

From the chief executive

We need more members! Our membership may be at an all time high, but everything we do for wildlife makes us realise that there is even more yet to do, for both wildlife and people. And to do more, we need more members.

You probably know people who care for Gwent's countryside, or who want to have their children grow up surrounded by wildlife – but who have never been asked if they would like to join Gwent Wildlife Trust. Please speak to your friends and family, neighbours and colleagues, and see if they know about us and our work. There is a membership form on the back cover of Local News, and at the back of our 2009 events guide which is enclosed with this mailing. Perhaps you could pass on our Local News when you have finished with it? It's a good way to let people know what we are all about.

Our 2009 events guide is the Yearbook for the Trust – full of information on things to do throughout the seasons, and a striking summary of our varied work for local wildlife. Do look through it carefully. There are many wonderful events which you will be able to book onto, but be warned, some are so popular that you may have to be quick.

I should also apologise that as this 2009 guide is coming out at the end of March, you will find there are events for February and March mentioned in the guide that have already gone.

These events have all been promoted by the Trust office, and mentioned on our website – visit www.gwentwildlife.org at any time of year for updates on what is going on. Also, if you have particular interests, be it hedge-laying or drystone walling, dormice or otters, the campaign against the New M4 across the Gwent Levels or our Living Churchyards project, please let us know. We have contact lists for all these concerns!

The Welsh and UK Government's consideration of the energy generation potential of the Severn Estuary is a great concern to us just now. We want more sustainable energy, and a reduction in the likely extent of climate change – but we don't want to sacrifice our most important wildlife sites in doing so. Please see the major article below for details of the issue, our thoughts and fears, and how you can get involved.

And with warmer weather now upon us, do make time to get out and enjoy the wildlife around you. In the last week, we've had reports of hawfinch, goshawk and lesser spotted woodpeckers reach us in the office, whilst celandines are all along the roadsides, and the Wye Valley is lighting up with wild daffodils. It is very special out there!

Julian Branscombe, Chief Executive
jbranscombe@gwentwildlife.org

Power from the Severn

In January, the government published a shortlist of five schemes for harnessing the tidal power of the Severn Estuary to provide renewable electricity. Gwent Wildlife Trust is deeply concerned with this complex issue, as the Estuary is a globally important wetland, and the marine hub of the internationally important freshwater ecosystems of the Rivers Wye, Usk and Severn.

The search for safe, inexpensive energy is intensifying. A barrage could be a major source of cheap clean renewable energy, but it would be disastrous for the wildlife on the estuary. The Trust supports renewable energy generation in principle, but we believe any tidal energy option for the Severn must pass stringent tests to ensure it is truly sustainable in wildlife terms, not destroying the precious habitat for wintering birds, migratory fish, porpoises and other marine life.

The push for green energy

The UK Government has signed up to European targets to generate 20% of the UK's energy from renewables by 2020, and to reduce the UK's carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. These are ambitious targets, and they can only be a good thing, as climate change is a major threat to society and wildlife alike.

In 2007, the Government announced a major new study to identify options for energy generation in the Severn Estuary. In January 2009, the first results of the study were announced by the Government, and a shortlist of five schemes proposed. These are:

- **Shoots Barrage** – located near the Severn road crossings;
- **Beachley Barrage** – slightly smaller and further upstream than the Shoots Barrage (and upstream of the Wye);

- **Fleming Lagoon** – an impoundment on our shore of the Estuary, between Newport and the Severn bridges;
- **Bridgwater Bay Lagoon** – an impoundment on the English shore of the Estuary between Hinkley Point and Weston Super Mare;
- **Cardiff-Weston Barrage** – located between Brean Down and Lavernock Point.

A disaster for wildlife?

The rich diversity of wildlife associated with the Severn Estuary is a result of the dynamic nature of the estuary. It has the second largest tidal range in the world. All five shortlisted energy schemes would have a significant impact on nature conservation interests.

It seems clear that the Cardiff to Weston barrage would be the most damaging. It would cause the loss of 20,000 hectares of mudflat and saltmarsh, which would be catastrophic for the 70,000 or so

wintering waterfowl which use the estuary every winter. The Barrage would also be a major obstacle to migratory fish, and it may result in rare fish such as shad going extinct at its main British site. This Barrage would produce the most electricity of the five short-listed options, but it would need tens of billions of pounds of public money in order to be viable. However, the Cardiff-Weston barrage is the option being most heavily promoted by commercial interests.

