

State of Wildlife in Pembrokeshire

Over the last year, the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership has conducted a review of the State of Wildlife in Pembrokeshire. The recently published report looks at 23 species (or species groups) and habitats (or habitat groups) in the County which were studied in 2011 and provides an update on current status and trends in these features as a metric of the likely situation in the wider environment.



The report highlights some successes, but there is still much work to be done if we are to halt (and then reverse) the decline in biodiversity. A summary table is provided below. Headline figures include:

- 70% of features assessed were in poor or moderate condition (and therefore sub-optimal)
- 57% of features assessed were considered stable or improving (halting the decline)
- 30% of features were assessed as in decline
- 26% of features had insufficient data to assess trend and/or condition
- All the features assessed as in good condition or with improving trend have been subject to sustained conservation effort

The report is set against a backdrop of new

PEMBROKESHIRE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP



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Volume 13 Issue 2
Summer 2016

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and enhanced legislation aimed at embedding the protection and enhancement of our natural environment in public life in Wales.

Feature	Condition	Trend
Heathland	Poor	Data Deficient
Southern Damselfly	Poor	Declining
Three Lobed Water Crowfoot	Moderate	Stable
Ponds and Lakes	Moderate	Improving
Rivers, Streams & Ditches	Moderate	Improving
Otters	Good	Stable
Hedgebanks	Data Deficient	Stable
Bats	Moderate	Stable
Oak Woodland	Moderate	Improving
Hazel Dormouse	Data Deficient	Data Deficient
Arable Field Margins	Data Deficient	Declining
Farmland Birds	Poor	Declining
Grassland	Data Deficient	Declining
Marsh Fritillary	Poor	Declining
Grassland Fungi	Good	Stable
Kestrel	Moderate	Data Deficient
Coastal Cliffs and Slopes	Moderate	Improving
Chough	Moderate	Stable
Wetland Birds	Moderate	Stable
Mudflats	Poor	Stable
Native Oyster	Poor	Declining
Pink Sea Fan	Moderate	Declining
Grey Seal	Good	Improving

Both the original 2011 report and the 2016 update report can be downloaded from our website here: http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=1626,109,135&parent_directory_id=646

Ant Rogers

Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership

Pembroke Upper Mill Pond Nature Reserve Benefits from Co-op Funding

In 2015 The Co-operative's Food businesses donated their 5p bag levy to support wildlife projects across Wales. The six Wildlife Trusts in Wales are using these funds to save our most endangered wildlife and wild places for future generations to enjoy.

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales has been fortunate to receive funding through this scheme which has recently helped to complete major ground works at one of its

wetland nature reserves at Pembroke Upper Mill Pond. Over the last decade the reserve has dried up considerably due to poor flows of water through the reedbed resulting in scrubby and invasive species encroaching onto valuable reedbed habitat and ditches blocked through the build-up of silt.



