



Llangattock Green Valleys newsletter

Issue 122
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<http://www.llangattockgreenvalleys.org/>

REGISTER FOR A SURVEY

By Peter Blood

About 80% of the houses people will be living in, in 2050, have already been built and one third of the current housing stock was built before 1919, so most of those are not energy efficient. While legislation to outlaw fossil-fuelled cars will take effect within about 10 years, even if regulations required all new homes to be highly energy efficient, this would only benefit 20% of properties existing in 2050.

The way forward is to reduce the energy needed to keep the house warm by making retrofitted improvements to the fabric of houses we already have. That will reduce emissions and save energy and money no matter how the house is heated and, in many cases, it will make heat pumps a viable option.

Since about 70% of housing in Wales is owner-occupied, the responsibility to make these improvements rests with many of us individually but it's not easy. What needs to be done to my house? Where can I get unbiased advice? What will it cost? Where do I begin?



*Wall insulation being fitted to an old property
(Not all retrofits are as drastic as this!)*

Powys Home Energy Surveys

Llangattock Green Valleys (LGV) is taking part in a scheme set up by Powys Action on the Climate Emergency (PACE) to help house-owners get an initial idea of what can be done to their house to improve its heat retention. Home energy surveys will be done by trained volunteers completing a questionnaire with the homeowner, which will be used by domestic energy experts to write a report with recommendations, where possible including details of local advisors. The report will enable the homeowner to plan further steps, seeking professional advice where necessary. The Community Renewal Fund is subsidising 50 Home Energy Audits in Powys, to be completed by the end of June.

This scheme is an extension of one operated for some years in the Newtown area by the charity Lightfoot Enterprises <https://lightfootenterprises.org/>. Lightfoot will train the volunteer surveyors and compile the reports. The surveys will be available at a reduced price of £35 for able-to-pay households, thanks to the funding provided to PACE. LGV hopes that it will be possible to continue surveys of this kind after this scheme funded through PACE has ended.

Installing a new boiler will only reduce the energy consumption if the boiler is more efficient than the old one because the house needs the same amount of energy from the boiler to keep it warm.

Register for a survey

If you are contemplating making home energy improvements and are interested in a Powys home energy survey, please complete the form at:

<https://lightfootenterprises.org/household-energy-surveys/>. If you know someone who would benefit from the survey, please share it with them.

Preference will be given to households that have not already had a survey and households in fuel poverty; surveys are also subject to the availability of a volunteer. LGV would like to spread the surveys across the Crickhowell, Llangynidr, Llangattock, Cwm Du, Bwlch and Vale of Grwyney region.

If you have any questions, please email peter.blood@llangattockgreenvalleys.org

ENERGY GENERATION PROJECTS

By Steve Sharp

Hydro schemes update

From October 2021 to February 2022 in South Wales there was half the rainfall of two years ago and 20% less than last year, so generation from our five hydro schemes was correspondingly lower.

The recent storms Eunice and Franklin caused a lot of rainfall which helped to boost our hydro generation figures but, along with the devastation to many parts of the UK, three of our hydro schemes experienced power cuts. We were thankful that our maintenance manager Jed was able to get these schemes up and running again within about 24 hours and at Cwm Gu he noticed how close a large tree had fallen to the turbine house.



Fallen tree near Cwm Gu turbine house



SPRING TIME ACTIVITY

By Jackie Charlton

The Otter

LCW volunteers have suspected that an otter has been around our stream or in the canal for several years now. Some time ago we optimistically built an otter holt and put a photograph in this newsletter. Well now we know we have an otter which has been filmed several times on a static wildlife camera. Not sure whether it is a female or male but my suspicion is this is a young lady. There is a video available on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/llangattockcommunitywoodlands/>. This was taken in the first week in March.



The Woodlanders



Last summer, The Woodlanders, our young band of very enthusiastic environmentalists and general all-round 'very good at playing' group were awarded funds from Powys County Council as part of the Covid Community Renewal Fund. Over the winter



months, Powys offered more support for the group to come together once again, to get to know one another after another 'lockdown' in January. During the first weekend in March, the group opened several activities to local children including rock climbing in Llangorse and model making in Crickhowell. The aim was not just about bringing the children back into social groups but also to support local businesses that had been badly impacted by Covid because of closures and lockdowns.

