

Attendees:

Gary Mitchell (GM) – Social Farms & Gardens
Mark Cleaver (MCI) – Monmouthshire County Council
Nigel Leaworthy (NL) – Monmouthshire County Council
Peter Frost (PF) – Natural Resources Wales
Andrew Lucas (AL) – Natural Resources Wales
Natasha de Vere (NdV) – National Botanic Garden of Wales
Angus Garbutt (AG) – Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Francis Gellatly (FG) – Animal Plant Health Agency
Liam Olds (LO) – Buglife
John Bowles (JB) – Welsh Beekeepers Association
Tim Wroblewski (TW) – TACP
Tom Holmes (TH) - Welsh Government
Kathleen Carroll (KC) – Welsh Government
Marc Carlton (MCA) – Wildlife Gardening Forum
Keith Davies (KD) – Welsh Bee Keepers

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Kathleen Carroll opened the meeting by welcoming the members. Introductions were made and apologies were offered from those who were unable to attend on the day.

2. Botanic Garden's Saving Pollinators programme

Natasha de Vere gave a presentation on the Botanic Garden's Saving Pollinators programme which covers their plants for pollinators' research and their Growing the Future project.

She discussed the DNA metabarcoding project, which is the first of its kind. This technique highlights the plants pollinators visit. This is in addition to some other projects been undertaken by PhD students on Honey bee foraging and which plants they use of those available.

Natasha also mentioned work been undertaken to test commercial seed mixes and their attractiveness to pollinators, with new seed mixes being created with the support of scientific evidence.

3. Wales Threatened Bee Reports and B-lines

Liam Olds gave a presentation on the Wales Threatened Bee Reports (https://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Wales%20Threatened%20Bee%20Report_FINAL_0.pdf) and B-Lines, which highlights how certain species of bees are faring in Wales, alongside demonstrating how 'B-lines' can be part of the solution to enhancing, restoring and creating new habitat.

PF suggested that a national apprenticeships scheme for entomologists would help increase numbers. LO advised it took him three years to qualify.

4. Mitigation work for pollinators on Newtown Bypass

Tim Wroblewski presented to the group information on the work undertaken on the Newtown Bypass to alleviate congestion on the town centre.

The Minister gave the 'Green light' for this project in 2016, when construction began and the road was officially opened in February 2019.

Tim advised that the plan was to use a seed mix from a local SSSI, however, due to timing this wasn't possible. In future, longer lead times and planning during design stages would aid in sourcing and using local seed mix.

Tim provided some statistics on the work undertaken and highlighted the 6.2km of newly planted hedgerow, 88,945 planted plants & 195 individual trees planted.

5. Work of the National Bee Unit – Asian Hornet Track and Trace

Francis Gellalty gave a presentation on the work of the National Bee Unit and advised the Bee Inspectors had started work on the 1st April.

Notifications of alleged sightings of Asian Hornets have raised from 3,000 in 2016, to 8,000 in 2018. Francis advised that when the NBU are certain they are dealing with a positive sighting of an Asian Hornet a Press Release is issued through DEFRA.

6. UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS) update

Angus Garbutt updated the group on the current situation with PoMS, which concentrates on bees and hoverflies specifically, alongside other species. Angus explained volunteers undertake a Flower-Insect timed (FIT) count, which counts all insects that land on target flowers within 50x50cm patch, during a 10 minute period. These counts take place during the warmer/drier months (April – September) in Urban and countryside locations. The survey is designed to detect broad GB-level changes in pollinator groups and some species. Angus went on to explain the progress made in 2018 and stressed there were vacant squares available, if there was any interest from the group to undertake some monitoring.

7. Action Plan for Pollinators Taskforce updates

Consultations

Gary Mitchell advised the group, Welsh Government had consulted on Allotments nationally, sadly there were only 14 responses. Gary mentioned he'd been involved in a face to face meeting with the Ministerial committee, where he was able to voice concerns, emphasising there was too little recording and monitoring. There will be a paper being released shortly advising of a plan of action.

Area Statements

Peter Frost provided an update on Area Statements and that NRW will be going out to wider consultation in August. Peter advised workshops would be taking place in Bangor and Cardiff, however, there are vast amounts of mapping work to be undertaken.

Bee Friendly update

KC advised the board that Bee champions have been working together to update the action guide.

Jan Miller (JM) has mentioned in her comments that the quote on page 3, there was a general agreement for a new quote.

KC suggested that there was a useful quote in LO's presentation and requested suggestions for a new quote from member within the week.

AG requested that the quote be something positive, PF advised that research shows positive statements derive hope.

KC mentioned that JM had mentioned listing her webpages/books in the Action Guide, however, she was concerned that this could be seen as directly promoting business. The group agreed to retain the current level of information.

NdV suggested that the bumble bee conservation have a useful new tool which could be utilised.

PF suggested having links on the website, so it can be updated periodically, rather than the Action Guide being updated frequently.

Members expressed concerns around an A5 booklet, it would be easy to read in print, though far more difficult electronically. It was discussed that a printer friendly version would be useful with very little pictures/colour.

NdV questioned whether the stance on pesticides on page 15 was the stance we wanted to take. NdV suggested that if anyone wanted to become Bee Friendly then they shouldn't use pesticides. TH mentioned that not all people reading this guide will become Bee Friendly and we have a responsibility to ensure these chemicals, which are widely available are used responsibly.

NL advised Monmouthshire have reduced the use of pesticides and Glyphosate has been reduced by a third. Some is used on INNS, little use on highways and they are currently trialing the use of citric acid for elimination of moss in play areas.

AL stressed that we need to remember that becoming Bee Friendly is a journey and not a destination.

KC requested any further comments on the action guide by the end of the week.

Welsh Government (WG) – Future Land Management

Members were advised that WG are due to make an announcement in May and launch the consultation for the Royal Welsh Show. Once the consultation is launched, Simon Bilsborough has agreed to join taskforce members in a teleconference to discuss the consultation. KC agreed to arrange this when the consultation is published.

Welsh Government – Green Corridors

KC advised members that the remit for the new scheme is a lot broader and the gateways into Wales have been planted with daffodils. KC advised Samantha will be present at the next meeting and any upcoming workshops will be shared with members.

Monmouthshire Council roadside verges management

MCI advised that Monmouthshire only now cut roadside verges in June, totalling about 6-8 weeks, start to finish. Rather than three times a year as was the norm, previously. He explained, although verges are being cut, the Council are looking to reduce cuts to other areas as compensation. Monmouthshire are striving to meet public expectation and continually make improvements.

JB suggested that the removal of scrub and restoration of grassland concerns him. This is often carried out for no beneficial reasons.

8. Next Meeting

Members agreed to a date in October 2019. KC to follow up with a confirmed date.