project is currently in its development phase and is working with approximately 50 burial grounds across Wales to develop case studies and trial new approaches to ecological management. MM outlined opportunities including ecological surveys, habitat management plans, veteran yew tree case studies, environmental DNA (eDNA) soil sampling, monument recording and volunteer engagement. Attendees were encouraged to identify suitable burial grounds, veteran yew trees and community groups that could contribute to the project and support future delivery across Wales. Discussion:	
7.2	Attendees asked whether this was the first Caring for God's Acre project to be delivered in Wales. MM explained that an earlier biodiversity project had been undertaken in north-east Wales and that the current programme builds	

7.3	upon that work with the intention of establishing a longer-term Wales-wide project. Discussion also covered the identification and management of veteran yew trees, collaboration with emerging Tree Warden Networks, and opportunities to share information on suitable sites and local volunteer groups. Arrangements were also made for a site visit to Llanrhystud Churchyard following the meeting. Ceredigion Local Nature Partnership Update Presentation JR provided an overview of current and emerging work being undertaken through the Ceredigion Local Nature Partnership. The presentation highlighted the importance of collaboration in responding to climate change and biodiversity loss, together with the development of a Partnership website that will improve connectivity between organisations, projects and sites through interactive mapping. JR also described ongoing work with schools, artists and ecologists to promote environmental education and community engagement, alongside proposals for a Community Enterprise Agroforestry initiative that would combine habitat creation, sustainable land management and outdoor learning. Attendees were invited to consider opportunities to collaborate and to identify suitable sites and landowners interested in supporting future demonstration projects. Discussion: Attendees sought clarification on the meaning of agroforestry within the proposed project. JR explained that this involved integrating trees into productive agricultural systems to improve resilience, biodiversity and land management. Further discussion considered Welsh Government and National Forest for Wales grant opportunities, including support for lower-density tree planting, orchards and silvopasture. Attendees also highlighted the value of establishing demonstration sites where farmers and land managers could see successful agroforestry approaches in practice. Welsh Beaver Project Presentation ALD of the Welsh Beaver Project delivered a presentation outlining the history and objectives of the project, which is led by the North Wales Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Welsh Wildlife Trusts. The presentation summarised the ecological evidence supporting the reintroduction of beavers as a native species and described ongoing work to assess suitable release sites and enclosed management projects across Wales. Particular attention was given to the role of beavers in restoring wetlands, improving water quality, increasing biodiversity and contributing to natural flood management and climate resilience. Examples from existing projects demonstrated how beaver activity can enhance habitats, retain water within catchments and support wider ecosystem recovery.
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	Discussion Following the presentation, attendees discussed the practical management of beavers within enclosed sites and the distinction between enclosed conservation projects and wider wild reintroductions. Questions focused on beaver behaviour, habitat requirements and the environmental benefits associated with their activity, particularly in relation to water management, peatland restoration and climate adaptation. The discussion recognised the value of continued evidence gathering to inform future decisions regarding the role of beavers in nature recovery across Wales.	
Actions		