



Llangattock Green Valleys newsletter

Issue 103
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<http://www.llangattockgreenvalleys.org/>

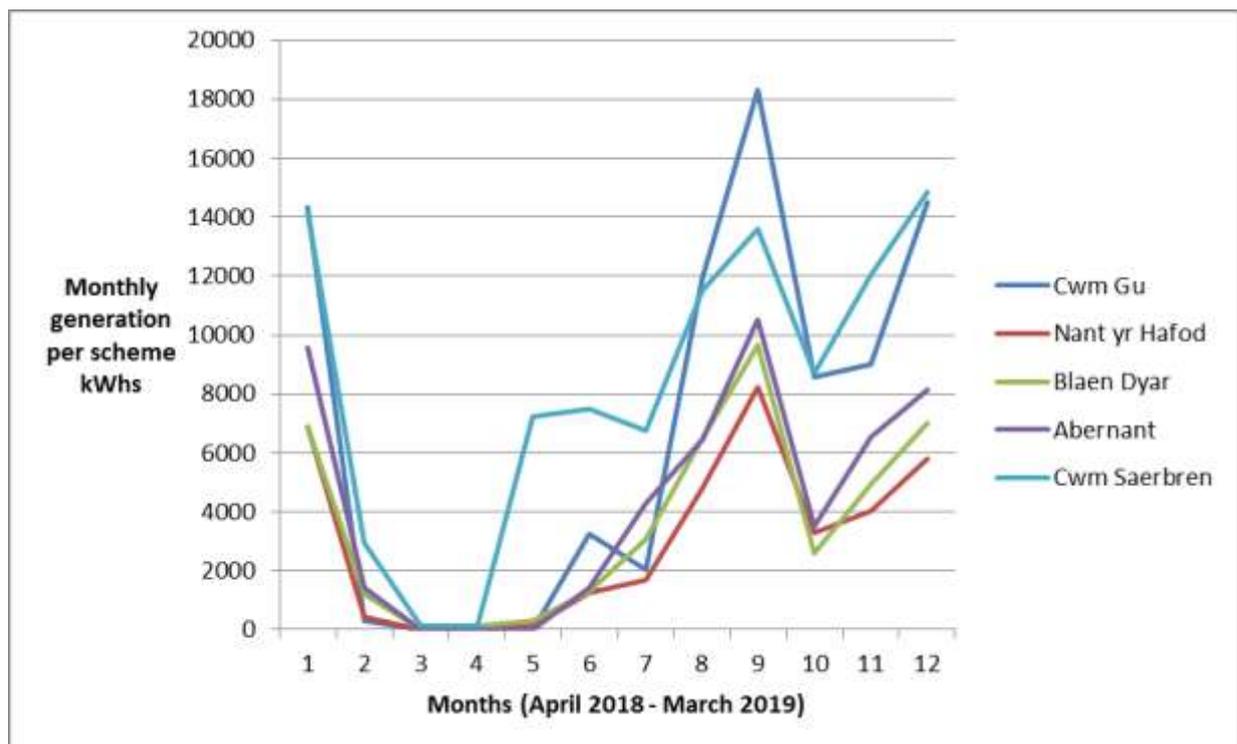
ENERGY GENERATION PROJECTS:

By Steve Sharp

Hydro scheme update

Monthly generation from our schemes has increased gradually since the start of this year although total generation during the quarter was down on the previous one.

As promised last month, I have created the graph below to show monthly generation for each of our five hydro schemes during the last twelve months. This confirms what our band of volunteer meter readers know, which is that each scheme has a different character depending on factors such as location and soil types.



Our smallest scheme, Nant yr Hafod, has limestone but also some peaty reed beds above the intake weir and therefore usually takes longer to start generating after rain but will often run slightly longer than other schemes after rain has stopped. By comparison, much of Abernant was built on solid bedrock and this scheme generally starts generating more quickly after rain but often subsides faster as well.

You can see that, for a couple of months last summer, there was no generation at any of our schemes, which is expected each year and is factored into the generation and income models.

Another factor affecting generation is the size of the 'hands-off flow' or 'compensation flow' notches built into the weirs, which is prescribed in our abstraction licences. These notches allow a certain volume of water to flow down the stream before any can be abstracted for the hydro scheme, so that plants and organisms can survive in the area known as the 'depleted reach', between where hydro schemes take water out from and then put it back into a stream.

April is known for its short, sharp showers and when rain falls persistently at low volumes or regularly for short periods, this can cause hydro schemes to stop and start continually which can lead to an increased number of problems and greater maintenance requirements for parts such as valves and the electronic controls.