The other options all have wildlife impacts. For example, the Fleming Lagoon would impound the entire mudflats alongside the Caldicot Levels. Knot and dunlin would be among the waders affected by reduced extent of mudflats and reduced foraging time on this estuary. The latest modelling suggests that the main Barrage option would also change the sediment composition of the estuary, making it less suitable for wintering birds, and there are fears that this may also apply to the Lagoon options.

Beyond the five short-listed proposals, a further two options – the so-called ‘Tidal Reef’ and ‘Tidal Fence’ – may be researched during 2009 using Government funding. The tidal reef is a particularly interesting possibility – stretching from Minehead to Aberthaw. The reef would generate electricity from slow-turning turbines in a Barrage with a floating element, allowing it to go up and down with the tide. This is estimated to be less costly than the primitive engineering of a Cardiff to Weston Barrage. It could generate even more energy than a Cardiff-Weston barrage, but with much less damage as it would keep most of the estuary’s saltmarshes and mudflats intact.

At present, the Tidal Reef is not getting the same backing that is being afforded particularly to the Cardiff – Weston Barrage. However, we believe the time is right for more innovative, modern and less environmentally damaging tidal energy schemes to come to the fore. The Tidal Reef is not on the shortlist, but we are pushing for its serious consideration.

The Wildlife Trusts’ view

The Wildlife Trusts support renewable energy generation, but we believe that any tidal energy option for the Severn must pass stringent tests to ensure that it is truly sustainable. The chosen option must be relatively low-impact to wildlife, whilst providing value for money. The Government must also comply with international wildlife legislation, which puts the highest legal protection on the Estuary’s habitat and wildlife. We are contributing to the Government’s studies and working with other environmental organisations to encourage the best choices possible. It is clear even at this early stage, however, that:

- the Cardiff to Weston barrage option would cause unacceptable damage to the wildlife of the Estuary – at huge expense to the public purse;
- the tidal reef option deserves urgent research, and deserves equal consideration to the five shortlisted options.

Make YOUR voice heard!

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) are consulting the general public on the shortlist of Severn tidal energy options. The closing date for responses is 23 April. Please respond and ask the Government to take wildlife seriously when they consider their responsibilities for promoting sustainable energy generation.

For the Government’s consultation document, see www.decc.gov.uk/severntidalpowerconsultation. This site provides details of how you can respond as a member of the public, by e-mail or post. If you want the consultation document and don’t have access to the internet, please contact GWT.

For the latest information on Gwent Wildlife Trust’s position and response, please see www.gwentwildlife.org.

Reserves News – Lauri Maclean

Reserves Roundup

Routine reserves work over the autumn and winter usually involves a large amount of scrub control and coppicing. Although scrub is a vital habitat (and we always ensure some is left as habitat), scrub invasion of species rich grassland can cause a loss of important grassland species. Coppicing is undertaken on some of our woodland reserves and provides habitat for dormice as well as open sunny areas for woodland butterflies and other invertebrates.

Wyeswood Common

Some major works are now underway at Wyeswood Common with new boundary fencing being put up and water connections for the stock troughs started. The aim is to stock proof the site so we can begin grazing the grassland.

Over the summer, work began on monitoring the grassland species so we have a record of how our management affects species diversity. Our first survey, as expected, demonstrated that the grassland is extremely species poor – with rye grass dominating the entire site – our challenge is now to manage the site to show a year on year increase in species!

Working on the Gwent Levels

In January this year, the reserves department started work on two of our wetland sites on the Gwent Levels. At our

Solutia reserve, we have been working with the Peterstone and Wentlooge Internal Drainage Board to clear up some overgrown and dried up drainage ditches (locally known as reens). The reens are home to a special range of aquatic wildlife including rare water beetles and plants. Although the works appear invasive as big machinery is needed to dredge the reens, within a few months the vegetation will start to reappear along the reen banks and the waters of the reens soon teem with life!

If working on these wetland site appeals, we have recently started a new volunteer group currently running weekly on Wednesdays to carry out wetland habitat creation at both our Gwent Levels sites, Solutia and Magor Marsh. If you are interested in joining us please contact Richard Bakere on 01600 740600 or email rbakere@gwentwildlife.org.