Ditch clearance

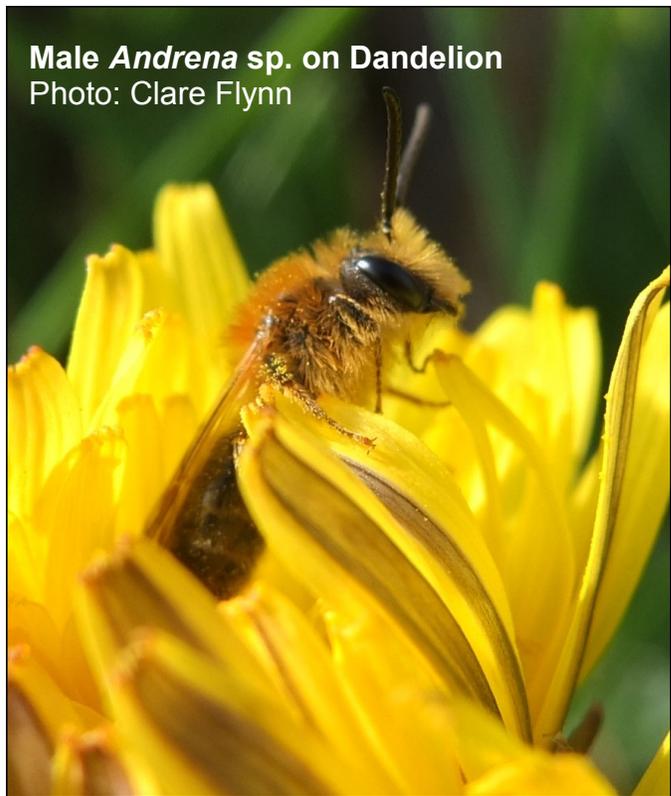
The Trust employed the services of Angle based Aquaclear Water Management services who utilised their amphibious 'Truxor' vehicles to clear ditches and block channels to force water back into the reedbed. They also cleared and pumped silt from areas in front of where the reedbed meets the pond area so as to stop the spread of reed into this area of open water which is an important site for wading birds such as little grebe and heron. Water levels have already risen considerably and fresh reed is growing once more. With higher water levels, other species such as the kingfisher, otter, frogs and toads and species of dragonfly and damselfly will benefit considerably.



Willow and Alder clearance

Aquaclear, volunteers from the Wildlife Trust and local residents spent time clearing areas of willow and alder from the reedbed to control further spread and allowing areas of open water to remain open. An artificial Otter holt has also been installed to provide suitable shelter and encourage this species to breed on the reserve. Otters regularly use the site and the rest of the Mill Ponds complex. Further work will continue to manage alder and willow during winter months and water levels will be monitored throughout the year. The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales is grateful for the support the Co-op has given to this project.

Nathan Walton
Wildlife Trust Officer
for Pembrokeshire



Male *Andrena* sp. on Dandelion
Photo: Clare Flynn

A New Wildlife Recording Group for Pembrokeshire?

It would be great to encourage keen naturalists and wildlife spotters who may not be actively involved in recording at the moment to meet up and do some focussed wildlife spotting and identification in the beautiful Pembrokeshire countryside. Working with the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC), 1km squares which are currently very under-recorded could be targeted, or sites of particular wildlife interest could be explored. The group would aim to identify accurately the species seen and submit these sightings as biological records to WWBIC.

Anyone with a keen interest in natural history would be very welcome to come along and take part, regardless of experience or level of knowledge. Support can be provided to the uninitiated in the process of biological recording and WWBIC will ensure records are properly verified and entered into their database.

If we can get a few enthusiastic and hardy souls together, the focus will be on shared enjoyment of Pembrokeshire's natural heritage and the outcome will hopefully be some good quality biological data, helping to fill some of the gaps in the County's database of records. If you'd like to have a chat about coming along and getting the group going, please email me at fieryclearwing@gmail.com

Clare Flynn
Naturalist

Conserving the Park

'Conserving the Park' is Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's flagship scheme for working with private landowners within the National Park. It has proved a powerful tool in delivering practical land management for important habitats and species.

Outside of designated areas and all farm agri-environment schemes, there are gaps in the support available to landowners who aspire to manage their land for the benefit of wildlife and our aim is to fill these gaps!



We currently support work at over one hundred sites and influence management on around 3,981ha of land through a mixture of land management agreements, grants and practical assistance through our warden team and the provision of grazing animals through the Pembrokeshire Grazing Animals network.

The scheme supports community spaces such as Stackpole Churchyard, which even at the tiny size of 0.25ha holds a wealth of wildflowers including dry meadow species (such as oxeye daisy and black knapweed), woodland species (including moschatel and ramsons) and damp grassland species (such as angelica and meadowsweet). With the help of the ranger service, volunteers carry out an annual hay-rake which ensures the site continues to be managed sensitively.