FUNDING FORTUNES FAVOUR LCW

Well, we did it. We have now secured funding for the improvements to make our site accessible and more convenient for visitors. The Brecon Beacons National Park Sustainable Development Fund has confirmed support for our 'grass matting' into the site, making it much more accessible for all types of wheels including push-chairs, wheel chairs and other vehicles. The Big Lottery or Awards for All has also awarded us the full funding for the compost toilet, which will encourage many more people to spend time on our site knowing they don't have to hide in the woods at certain times of the day. LCW wish to thank all those who supported our applications by filling in questionnaires, sending in letters of support and just willing us on. We are going to be very busy during the summer months, developing the grass matting pathway and building the compost toilet. All the news will be here.



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LOTTERY FUNDED



More Busy Building

Volunteers have been busy building this month. The shelter is back with sides and a new base and we have started laying the foundations for the wood shelters, which will help LCW to control the seasoning of wood for sale. There is new legislation emerging for wood fuel to ensure it is compliant with climate change Clean Air Strategy. LCW will have to ensure that



wood is properly seasoned and the sap content within the guidance is adhered to. The consultation on the Clear Air Strategy was undertaken last year and the results are now available. A summary has been completed and can be found [here](#). For wood fuel and new controls on the efficiency of wood stoves, Norway is streets ahead of us but the UK will have to catch up now. All our wood is naturally dried, usually for a season, and water content is measured before being delivered. You need shelter and air to dry wood properly and this is the aim behind the shelters. Each base is sitting on stone slabs to keep the pallets dry and they will each have proper roofing for rain run-off, all designed and built by volunteers. We are

stacked up with orders already for the coming months and last year's sales enabled us to remain financially sustainable, one of the key aims for our Charity.



BOB'S BEE NOTES ~ APRIL

Bob is away on his pilgrimage this month so he can't provide his Bee Notes – it's a bit difficult when all you have is a phone. We wish him well on his walk and he will be back next month.



Just so you have something to catch up on about bees, I looked back at Bob's notes for April 2016 and 2017. One focuses on swarms and the other on making sure conditions are right for the Queen to start laying and we have checked out both for our hives in Llangattock.

Last month, I looked into the hives to check for any signs of egg laying and the density of the bees on the frames. The first check is to see if the Queen is moving around and if there are larvae in the hive. We saw the Queen in one hive and plenty of larvae, so I know she is working well, as are the bees around her. We had a good showing of larvae in the two hives that were thoroughly checked and I have no reason to think there isn't a similar amount of activity in the other two, which was very pleasing. There was no point in disturbing the other hives at this point, as it was still rather cold for the bees.

The second check was to make sure there is plenty of room for the colony to expand as the eggs hatch and new, young bees emerge to ensure a strong colony for the summer. Our bees were very compact but not so much it gave rise to concerns about swarming. They have plenty to eat and the warm weather of the last week or so will encourage good pollen and nectar collection, thereby ensuring good stores and maybe even some honey later on.

It's a really exciting time of year for bee keeping. Having learnt so much from Bob over the last 3 or 4 years, there is still so much more to learn but I am beginning to feel more confident. Learning to keep bees is an ongoing and, I suspect, a lifetime achievement which makes it even more satisfying and rewarding.



On behalf of Bob the Bee



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, do get in touch. Please email Eric Gower eric.gower@gmail.com for a membership form.

LACAS

By Sue Cartlidge

Allotments AGM

LACAS recently held its 10th Annual General Meeting, which was well attended. The Chairman reported that in the last year we had grown and thrived. There are now 59 separate plots on the site, ranging from a full-size plot down through 4 raised beds to an eighth-size plot. At the moment, only two plots are unoccupied.

Phil Gibson, having held the committee together for the last ten years, decided to step down as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. The latter post is to be filled by Teresa Henderson, so if you feel you want to take on a plot, Teresa can be contacted on thstar102@outlook.com. The post of Treasurer has yet to be filled.

Sadly, last year's Summer Show was cancelled due to the appalling weather that week but LACAS did host several successful and well-attended events such as the Big Lunch, the Apple Day (organised by the Woodland Group) and Bonfire Night, not to mention three work parties to help maintain our community areas.

Little Weeed!!

We are now acutely aware that bees and pollinators are vital to humans in so many ways. What we may not realise is how important weeds – many of which are the UK's best wildflowers – are to the pollinators for shelter, food and nesting sites.

Pesticides are used to remove weeds – though we hope not on the allotments! Pesticides can enter the food chain, poisoning the insects and animals that eat them, and they rarely discriminate between the invertebrates they damage, which unfortunately includes pollinators.



Image by [Petr Kratochvil](#)

Some weed species such as chickweed and dandelions bloom at times of the year when there is very little food available for pollinators. Because of this, they can be an invaluable food source and save bees from getting hungry in early spring. So, please leave your dandelions to flower for a while before you decide to dig them out! We've been trying to establish wildflowers in the orchard for the last two years, so hopefully we'll get a good crop this year.

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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 Andrew Fryer if you would like to explore the ways in which you can help: andrewfryer70@gmail.com. You can meet our Board of Directors [here](#).

Now that we have 5 hydro schemes up and running, we'd also like to get a few more volunteers involved in monitoring the 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 admin@langatockgreenvalleys.org.