Brown Hare

Brown hare are in decline throughout the country, mainly due to changes in agricultural practices. They can be easily distinguished from rabbits by their larger size, long limbs and black tipped ears. We were pleased to record a brown hare on the hay meadows at Magor Marsh in January. Hares are found throughout the Gwent Levels area and we have had occasional sightings on fields adjacent to the reserve. February and March are good months for hare watching and boxing hares in the throes of ‘march madness’ can be observed. This is part of hare breeding behaviour. The rapid chases are usually a dominant male driving a rival away from a female he is guarding. ‘Boxing’ is usually a rebuff given by a female to an over-amorous male!

Several of our reserves have had previous brown hare records, most notably Brockwell Meadows. If you do spot a hare on any of our reserves, please let the Trust know.

Call for New Volunteers in Risca

The reserves department is starting a new project to get local volunteers to help to manage our Dan y Graig nature reserve. We are particularly keen to hear from people in the Risca area who would like to join our reserves work parties undertaking habitat and maintenance work on the reserve.

Dan y Graig is a small reserve on the outskirts of Risca but it has a wonderful range of habitats including a pond, a small area of calcareous grassland and broadleaf woodland. We have made forest school and pond dipping areas for local primary schools to use on the site. A surprising amount of wildlife can be found on this little reserve and a recent survey found that the streams and trickles running down the hillside, feeding the pond, are particularly rich in rare

invertebrates. If you're lucky, you may even spot a water shrew or see kingfisher hunting by the pond!

Volunteers will be involved in managing the grassland area, keeping the pond open, ensuring the site is free of litter and invasive species and helping maintain the paths, steps, and bridges. If you are interested please contact Lauri MacLean on 01600 740600 or email lmaclean@gwentwildlife.org.

The Dan y Graig project is funded through Caerphilly County Borough's 'Tidy Towns' initiative.

Thanks to Kate!

The reserves department relies on many volunteers without whose help it would be impossible to manage so many reserves. We have been particularly fortunate to have Kate Hanley working full time with us in the reserves department over the past nine months. Kate has been undertaking work experience in the hope of becoming a reserves officer in the future. She has undertaken an impressive workload which has included organising the events programme, leading volunteer work tasks, helping write management plans, managing a fencing project, and building a reptile hibernacula at the Lower Minnetts field. Needless to say she's going to be missed...

Lower Minnetts Reptile Hibernaculum Event – Kate Hanley

Wednesday 11th March 2009

Thank you!

First and foremost a huge thank you to O2 and Monmouthshire County Council for funding that has enabled us to do significant work on the site, to our graziers for their understanding and open attitude towards the construction of our hibernaculum, to our partnership organisation the Forestry Commission for their support, and most especially to our staff and **volunteers** of the day, without whom the event would not have been possible:

- Corus employees
- Kaleidoscope group
- Green Key Group
- Gwent Levellers Group
- Forestry Commission employees
- GWT employees and trustee

Wider Environment News

The winter months tend to be a time when all the staff in the Wider Environment Department become hermits, writing up summer survey reports, developing tenders for ecological consultancy work and preparing for the spring and summer

months to come. Instead of detailing this rather unexciting part of the year I thought we would write a bit about our Conservation Officer, Sorrel Jones' work, and how although it can sometimes be devoid of seeing much wildlife, it is so important for the wildlife of Gwent.

Sorrel writes: "I do a lot of policy, strategy and planning work. It's not very visible, and people may think it's not very exciting – but it is important. On a day to day basis, we are working to prevent development of beautiful, wildlife-rich places like Hawtin Park in Pontllanfraith, and Greenmeadow Farm in Cwmtillery. But occasionally, we have the opportunity to change the policies that guide this type of planning decision – and now is one of those times.

All of the councils in Wales have been asked to write a Local Development Plan (LDP), a document that sets out policies on where development can take place, and what types of development are needed. Gwent Wildlife Trust has been involved in shaping these LDPs by attending workshops and writing formal responses to consultations. This is our chance to make sure that new development does not harm our local biodiversity, and contributes towards making our towns, villages and cities better places for both wildlife and people.

The good news is that this process is still ongoing in many local authorities, so if you want to have your say about what gets built in your local area, or if you want to support policies that protect wildlife and help to combat climate change, you can get involved by looking on your council website and joining in the public consultations. In fact, you've already supported me in my role by being a member – knowing that I represent thousands of people across Gwent that care about the environment really helps!"