Other News



LCW volunteers are very grateful to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority for supporting our funding application for improvements to the Alder Carr site. It has made access easier, enabling us to finally get funds to put the footings down for a secure shed and compost toilet. Our volunteer base has grown a lot in the last 12 months and we now have five women attending on a regular basis, contributing to all aspects of our volunteering activity. Facilities in the woods are not ideal for a mixed group.



The temporary matting over the entrance to the site was quite expensive but extremely useful. There were two areas where vehicles could not access the wood or get on to the site. Drainage is being put down during the summer months but we weren't able to deliver wood for a few weeks at a crucial time in the year. This has now been resolved.



BOB'S BEE NOTES

The bees have been out flying for a few months on days when the weather has been mild enough for them to do so. On a recent inspection, when the weather improved, we noticed that one of the two woodland colonies had no bees coming out of the doorway. We felt an examination was needed, even though it was risky in the cold, to see what had happened. To our disappointment, we found the bees were dead and the Queen was on her own on top of one of the frames. It is not unusual to see a dead Queen on her own as she is usually the last bee to die in a doomed colony.



We worked hard last year to rear some new Queens. For some reason none of the new Queens survived, even though there were lots of bees in the hives at the time and they were mating. This Queen pictured here was one from a previous year; you can see the white mark on her head which makes her easier to see in the hive. When a colony dies out, we look for any cause that might be associated with disease as other colonies will steal any remaining stores and take the disease with them back to their hive along with the honey. A sample of about thirty dead bees are taken from the hive and the contents of their gut examined under a times four hundred magnification microscope to look for bee disease. Any remaining old comb is melted down and the beeswax used to make candles or polish, other debris is used to start our cooking fire.

The summer weather was strange at times last year, as we could see from the lack of fruit set on our apple trees and poor crop of soft fruit on the allotment bushes in Llangattock. The other disappointment was no surplus honey last year, probably due to the weather again. It was disappointing that last year we had no produce at all from the Llangattock Community



Woodland hives but this was the experience of many beekeepers locally. We will start planning in the next few weeks what to do with our remaining hive and how we might build up some additional hives.

Let's hope for a better year in 2022, when we know the sun will shine and we can give our bees the support they need to grow and survive.

Bee Bob.



LCW Trustees are justly proud of the commitment and enthusiasm of all our volunteers. We meet regularly every Tuesday and you can find information on where and when we meet on our website www.lcwg.btck.co.uk. If you are interested in environmental management, green wood crafts or bee keeping then please do get in touch. Please email Eric Gower eric.gower@gmail.com for a membership form.

STUMP UP FOR TREES

By Steve Sharp

I had heard a lot about Stump Up For Trees (SUFT) and the good work it was doing locally and had seen founder Keith Powell on the BBC news back in 2020, with his bracken-basher machine, cutting the charity's name into the hillside at Bryn Arw to help publicise what was the first tree planting project on common land in Wales. Since then, SUFT has generated significant publicity on television programmes such as Countryfile and has created much local and political support for its aim to plant over a million native, broadleaf trees in Wales.



Therefore, when I was considering planting a 50-metre hedge on our field just outside Llangattock last month, I contacted SUFT to see if this was something they could help with. Co-founder Rob Penn, who has written several tree-related books and is patron of the Small Woods Association, contacted me to confirm they could provide the trees and the manpower to plant them and could do so in about a month's time. Great!

Next up was a Site Assessment visit by SUFT Field Officer Mark Morgan, who confirmed that the site met all their criteria. We had to agree to look after the hedge for at least four years (twelve years for trees) and ensure it wasn't damaged. In return, as SUFT gets financial support from the Welsh Government and commercial sponsors, there would be no cost to us.

Planting day came and first to the site was Rob, with a boot full of small hedge whips of native varieties including hawthorn, hazel, dog rose, wild cherry and rowan and some canes and guards. Initially, we didn't want plastic tree guards but as our field is currently home to lots of rabbits and other animals which may take a liking to young trees, we asked for guards on all but the hawthorn and we agreed to monitor these and to report back whether the hawthorn prickles are sufficient to prevent them being nibbled.