Wildflowers at Stackpole churchyard

In particular, we continue to support farmers and landowners on the coast with grazing and vegetation management. Hill Farm has been part of our scheme for a number of years and lies on a popular short coastal circular walk easily accessible from Manorbier. The spring coastal flowers here are outstanding, with Sea Campion, cushions of Sea Thrift, Spring Squill and Wild Thyme to name but a few. Choughs and Skylarks are also a regular sight. Providing the landowner with practical assistance through the scheme to manage the vegetation and animals to graze the coastal slope has

Practical assistance in vegetation management



ensured this area retains its wonderful mix of scrub and open habitats.



Sarah Mellor

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Surveying Sea Urchins at Skomer MCZ

Sea urchins are the 'rabbits' of the marine world and vital to maintenance of biodiversity. They are the most important grazers of rock surfaces feeding on seaweeds and encrusting animals, efficiently Hoovering the rock surface bare. This helps reduce the density of dominant species and allows space for larval settlement thus, helping to promote species diversity.

In Pembrokeshire, sea urchins were collected during the 1960s and 70s as diving became popular. The animal was removed from the shell, bleached, dried and retained as a souvenir. Sites around Skomer Island were heavily targeted and concerns grew about the ecological effects of the apparent over collection. This triggered the first suggestions that there was a need to conserve the marine area surrounding the island and by 1971 a marine reserve was proposed by a group of naturalists and biologists from the Field Studies Council. Forty five years later the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) can boast to be the most



intensively studied marine area in the UK with a long established monitoring programme acknowledged as a leader in its field.



Surveying Sea Urchins
Photo: Blaise Bullimore

The first urchin population surveys at Skomer were carried out in 1979 and 1982 but no repeat surveys were completed until 2003, when a volunteer diving team was organised to establish their status at a number of fixed sites to allow data to be directly comparable in future surveys. Surveys have continued to be completed every 4 years with the fourth full survey being completed in 2015 over two weeks by 29 volunteer divers. At each site the volunteers count and measure the urchins along transects.

Site variations in densities were observed in each of the surveys from 2003 to 2015 and reflect the differences in site exposure to wave action and prevailing currents. Sites with rocky reef habitats with wide gullies and boulders where the urchins could shelter from wave action had the highest densities. To support the survey, zooplankton sampling was also completed and results show that August is the peak month for the occurrence of echinoderm larvae within Skomer MCZ.

Kate Lock
Natural Resources Wales



The Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group

The massive wildfires that raged in Alberta, Canada at the beginning of May 2016, destroying parts of the city of Fort McMurray and covering some 200,000 hectares, have hit the headlines globally and brought large scale, uncontrolled fires into sharp focus.

Fire has always been an integral and rejuvenating part of nature and mankind has mimicked that natural phenomenon over millennia by burning vegetation deliberately for agricultural and environmental benefit. In Pembrokeshire, vegetation burning is a traditional and ancient land management practice. When carried out appropriately, it plays an important part in maintaining palatable and accessible vegetation for grazing animals, creates greater species diversity and critically, controls the volume of vegetation (or fuel load) in order to avoid large scale, uncontrolled and dangerous wildfires in the countryside at the wrong time of year.



Controlled burn near Brynberian

The Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group is a partnership of organisations including Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Natural Resources Wales, Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales, National Trust and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority which is managed under the auspices of PLANED's Sustainable Agriculture Network. The Group works with farmers, landowners and graziers to provide them with advice and assistance on



carrying out controlled burning of vegetation. The Group is able to offer:

- Information on the legal requirements of controlled burning
- Advice on planning a controlled burn
- Assistance with the preparation of burn plans
- Practical assistance with site preparation
- Where possible, practical assistance on the day of the burn

In order to minimise disturbance to wildlife, burning is allowed only between:

- 1st October – 31st March in upland areas
- 1st November – 15th March elsewhere

It could be argued that with spring apparently awakening earlier than in the past, the current burning season should be further curtailed. However, this view has to be counterbalanced with the risk of not being able to burn at all for successive seasons resulting in a dangerous increase in fuel load.