People and Wildlife – Denis Jackson

Probably the most time consuming activity the People and Wildlife Team are responsible for is the production of the annual events programme. From a basic leaflet with some eight pages and 20 events, only four years ago, the programme has grown substantially to the guide you have today. We have tried to create something which is more than just a list of events and activities. Today, what we have is more of a 'yearbook' – a guide to the Trust for 2009, with events and courses presented alongside more general information, such as our volunteer work parties, education work, ecological consultancy business, and much more.

Because of this, the yearbook (I'm thinking of entitling it that next year, what do you think?) has a number of different uses.

For you, our members, it tells you what's on and how you can get involved. For non-members, it's a great introduction to the Trust and might even bring us in a few more members. We have plenty of extra copies: could you put a few in your local shops, libraries and the like? Doctors and dentists waiting rooms are always good, and how about at work or school? I bet you're not the only person out there that cares about their quality of life. Just give us a call in the office and we can get some to you.

Before finishing this topic, I must say a personal and public THANK YOU to Kate Hanley who did most of the work in pulling the activities together for this year's programme. She's even got a couple of events in the bag now for 2010 so if there's something you would like to do – either as a leader or an attendee, do get in touch ASAP.

If you go down to the Marsh today....

...you may be in for a bit of a surprise. As you enter the car park, the first thing you'll notice is three very large fish out of water behind a wooden fence.

Don't panic! This is not a mass stranding event as a result of some catastrophic failure of the reed system. The fish are sculptures, in wood, created by Bulgarian artist Rumen Dimitrov. They were kindly donated to and installed for the Trust by the organisers of the Caerleon Sculpture Festival.

The sculptures will be the centrepiece of the new Wildlife Garden that our Green Key volunteer team are building. Some of you may remember me writing about this a while back – the idea is to create a microcosm of the reserve, right by the car park, so it will be accessible to all and serve as an example of first-rate wildlife gardening practice. Unfortunately, due to funding difficulties, work on the garden had to be postponed but now, thanks to the generosity of Marshalls Paving, Hanson plc, and others, we have recently been able to re-start work on the project. Soon, we will have the access paths laid and be able to start work on some of the planting – although much of the hedge planting has already been done. If anyone is able to offer us some time with a digger or dumper, preferably not too large, it would really help us to move things along – literally!

St David's Hospice Foundation

On the subject of Green Key, somewhere in your member mailing, you'll find a leaflet for the St David's Hospice Foundation Lottery. This organisation does a great job of helping folks come to terms with the practical and emotional issues that come with terminal illness, something that many of us will have to deal with at the end of our lives. Mental

illness – as tackled through our Green Key project – is also something we would rather not think about, but it is much more common than most of us think.

I hope you welcome this fundraising collaboration. The Foundation has kindly paid for the appeal leaflet and they pick up all the expenses associated with running the lottery. For every pound a GWT member spends on the lottery each month, 30p goes directly to supporting Green Key. Green Key is struggling to find funding in the current climate, despite its ongoing record of outstanding performance. Please take a moment to read the leaflet and take part in the lottery if you can.

Love a Bug event

We have received Big Lottery Fund support linked to the BBC Breathing Places campaign to develop our work at Magor Marsh. This has allowed us to extend our programme of community events at the site, and we shall also be starting a Wildlife Warriors youth group there in April.

This funding enabled us to put on a special Love a Bug event on Saturday 14th February – Valentine's Day. Over 100 people turned up for an exciting programme of activities and bug hunting, including ree dipping and mini-beast searches through the marshland and woodland. The feedback was wonderful, with everyone having a brilliant time.

Wildlife Landlords

Sadly, the volunteer who was going to take on the running of this project has had to withdraw due to pressure of other work. I really do need someone to run this. We have more and more nesting boxes being erected all the time and a small army of volunteers being trained to survey them during the breeding season. If anyone would like to take on what could be a significant source of income for the Trust, please get in touch with me.

Welcome Phone Calls

A small yet perfectly formed volunteer team is now calling as many new members as they can each month. There are many reasons for doing this. What we really want to do is to ensure that new members are happy with the way they were recruited and to offer a personal "thanks" for supporting our work. I have made some of these calls myself and my own experience was that people really did appreciate the personal touch and were pleased to have someone explain to them how they could get more involved by volunteering or coming along to events and the like.

I do need more volunteers to join the Welcome Call team. Each call only takes about five minutes and you can make as

many or as few calls each month as you wish. If you'd like to have a chat about what's involved, get in touch with Val, our volunteer officer on 01291 689240 or email vjackson@gwentwildlife.org.