About fifteen volunteers soon arrived, a few travelling from as far away as Cardiff, and by 10am our field was full of chatter and laughter, as most of them knew each other well. Although the banter and conversation didn't stop, it was clear that everyone was keen to get the young trees into the ground and knew what to do. The canes and guards had been laid out along the hedge line and the whips were planted about a foot apart, in three rows.

Apart from the camaraderie, the volunteers seemed to enjoy doing something different and which is beneficial to the environment and out in the fresh, Black Mountains air. When we appeared during the break with some drinks and my wife's courgette cake, quite a few of the volunteers seemed surprised, as they are more used to planting trees on mountain ridges and in fields a long way from houses with kettles. The planting of over 400 small hedge plants was completed within 3 hours, which amazed us, and we are really pleased with the end result!

If you want to find out more about SUFT, or make a donation to support the great work that they do, see <https://stumpupfortrees.org/>. To find out more about becoming a SUFT volunteer, see <https://stumpupfortrees.org/get-involved/>. Tree planting starts again in November but over the summer months there are plenty of things to do such as tree maintenance at upland planting sites, ecological surveys and even ancient tree recording.

LACAS

By Sue Cartlidge

Here at the allotment site we are all looking forward to another growing season, covers are coming off the earth, and potatoes are chitting on windowsills! If you are thinking of growing your own this year, we still have a few plots available. If you do decide that you would like to take on a plot, then please message Sue Cartlidge who is Membership Secretary for LACAS on 07977-912092 or email langattockallotments@gmail.com.

A while ago we were burgled and our strimmers and rotavator were stolen. Fortunately, our insurance covered the loss and we are in the process of replacing the lost equipment, as well as the locks on the containers!!

Unfortunately, we are having to raise our fees this year so that a full plot will now cost £40, a half-plot £25, and a quarter-plot £15.

We are planning to join the National Allotment Society. The benefits of joining are a quarterly members' only e-newsletter that can be read on their website, advice and support if our site is under threat, retail offers, gardening advice and free allotmenters' liability insurance.

The Big Lunch: In better times we were able to host a Big Lunch early in the summer and this year we are going to do it again, hooray! The obvious celebration is the Queen's Platinum Jubilee – but even if you're not a royalist do join us on Sunday 5th June from 11.30 onwards when we will have tables and chairs, maybe a marquee and space for you to bring a dish of something delicious to share with your neighbours. All welcome! There may even be a BBQ for you to toast the odd burger.....more news nearer the date.

Oak Tree: The very aged and rotten oak tree near to our main gate has been cut back (see pic) to get rid of dangerous branches. Hopefully these will be put to good use in the park next door as seating near to the zip wire. The main trunk has been left for wildlife to nest in or munch.



Retrofit Masterclass: Demystifying the skills!



This Masterclass is a first step in upskilling to meet the retrofit demand. The course will build on your existing skills and introduce you to retrofit, equipping you with knowledge of key technical refurbishment topics that are crucial to successful retrofit programmes.

After completing the course, learners will be able to:

- Understand why retrofit is important in reducing carbon emissions
- Investigate a whole house approach before considering PAS 2035 accreditation.
- Develop an appreciation for what makes a successful retrofit project.
- Improve awareness of key technical refurbishment topics including: Moisture awareness, Airtightness, Exposure, Internal/External wall insulation, Building physics. Unintended consequences, Renewable energy technologies, Heat pumps
- Consider the opportunities that the retrofit challenge represents.

Learners who complete this course will gain CPD Certification whilst expanding retrofit knowledge.

This course has no formal entry requirements. It is suited to those wishing to supplement their understanding of domestic retrofit's key principles and will be of interest to: Builders, tradespeople, surveyors, architects and building designers, project managers, site managers, materials suppliers installers and assessors.

COURSE DATES

Monday 25th April to
Friday 29th April
or
Tuesday 3rd May to
Saturday 7th May

Each programme is delivered over 5 days, Day 1 is online, Days 2 to 5 are on the CAT site and will include opportunities for practical 'hands on' learning.

Applications are welcome from those living or working in Powys.

This project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund and participants will be reimbursed for their time up to £1,000 for their participation and completion of the training. The offer of a place includes food and accommodation whilst training on the CAT site.

Tuition and course materials for this bootcamp will be in English.