Recently, the Group has been busy working with both individual farmers and grazing associations. Fire break cutting programmes have been completed for two seasons and controlled burning awareness events held in St. David's and Newport. These events provided farmers, landowners, commons graziers, staff from countryside management organisations and interested volunteers with opportunities to discuss the fundamentals of controlled burning.

In the latter part of March this year during the short dry spell toward the end of the burning season, the Group assisted graziers on a number of commons with their controlled burns. Monitoring these burns and informing the Fire and Rescue Service of the details ensured that they were carried out successfully and avoided the unnecessary deployment of Fire and Rescue Service resources.

Fire break cutting on Castleblythe Common



Further information on the work of the Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group can be obtained from Steve Bradley of PLANED (01834 860965. E-mail: Stevenb@planed.org.uk)

Geraint Jones

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority



Managing Bait Digging at the Gann

The Gann is a Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat of sheltered mixed gravel sediments, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (part of the Milford Haven Waterway SSSI) and lies within the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Bait collecting is extensive on the site and has been for many years, consisting principally of digging holes to search for king ragworm, *Alitta virens*. There have been concerns for some time that the large scale of this activity has the potential to impact on the infauna and epifauna of the Gann as well as affecting the sediment composition of the site. Following recent partnership work we may now be a step closer to managing these impacts.

There are two types of digging at the Gann: regular, most likely commercial activity and



recreational. The regular diggers are there almost every day and work in a methodical way, usually working the same area of the beach excavating large pits whereas the recreational diggers tend to dig smaller holes dispersed randomly across the beach. Legally speaking, personal bait digging is ancillary to the public right to fish – an individual can collect bait from the foreshore for his or her own use, whereas commercial activity requires the landowners' permission - without which it is illegal. The difficulty arises in that it is very difficult evidentially to tell the two apart.



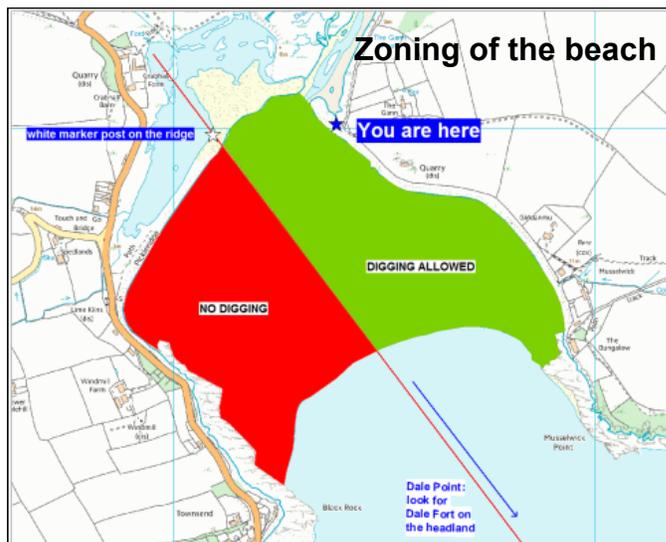
Evidence of bait digging

We were very fortunate in that the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Relevant Authorities Group (SACRAG) were able to fund a review which considered case studies from across the UK. This proved to be invaluable in understanding and evaluating the different options available.

Sue Burton, Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer organised a series of stakeholder meetings where representatives from the relevant authorities, members of the local angling and bait digging community and local residents agreed to progress a code of conduct to include zoning the beach into 'dig' and 'no dig zones'. Restricting bait collection through zoning will ultimately require a byelaw or statutory instrument to back it up. This is not a quick option so a voluntary code can be used in the interim period while byelaws are being passed.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW), with help from the Pembrokeshire SACRAG, PCNPA, Dale Fort Field Studies Centre and the local community established sampling stations throughout the site to investigate the faunal composition of the area. The results of these investigations indicate that the lower, sandier shore supports a high abundance of species - in particular red algae, peacock worms and sand mason worms. The upper and middle shore exhibited a more muddy and gravelly sediment profile and contained the highest levels of bait digging; lower diversity and abundances of species and were recorded in these areas.