The Event

The event was a great success, with many benefits achieved for both wildlife and people.

We completed a fantastic hibernaculum and we hope to see reptiles such as common lizards, adders and slow worms using it to bask this summer and hibernate this coming winter. We also managed very tidy jobs on the gate and the strainer post!

Children will be able to start monitoring the hibernaculum during the coming forest school season, and so enhance their outdoor education, and our graziers will have a much easier time moving their stock onto the meadow for conservation grazing to take place.

It was good to see so many people enjoying themselves whilst doing something positive for the environment and community, and we certainly couldn't have done it without our volunteers of the day!

Lower Minnetts Reserve

The Lower Minnetts Reserve is a fine example of semi-improved, species rich, calcareous grassland. Species include agrimony, lady's bedstraw and common spotted orchids. It is currently managed as a hay meadow, with an annual late summer hay cut and aftermath grazing by a few sheep and horses.

The Reserve is owned by the Forestry Commission but managed by Gwent Wildlife Trust who has a 10 year management agreement to maintain the site for its wildlife value.

The site is especially important for education, and the species rich nature of the grassland and diversity of habitats ensures there are plenty of plant and insect species to be observed by children attending the nearby forest school. The addition of the reptile hibernaculum will add greatly to the species rich nature and educational value of the site, and will hopefully serve to dispel some of the more negative myths surrounding these shy and fascinating creatures.

The Hibernaculum Project

Hibernacula are places where reptiles of all species can safely bask, hibernate, reproduce and feed. The aim is to achieve a structure partly below and partly above ground where, no matter the outside temperature and weather, reptiles can find dry, frost free places to take shelter.



Volunteers at the Hibernaculum Project – Doug Danter (Corus)

Volunteers and GWT

Volunteers can make all the difference in the management of a nature reserve – giving their time, effort and enthusiasm to do work that the Trust would otherwise not be able to do. Volunteers have always been vital to the Trust and never more so than now in this period of financial difficulty.

Partnerships

Much of the work at Lower Minnetts Field has been achieved through working in partnership with volunteers and other organisations - work has been supported by an O2 Community Award and a grant from Monmouthshire County Council's Agenda 21 scheme. The Forestry Commission have supplied infrastructure on the site including a name sign and gates. Volunteers are especially important in maintaining the reserve and Gwent Wildlife Trust is grateful to all who helped on the day, especially Corus employees, who have offered to come again!

Local Groups Roundup – Hilary Lee

In spite of the wintry weather, the Local Groups have continued with their programmes as far as possible. Unfortunately, one or two evening talks had to be cancelled, which was very disappointing for everyone; hopefully they can be rescheduled at some time in the future. Many interesting talks have taken place this winter; many beautiful wildlife pictures seen and new information and skills learned.

Now at last, the spring is well on the way and we can look forward to some outdoor activities. In these straitened times, what better way of enjoying low-carbon, inexpensive treats than getting out and about with Gwent Wildlife Trust & its Local Groups? Guided walks and visits galore appear on the new Programme of Events, and the Chepstow Group will be embarking on another season of plant sales, starting with the Grand Plant Sale on 16th May. Please remember, when you are in your garden to pot up some extra cuttings, seedlings, etc for sale; they can be collected from anywhere reasonably close to Chepstow and will all be put to good use; well over

£800 was raised last year by plant sales. There is also a plan to have a stand at the Usk Open Gardens Day at the end of June, so if anyone is interested in helping out with this, please get in touch with Hilary on 01291 689326, or leave a message for Rosie at Seddon House.

Later in the summer, the Monmouth Group will be involved in the Open Day at Seddon House, as well as organising a Flag Day, so they would also be happy to hear from any potential helpers.

Come out and about and meet lots of friendly people with the Local Groups!

NEWS IN BRIEF

Abergavenny Watch Group – Keith Bucknall

After a break of some 18 months, due to the ill health of leaders, the sad death of one (David Greenwood), and change of job of another, Abergavenny Watch And RSPB Wildlife Explorers (AWARE) is getting back on the road in May of this year. The first meeting will take place on Saturday 9th of May at Llwyndu, Abergavenny and will be all about observing the activity of bird species in and around the bird boxes that the group has sited there.

A full programme of activities has not yet been planned, but will be available at that first meeting. Further details can be obtained from Keith on 01873 737689.

eBay – Money for old roof tiles...

