



Llangattock Green Valleys newsletter

Issue 104
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<http://www.llangattockgreenvalleys.org/>



Workshop on Smart Meters Wednesday 5 June 2019, 7.30 pm Old Rectory Hotel, Llangattock.



In due course every home is to be fitted with a Smart Meter but there has been some negative coverage in the media, particularly regarding capability to switch suppliers and security of the communications network.

Should we be worried? And why do we need them anyway? What are the benefits for the consumer? Is it a lot of hassle having one fitted?

The speakers at this workshop will give you the answers to these questions and others you may have.

Rhian Cook is the Principal Project Officer of the Green Futures team based in Melin Homes, a Housing Association in Pontypool, and **Luke Wallace** is the Graduate Project Officer. They run energy saving, fuel poverty and health related projects in the area where Melin has residents. They have received training from SMART GB and Rhian has worked with SMART GB for the last 3 years, answering questions and concerns that people have about Smart Meters.

Rob Lloyd advises the Board of Llangattock Green Valleys and has a Smart Meter installed at his home. He will recount his experiences as a consumer.

This meeting is open to all so please help spread the word by telling your friends, relatives and neighbours.

Advance registration not necessary but it will be helpful to have an idea of numbers. Please email workshop@llangattockgreenvalleys.org.



ENERGY GENERATION PROJECTS:

By Steve Sharp

Hydro scheme update

It was relatively dry last month, with the hoped-for April showers not materialising with any great frequency. Therefore generation from our schemes was sporadic, with more periods of turbine inactivity than generation. Last year, April was one of the wettest months of the year with total generation from our five hydro schemes of nearly 52,000 kWhs and, as you can see below, this year the schemes generated only 37% of last year's total.

	April (kWhs)	Generation to date (kWhs)
Cwm Gu:	6,480	237,610
Nant yr Hafod:	1,360	132,700
Blaen Dyar:	2,490	82,150
Abernant:	2,920	94,160
Cwm Saerbren:	5,940	119,860
Total (5 schemes)	19,190	666,480

Looking on the bright side, the schemes have been relatively trouble-free over the past 6 months and we've seen a definite increase in performance at Cwm Gu as a result of the changes we carried out last year to the Hands-off flow notch and intake weir.

This year's AGM of the merged LGV MH Co-operative will be held on **Monday 24th June** at The Old Rectory Hotel in Llangattock, starting at 7pm. Members of the previous MH1 and MH2 Co-operatives, who are now all Members of the new Society, are very welcome to attend and will soon be receiving AGM communications and accounts.

Should you be interested in becoming a director of the new organisation or discussing the role and likely commitment with an existing director, please let Sharenergy or LGV know by responding to the AGM emails. We are currently seeking a Company Secretary and are keen to encourage new Members to get involved with managing the hydro Co-operative.



CALL FOR LOCALS TO HELP - 19th JUNE

Volunteers are needed on two days next month to support the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and their Invasive Species Team (IST) with a project on the Usk Path in T'yr Ash Woods (just along from Bullpit Meadow in Crickhowell).

Local warden Sam Ridge and the IST need your help to pull out the new growth of Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, so if you can spare 2.5 hours on 19th June, please be at Bullpit Meadow for 9:30am.



Invasive species: Himalayan Balsam

It's easy work as the root systems are poor, as well as being sociable and rewarding! Please bring along your own gardening gloves, some old compost bags or a garden bin and wear long sleeves.

The more the merrier!



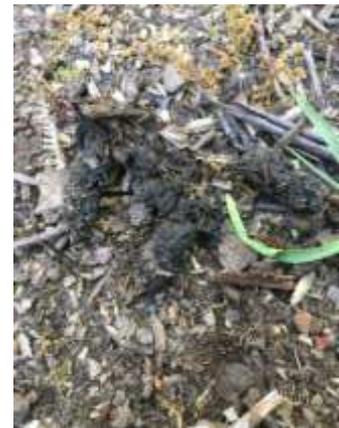
LCW AGM 2019

Another AGM has been completed and the Annual Report will be available soon on our website. We remain financially sustainable and have continued to increase our customer base for wood fuel, charcoal and honey. We also sell other products on the run up to Christmas and receive orders for things like hedgehog huts, bird boxes and plant labels. Of course, over the next few months we will improve the site further to improve access and encourage greater participation in the woodland. Llangattock Community Woodlanders have been an exciting and rewarding addition to our volunteering and we hope 2019/20 brings new ideas on to the site.