A sign has been put up by the PCNPA to inform bait collectors of the code and we have subsequently been undertaking activity monitoring to determine compliance.



Some modifications are to be made to the zones following further analysis of the habitat, species and activity monitoring data and we will have to see how this pans out, but hopefully we are now one or two steps closer to managing the impacts of bait digging at the Gann.

Chris Lawrence
Natural Resources Wales



The Cheerful Project Goes Wild This Autumn!

Since Spring 2015, Span Arts (the community arts charity based in Narberth) have been running workshops, skill shares, walks, talks and other events in rural locations all over central Pembrokeshire under their latest scheme: The Cheerful Project.

Now they are venturing outside to bring together the natural world and the arts! This autumn will see a new program of activities designed to help you see the wild world through a different lens. Although the details aren't yet finalised you can expect wildlife walks, storytellings in unexpected locations, wild poetry, digital nature-app workshops and many more creative happenings in or inspired by the natural world.

There is such a strong link between our creativity and our connection to the wild and wildlife

that this theme seemed like an obvious one for us to explore! Our events are designed to bring people together to reconnect with one another, with their innate creativity and with the world around them.

The Cheerful Project is aimed at reducing rural isolation and providing opportunities for people to socialise, create and rejuvenate. If you're interested in finding out more about the project, you can contact us at cheerful@span-arts.org.uk or check us out online at <http://www.span-arts.org.uk/tag/the-cheerful-project>

Rowan Matthiessen
SPAN Arts



Biodiversity Events

May—August



Date	Title	Information	Contact
30 May 20:00	Brilliant Bats. Carew Castle	A family friendly evening where the past meets wildlife. Explore Pembrokeshire's most special historical locations. Follow footsteps to the past, look for bats and listen for their calls	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
31 May 20:00	Brilliant Bats. Bishop's Palace St David's	A family friendly evening where the past meets wildlife. Explore Pembrokeshire's most special historical locations. Follow footsteps to the past, look for bats and listen for their calls	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
01 June 10:30 – 14:30	Geology Walk St. David's	Geology and the building stones of St. David's. A guided walk with Sid Howells	Darwin@darwincentre.com
01 June 20:00	Brilliant Bats. Little Haven	A family friendly evening where the past meets wildlife. Explore Pembrokeshire's most special historical locations. Follow footsteps to the past, look for bats and listen for their calls	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
02 June 11:00 – 12:30 and 14:00 – 15:30	Bumblebee and Bugwalk . Hilton Court	An event for families with the Darwin Centre	Darwin Centre: 01437 753196
03 June 14:00	Bug Safari. Lamphey Bishop's Palace	It's a jungle out there; well it is to nature's smaller creatures. With our partners at Colby Woodland Garden and the Bishop's Palace at Lamphey come and explore the world of the minibeast, and join in craft activities	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
08 June 13:30 - 15:00	An Introduction to British Wild Bees. Colby Woodland Garden	Talk and walk aimed at interested adults. Wales Biodiversity Week	Colby Gardens: 01834 811885
10 June 10:00	A Walk in the Park. Nevern	Let our National Park guide open your eyes to the wonderful landscape of Pembrokeshire Wales Biodiversity Week	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
10 June 13:30	Wild Flower Walk. Lamphey Bishop's Palace	Join our National Park leader and explore the flora of Pembrokeshire Wales Biodiversity Week	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