Thanks to volunteer Keith Allen, the money raised by our on-line charity shop on eBay has now reached the £1000 mark. If it can be moved, Keith will sell it – be it kindly donated Japanese foot-binding slippers or the old roof tiles we inherited with our 1991 purchase of Pentwyn Farm.

Follow the Support Us! button on our website at www.gwentwildlife.org to see the latest essential or exotic items which you can buy from the Trust. If you have anything to sell, or can help in any way, please contact the Trust office, or you can reach Keith Allen direct on kh.allen@virgin.net.

Standing up for wildlife

Development threats to wildlife continue, despite the construction industry slow-down. A major continuing concern of the Trust's is the proposal for a cemetery on fabulous species-rich grassland at Hollybush Heights, Cwmbra. The Trust is appalled that Torfaen County Borough Council are favouring this precious grassland site for this proposal. We are trying to get the overall position of the Council changed with respect to this. However, given the extent of their apparent commitment to this site, we also feel obliged to engage with them to ensure that if it does go ahead, as much as possible of this group of unimproved grassland fields survives.

The development at The British, in Aberyschan, has also been a long-term concern for the Trust. The proposed open-casting and subsequent housing development would badly affect a range of important habitats. However, the whole issue has now been thrown wide open by the development company going into administration.

Lastly, the Trust continues to make a very active contribution to the campaign against the New M4 across the Gwent Levels SSSI. The Outline Business Case is now delayed to December, to be published alongside the national Transport Plan. Consultation on this opens in June, which will be very important to influence.

Barn owl success

Our hundreds of nest boxes mainly cater for small hole-nesting birds like tits, with pied flycatchers at nest boxes at Priory Wood and Springdale Farm being some of 2008's highlights. The nest box checking season is upon us for 2009 (contact Denis on djackson@gwentwildlife.org if you wish to help with this), but we have had a very exciting start to the 2009 season. A barn owl box at Springdale Farm is being used, as proved by the big splashes of white droppings and neat piles of grey pellets under the box. Fingers crossed for the birds staying to breed this spring.

In memory of Bob Harding

We are very sorry to report the death of a stalwart Trust member, Bob Harding of Chepstow. Bob had stood up for wildlife and supported our nature conservation work for decades, whether reminding us that even ragwort had a value for insects, or getting stuck into habitat management at Magor Marsh alongside Derek Upton and Barbara Thorne.

Special Garden Birds

Our Conservation Manager, Gemma Bodé, rents the Trust's Pentwyn Farmhouse, next to our Pentwyn Farm and Wyewood Common reserves. Everyone at the Trust office is jealous of the beautiful location where she lives – but that jealousy was nothing when compared to the reaction when she came into work to report a fabulous female hawfinch had visited her garden.

The Trust's Chief Executive, Julian Branscombe, tried to compete when he recorded a young Iceland gull flying north up the Afon Llwyd valley, from his Pontypool kitchen window. Iceland gulls are even more rare than hawfinch, but as Gemma pointed out, it wasn't actually *in* his garden.

Join Wildlife Winners!

The Trust is looking at every avenue to raise the funds to keep going its vital work. Our long-standing 100 Club has a new lease of life this year, renamed

Wildlife Winners, raising funds for our dormouse conservation work. For £1 a month, you can buy a number, and have a chance of winning the monthly cash prize – whilst also knowing that your generous support also allows us to manage Croes Robert Wood, one of Britain's most important sites for this rare and engaging mammal. For more information, contact Rachael on 01600 740600 or rdaniels@gwentwildlife.org.

New appointments

We shall be taking on two new appointments this spring, for short-term contracts to help develop our work. Jan Winder has already accepted a six month survey contract to enable us to fulfil our contractual commitments to Monmouthshire County Council. They have engaged us to assess the wildlife value of 277 sites proposed for development around the planning authority's area, and they are also paying us to assess the ecological connectivity around every settlement in the area. This is vital work to make sure the planning system takes full account of wildlife. GWT, through its Gwent Ecology subsidiary, has won this contract at a commercial rate, thus by efficiently undertaking the work to a high standard, we shall generate a profit which sustains other aspects of the Trust's work,

We are also taking on a member of staff on a short-term contract to develop the Environmental Resource Centre which is being built for us at The Works, Ebbw Vale. The construction contract has been delayed due to budgeting difficulties, but we expect work to start on site this spring, after planning permission was granted in January. Our new member of staff will enable us to have a presence in the area during construction, making sure that the building best serves our environmental education needs, whilst also building the links with local schools and the wider community around the former steelworks site, so that the Centre can be well used as soon as it is open.