OTTER POO!

The talk of our volunteers and trustees revolves a lot around toilets and now we move on to poo!

When the Canal & River Trust relined the bottom of the canal in Llangattock, we know that Otter came and visited, taking away the shell fish that survive in the mud base of the canal. Otter poo was seen then as well as the wonderful site of Otter paw marks in the mud. Well, you can imagine our delight whilst on a regular site walk to check on trees planted in 2017 and 2018 to find this otter poo sitting very proudly on the bank by the canal, where we recently removed damaging rhododendron bushes.



The photo on the right is what we found and the image below is from the BBC Wildlife Magazine. Here is what I found in the magazine, which described lots of different poo but perfectly described what we found by the canal.



“Known as spraint, otter droppings are normally coarse and black, full of fish scales, shell fragments, fish and crayfish parts, and sometimes feathers or fur. As otter poo dries out, it becomes pale and crumbly. Otter spraint may also just be oil deposited to mark a territory. Look for otter spraint in prominent spots along a stream, lake or river, such as grass mounds or rocks.”



WE LOVE CHARCOAL

Every week, a small group of volunteers gets together to burn cut rounds of wood which are too small to sell for firewood, to make charcoal. This is sold to customers who come to



us for a sustainable source of charcoal. We also supply charcoal to [Natural Weigh](#) in Crickhowell, who proudly help to promote and sell local, sustainable goods through their shop.

The trustees are currently looking to purchase a Charcoal Retort, which can be quite small but is a much more sustainable and efficient form of burning. We currently burn in three very tatty oil drums but manage

to get a great income from this. It will take some more investment on our part but by moving to an efficient and environmental form of burn we can increase our income and be sustainable in our woodland too.



BOB'S BEE NOTES ~ MAY

A swarm of bees in May is worth a rick of hay.

Bees can swarm when the nest is wealthy, healthy with food stores, overcrowded and possibly has an older Queen whose pheromone strength is on the decline. Some races of honeybee will



swarm most years because of genetic makeup that has evolved over time, where for instance the summers are short and hot but the winter weather is cold and long enough to stop any activity outside of the brood nest. The old Queen will follow the swarming bees to a position near to the original nest site, where the bees gather usually in a tree or bush, hanging on to each other until the scout bees with the most persuasive directional dance lead all the bees to their

new home. The dance, done on the surface of the hanging swarm, will show the direction of the proposed nest site but as there could be several possible sites; the decision of which one to go for can take some time. We are being told about swarms on an almost daily basis at the moment, probably because of the good weather we have experienced, where the bees have been bringing nectar back to the hives from flowering trees and shrubs and storing it where the Queen would normally lay her eggs. Should the Queen run out of cells to lay her eggs in, very quickly the bees swarm. It only takes four days after a Queen egg hatches for it to become a



capped Queen cell and that is when the swarm can leave. This month is when beekeepers should be checking their colonies for Queen cells, which hang vertically from the brood comb, sometimes in a part of the comb that has been hollowed out especially for it but usually in any space at the side or bottom of the comb. Beekeepers are on the lookout for swarms to start off new beekeepers or replace their own winter losses. Sadly, we think one of our hives was healthy, wealthy and had a new Queen so swarmed a few weeks ago, leaving an empty hive.

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

LACAS - THE BIG LUNCH

By Sue Cartlidge

For the third year running, LACAS is hosting a Big Lunch on the allotment site on **Sunday 2nd June from 1.00pm onwards**. Everyone is invited! Just bring your favourite dish to share – there will be a barbeque available, so bring something to roast on that if you prefer. If you want a comfy seat, bring that too or maybe just a blanket to put on the grass. And of course, a bottle of something drinkable! People sharing food and conversation, that's all it takes to join in the Big Lunch!



The Big Lunch is a concept promoted by the [Eden Project](#) to bring communities together all over the country during the same weekend. For example, there is a Big Lunch being held at the Community Centre in Abergavenny on Saturday 1st June.

As far as the allotments are concerned, there are several plots available although there is a short waiting list. If you are interested in taking on a plot then the person to contact is Teresa Henderson, who can be reached on thstar@outlook.com

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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@llangattockgreenvalleys.org.