To find out more and register your interest in applying for a place please contact courses@cat.org.uk



UK Government Wales
Llywodraeth y DU Cymru



Centre for Alternative Technology
Canolfan y Dechnoleg Amgen



Dosbarth Meistr mewn Ôl-osod: Dadgyfrino'r sgiliau!



Y Dosbarth Meistr hwn yw'r cam cyntaf tuag at uwchsgilio i gwrdd â'r galw am ôl-osod. Bydd y cwrs yn adeiladu ar eich sgiliau cyfredol ac yn eich cyflwyno i ôl-osod, gan roi gwybodaeth i chi am bynciau adnewyddu technegol allweddol sy'n hanfodol i raglenni ôl-osod llwyddiannus.

Ar ôl cwblhau'r cwrs, bydd y dysgwyr yn gallu:

- Deall pam y mae ôl-osod yn bwysig o ran lleihau allyriadau carbon
- Ymchwilio i dull tŷ cyfan cyn ystyried achrediad PAS 2035.
- Datblygu gwerthfawrogiad o'r hyn sy'n gwneud prosiect ôl-osod yn llwyddiannus.
- Gwella ymwybyddiaeth am bynciau adnewyddu technegol allweddol gan gynnwys: Ymwybyddiaeth am leithder, Aerdyndra, Cyswllt, Insiwleiddio waliau mewnol/allanol, Ffiseg adeiladu, Canlyniadau anfwriadol, Technolegau ynni adnewyddadwy a Phympiau gwres.
- Ystyried y cyfleoedd y mae'r her ôl-osod yn eu cynnig

Bydd y dysgwyr sy'n cwblhau'r cwrs hwn yn ennill Tystysgrif Datblygiad Proffesiynol Parhaus (DPP) wrth ehangu eu gwybodaeth am ôl-osod.

Nid oes unrhyw ofynion mynediad ffurfiol ar gyfer y cwrs hwn. Mae'n addas ar gyfer y rhai sy'n dymuno ychwanegu at eu dealltwriaeth am brif egwyddorion ôl-osod a bydd o ddiddordeb i: adeiladwyr, crefftwyr, syrfewyr, penseiri a dylunwyr adeiladau, rheolwyr prosiectau, rheolwyr safleoedd adeiladu, cyflenwyr deunyddiau, gosodwyr ac aseswyr.

DYDDIADAU'R CWRS

Dydd Llun 25^{ain} Ebrill
i Ddydd Gwener 29^{ain} Ebrill
neu
Ddydd Mawrth 3^{ydd} Mai
i Ddydd Sadwrn 7^{fed} Mai

Cyflwynir pob rhaglen dros 5 diwrnod. Bydd y diwrnod cyntaf ar-lein, a diwrnodau 2-5 ar safle CyDA lle bydd cyfleoedd ar gyfer dysgu ymarferol.

Croesewir ceisiadau oddi wrth bobl sy'n byw neu'n gweithio ym Mhowys.

Ariennir y prosiect hwn gan Lywodraeth y DU drwy Gronfa Adnewyddu Cymunedol y DU a bydd cyfranogwyr yn derbyn ad-daliad o hyd at £1000 am eu hamser am gymryd rhan a chwblhau'r hyfforddiant. Mae'r cynnig o le ar y cwrs yn cynnwys bwyd a llety tra'n hyfforddi ar safle CyDA.

Bydd yr hyfforddiant ar deunydd cwrs ar gyfer y bwt-camp hwn yn Saesneg yn unig

I ganfod mwy ac i gofrestru eich diddordeb mewn gwneud cais am le, cysylltwch â courses@cat.org.uk

 UK Government Wales
Llywodraeth y DU Cymru

 Centre for Alternative Technology
Canolfan y Dechnoleg Amgen

 Powys

LGV VOLUNTEERS NEEDED PLEASE! CAN YOU HELP?

We are looking for a number of people who would like to get involved at Director and non-Director level. Please get in touch with Simon Walter if you would like to explore the ways in which you can help: admin@llangattockgreenvalleys.org. You can meet our Board of Directors [here](#).

We'd also like to get a few more volunteers involved in monitoring the hydro schemes and taking readings. This would only take around an hour or so once every 6-9 weeks.

If you are interested in helping, please contact Simon Walter using the email below:
admin@llangattockgreenvalleys.org