This means that the Trust will have its largest ever staff complement this spring. This is expensive, and budgets are very tight. However, GWT has an excellent record of financial management, and the 30th March 2009 GWT Council meeting will sign off a balanced budget, worked out to the penny, which will see GWT through another successful financial year. There may be a recession and credit crunch, but the need for GWT's work remains as great as ever, perhaps more so. With the support of our members and good management, the Trust remains a striking success.

About the Gwent Wildlife Trust

Gwent Wildlife Trust has a vision of an environment rich in wildlife for everyone. We work to rebuild biodiversity and engage people with their environment. We manage land, campaign for wildlife, promote appreciation of wildlife and foster sustainable living.

Supported by 7,500 members and 7 local members groups, we:

- Manage 30 nature reserves – 900 acres in total – including two farms
- Conserve threatened species such as dormice and water voles
- Identify and help protect Wildlife Sites
- Fight damaging development
- Provide superb educational facilities at Magor Marsh
- Run children's Wildlife Watch clubs
- Run events so people can learn more about nature

We are part of a nationwide network of 47 local Wildlife Trusts. Together we have more than 700,000 members – the Wildlife Trusts are big enough to have a real voice within local and national government.

We can only be truly effective thanks to the support of everyone who cares about the environment. If you're not already a member, please join the Trust today.



About the Gwent Wildlife Trust

Please complete in block capitals

Title and Full Name

Title and Full Name
(Joint applications)

Address

Postcode Telephone

Email DOB

Below are the minimum membership subscription rates; we welcome additional support and donations.

Please tick appropriate box:

	Annual	Monthly
Individual	£24pa <input type="checkbox"/>	£2.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Joint	£30pa <input type="checkbox"/>	£2.50 <input type="checkbox"/>
Family*	£36pa <input type="checkbox"/>	£3.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced rate**	£12pa <input type="checkbox"/>	£1.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Amount of your choice £ (to be no less than minimum subscription rates)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life	£350 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Corporate – Please contact us on 029 2048 0070 for details		

- * Family Membership includes membership of Wildlife Watch for all children living at the same address.
- ** Reduced rate membership is intended for people who, for whatever reason, cannot afford the standard rates

Children of family member

Name DOB M/F

Name DOB M/F

Name DOB M/F

Name DOB M/F

Method of payment (please tick)

- Direct Debit (please complete form opposite)
- Cheque for £

giftaid it If you are a UK taxpayer, Gwent Wildlife Trust can reclaim the tax paid on the money you give. Your support will achieve much more - at no extra cost to you.

Title and Full Name of taxpayer

Signature Date

I wish Gwent Wildlife Trust to treat all donations I make, including membership monies from today's date, as Gift Aid donations, so enabling the Trust to reclaim the tax until I notify you otherwise. I understand that the tax reclaim by the trust must not exceed the total amount of income tax and capital gains tax which I pay in any tax year.

Help us make Gwent a better place for people and wildlife

Join by Direct Debit using the form below and receive a free welcome gift: a copy of GWT's Nature Reserves Guide worth £6.

Wildlife Trust Membership also includes:

- A welcome pack full of information about your Trust.
- A copy of our Natural World and Welsh Wildlife magazines, together with our informative local newsletter, three times a year.
- Substantial discounts on all GWT courses and events.
- Most of all, the knowledge that you are doing something positive for local wildlife – helping to preserve and enhance your local patch for future generations!

Instructions to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit



Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS using a ballpoint pen and return this Instruction to Gwent Wildlife Trust, FREEPOST NE218, Seddon House, Dingestow, Monmouth NP25 4ZX

Service User Number

9	8	5	5	8	2
---	---	---	---	---	---

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager Bank/Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Branch sort code

--	--	--	--	--	--

Bank/Building Society A/C Number

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Membership reference number (office use only):

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay Gwent Wildlife Trust Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Gwent Wildlife Trust and, if so, details may be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

Bank and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

The Gwent Wildlife Trust will keep your details on a confidential database, which will not be shared with any third party. This information will be used to let you know about the Trust's work, to maintain your membership records, and to inform you of activities which we think may be of interest to you. All information is correct at the time of going to press. Gwent Wildlife Trust reserves the right to alter membership rates and special offers. March 2009.