Biodiversity Events

May—August



Date	Title	Information	Contact
14 June 18:30	Picnic at West Williamston Nature Reserve	Annual South Pembrokeshire group of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales Picnic	Christine: 01646 673912
17 June 10:00	A Walk in the Park. Saundersfoot	Let our National Park guide open your eyes to the wonderful landscape of Pembrokeshire	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
24 June 13:30	Wild Flower Walk. Freshwater East	Join our National Park leader and explore the flora of Pembrokeshire	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
25 June 11:00	Crab Catching Carew Tidal Mill	A great fun activity for all the family. Find out more about these fascinating creatures	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
01 July 10:00	A Walk in the Park. Porthgain	Let our National Park guide open your eyes to the wonderful landscape of Pembrokeshire	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
02 July 14:00	National Meadows Day Walk St David's	Meadow Tour	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
06 July 13:30	Native Bee Walk and talk. Tenby Cemetery	In association with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority	Julie Garlick: 01646 624800
08 July 10:00	A Walk in the Park. Nevern	Let our National Park guide open your eyes to the wonderful landscape of Pembrokeshire	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
15 July 10:00	A Walk in the Park. Saundersfoot	Let our National Park guide open your eyes to the wonderful landscape of Pembrokeshire	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
22 July 10:00	Crab Catching Carew Tidal Mill	A great fun activity for all the family. Find out more about these fascinating creatures	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
23 July 13:00	Crab Catching Porthclais	A great fun activity for all the family. Find out more about these fascinating creatures	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

Biodiversity Events

May—August



Date	Title	Information	Contact
23 – 31 July	National Whale & Dolphin Watch	Join us all around the country to conduct land watches and record any sightings	Sea Watch Foundation www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk
26 July 11:00	Pond Safari Colby Woodland Gardens	In partnership with The National Trust, discover the fascinating wildlife of streams and ponds	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
26 July 20:00	Brilliant Bats. Bishop's Palace St David's	A family friendly evening where the past meets wildlife. Explore Pembrokeshire's most special historical locations. Follow footsteps to the past, look for bats and listen for their calls	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
28 July 11:00	Bug Safari. Colby Woodland Gardens	It's a jungle out there; well it is to nature's smaller creatures. With our partners at Colby Woodland Garden and the Bishop's Palace at Lamphey come and explore the world of the minibeast, and join in craft activities	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
02 August 20:30	Brilliant Bats. Carew Castle	A family friendly evening where the past meets wildlife. Explore Pembrokeshire's most special historical locations. Follow footsteps to the past, look for bats and listen for their calls	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
04 August 14:30	Seashore Safari Caerfai	Take a look at the fascinating wildlife and natural wonders of the shore	PCNPA 01646 624800 info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk
04 August 10:00 – 14:00	Bumblebee Discovery Day. Colby Woodland Garden	Aimed at families	Colby Gardens: 01834 811885
18 August 10:00 – 14:00	Bumblebee Discovery Day. Colby Woodland Garden	Aimed at families	Colby Gardens: 01834 811885



PBP Contact Details

Biodiversity Implementation Officer:

Ant Rogers. Tel - 01437 764551

anthony.rogers@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Pembrokeshire Biodiversity website:

www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk (search - biodiversity)

Wales Biodiversity website:

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk

Biodiversity Newsletters

Mae'r cylch-lythyr hwn ar gael yng Nghymraeg, cysylltwch â Ant am gopi cymraeg.

PBP would like to thank all those who contributed to this newsletter. If you would like to write an article for the next newsletter please contact Ant.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author of the article and may not represent the position of the wider Partnership or its constituent members.

PBP Members

County Landowners Association



Pembrokeshire Rivers Trust



Farmers Union of Wales



Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority



Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group



Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development



Keep Wales Tidy



Prince's Trust Cymru



Royal Society for the Protection of Birds



National Farmers Union – Wales



The National Trust



Natural Resources Wales



The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales



Pembroke 21C Community Association Limited



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Pembrokeshire County Council



West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre

