

Countryside News 2010

Denbighshire and the Clwydian Range AONB



Welcome

to Denbighshire's Countryside News 2010

This is a very special year for Denbighshire Countryside Service and the Clwydian Range. We celebrate 25 years of the Clwydian Range being designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the 200th Anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone for the Jubilee Tower on Moel Famau, and it also marks the final year of the Heritage Lottery Fund Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme, the Heather and Hillforts Project.

There has been an enormous amount of investment in the Clwydian Range and Flintshire and Denbighshire's rural areas, to improve, promote and work towards developing the area as a sustainable tourism destination. The Denbighshire Countryside team, partners and volunteers have worked incredibly hard this year and we include some of the highlights of those achievements in this newsletter. Thank you to all of those people who have been part of our work.

We hope you enjoy our countryside news...

Loggerheads Country Park

☎ 01352 810614 (weekdays)

☎ 01352 810586 (weekends & holidays)

loggerheads.countrypark@denbighshire.gov.uk

Denbighshire Countryside Service

Loggerheads Country Park, Nr Mold, Denbighshire CH7 5LH

Ruthin Office ☎ 01824 708261

Rhyl Office ☎ 01745 356197

Llangollen Office ☎ 01978 869618

www.denbighshire.gov.uk/countryside

All walks, events, news and education publications are available to download from this website.

www.clwydianrangeaonb.co.uk

www.heatherandhillforts.co.uk

www.clwydiancountry.co.uk - for accommodation and things to do.



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Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu
Gwledig: Ewrop yn Buddsoddi
mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development: Europe Investing in
Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Wildlife Garden Wonder

Local volunteers' hard work has paid off. A beautiful transformation has occurred in the tea gardens at Loggerheads Country Park.

A fantastic 'garden' for wildlife is now established with native flowers, such as ox-eye daisies, red campion and cornflowers which benefit butterflies and bees as well as the visitors. The new pond was brimming with tadpoles and voles have been seen using the woodpile. It is hoped the garden will encourage visitors to create a nature area in their own garden to help our struggling insects.

If you would like any advice on improving your garden for wildlife or are interested in getting involved please get in touch.



Photo of the month!

Got a great picture of the local landscape or wildlife that you'd like to share?

*We'd love to see it!
Bring it in to Loggerheads to be displayed and inspire others to explore the wonderful area in which we live!*



Himalayan Balsam

The first year of an ambitious three year partnership project to eradicate Himalayan balsam from the River Alyn within the Clwydian Range and beyond began in 2009.

Himalayan balsam is an invasive non native species, introduced into the British Isles in 1839 from the western Himalayas. It readily colonises riverbanks and outcompetes native plants. In 2008 Denbighshire and Flintshire County Councils were alerted to the relatively sudden increase in Himalayan balsam along the River Alyn. The Alyn Valley Himalayan Balsam Action Project was established with strong partners and the support of landowners. The plant needs to be removed on a landscape scale due to the seeds ability to travel downstream in water. Over 1000 hours of work went into a 'mass clearance' last year, the majority of which was done by volunteers! This year we are hoping to encourage even more people to get involved to remove this alien plant from our river.

Nest box success at Loggerheads

Denbighshire Countryside Service volunteers have been busy making and hanging nearly 100 bird boxes over the last few winters with the hope of attracting the pied flycatcher back to nest at Loggerheads. One reason for losing this migrant bird could have been a lack of nesting space in late spring. Females don't often arrive until mid May, by which time most other birds have begun nesting or even hatched their first brood. It is well known that this small bird will readily use nest boxes, if

available. Sticks were placed in the entrance to the nest boxes, to prevent other birds using the boxes, and then removed at the end of April. And it worked! Pied flycatchers were heard in several locations in the park last summer and a pair observed using a nest box! Nest box cleaning in the autumn revealed a few more likely nests. We'd love to hear about your sightings, please record them in the Countryside Centre. New volunteers are always welcome!

Llwybr Village Walk

Llwybr Tyrnog is a new circular walk in Llandyrnog.

This Community Miles Project is funded by Welsh Assembly Government, through Denbighshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan, to create circular walks around villages using the existing Rights of Way. New and improved furniture; kissing gates, stiles and wooden sign posts and Llwybr Tyrnog disks make the route easy to follow.

A leaflet shows a map of the route and provides useful information.

Thank you to the Community Council, local history group, Ysgol Bryn Clwyd and the local landowners.



Hi-tech treasure hunt in the Clwydian Range: The first in Wales

A fun, new treasure hunt in Coed Moel Famau and Coed Nercwys in the Clwydian Range has been launched for families, schools and events.

The Earth Secrets Trails are based on a type of geocaching called EarthCaching. The GPS takes you to places in the countryside and tells you why those places are special or unique. There is a comic with puzzles and games that accompany the GPS leading you on a tour of the landscape from 350 million years ago through the Ice Age to the recent past.

The kit; a GPS handset, pre-loaded with the two trails, backpack and comic, can be hired from Loggerheads Country Park and contains all the information and equipment for an unusual, fun day out.

Once you have worked out the answers to the puzzles this will give you the combination to open the treasure chest at Loggerheads to claim your prize.

Preserving Dinas Brân

Over the last 17 years, £800,000 of funding from Clwyd County Council - now Denbighshire County Council and Cadw, has been spent on a programme of reconsolidation at Castell Dinas Brân, Llangollen.

The castle first came into local authority ownership with much of the masonry in a poor state. If nothing had been done, sections of the masonry would certainly have fallen down. Seventeen years ago large parts of the curtain wall were balancing on very damaged and weathered foundations. Hidden under the walls today are steel pins, carbon fibre rods, concrete and carbon fibre ribbons, all helping keep the castle in a safe and sound condition for future generations. All of this work has been very specialised and we owe a lot to the excellent masons who have managed to repair the site whilst leaving so few signs of what they have done. Work which took place in 2009/10 not only repaired sections of the postern gate but also cleared areas adjacent to the D shaped tower, on the north side of the castle. Although only a very low foundation now, it does give a better idea of how the tower would have been in the castle's heyday.

Around 35,000 people visit Dinas Brân each year, despite the steep climb. If you haven't been there yet, do go. You can walk from the centre of Llangollen or walk up from the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail at the foot of the Eglwseg Scarp. Not only will you be rewarded by seeing one of the fantastic Welsh built stone castles (built inside an Iron Age hillfort!) but you will see the most fantastic views, eastwards into Shropshire and westwards towards Corwen and the Dee Valley, if you're lucky you may see a red kite fly over and you could hear the steam train as it makes its way along the valley. Magical!





NEWSFLASH

A new nature area

A disused highway in the shadow of Rhuddlan Castle has been transformed into a fantastic family nature reserve.

The area is now a mix of wildflowers, newly-planted woodland and ponds. Pond clearance, hedge-laying, planting 7,000 new trees, sowing wildflower seed and clearing ragwort are some of the work carried out by local volunteers and Future Jobs Fund staff with Denbighshire Countryside Service. A surfaced path suitable for feet and wheels improves access while picnic benches and interpretation boards let people relax and find out about the reserve.

Funded by Cadwyn Clwyd Rural Development Fund, this project has been massive and is a great example of partnership working. Thank you to the eco-committee from Ysgol Y Castell.

Views from the dunes

The 44.4km, Conwy and Denbighshire section of the All Wales Coastal Path has been opened by Assembly Minister Jane Davidson. A boardwalk and viewing platform at Horton's Nose, Rhyl is a highlight of the path. Improved access and reduced erosion on the sand dunes are two of the benefits. The viewing platform gives a 360 degree view from Snowdonia, out to sea, Rhyl promenade and the Clwydian Range.

Panels at the viewpoint interpret some of the things you can see beautifully illustrated by local artist Judith Samuel. Thank you to those who contributed valuable memories and images.



► It is now 5 years of success at Gronant!! 2010 saw record numbers of little tern breeding pairs (114 in total) and this summer's tern fledglings (216 in all).

► Landscape works begin at Glan Morfa, Rhyl, as part of the development of a recycling centre and cycle track

► Representatives from five schools from across Europe visited Denbigh High School in May 2010. They visited Mount Wood in Denbigh, planted a tree of friendship each and enjoyed work done by pupils over the last 4 years.

► A black redstart was spotted for the first time at Horton's Nose, Rhyl.



► Hedge-laying has improved the entrance to Brickfields Pond, Rhyl and reduced litter blowing onto the site.

► A new interactive map system is now in place at Café Cymru - originally the Offa's Dyke Centre in Prestatyn.

► David Scruton, proprietor of Hafan Deg B&B, has won the Clwydian Range Award for contribution to sustainable tourism and conservation.

► The new clwydianrangeaonb.org.uk website is up and running.

► Promenade Theatre has been a great success at Loggerheads summer 2010



► Fashion guru Gok Wan was on Moel Famau to film an episode of his show 'How to Look Good Naked' with North East Wales Search and Rescue Team.

► Derek the Weatherman, enjoyed a walk around Moel Famau Country Park and Moel Fenlli hillfort for BBC Wales' 'Weatherman Walking'.

► Presenter Jules Hudson brought a house-hunting couple to Loggerheads Country Park to learn more about the ancient woodland management technique of coppicing for series 10 of Escape to the Country.



Reconstructed burial mound

Three years marks success for Heather and Hillforts

Over the last 2 ½ years the Heather and Hillforts Project has done a great deal to protect and understand the hillforts and heather moorland of the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio Mountains.

Our Hillfort Heritage

Before the project started no one could envisage that work would take place to upgrade footpaths without damaging any of the archaeology, that we would uncover a stone inscribed by a WWI Canadian soldier whilst looking for a Bronze Age burial mound or that students from Bangor University would excavate Moel y Gaer hillfort, Llanbedr, alongside students from Vienna. An excavation, carried out in May 2009 on Penycloddiau hillfort, revealed evidence of a Bronze Age burial mound. Although 19th Century grave robbers had removed the burial remains, the mound was rebuilt following this excavation to protect the remaining archaeology as well as give visitors an impression of how it would have looked (see above).

Managing our Moorland

Sixty five acres of heathland have been managed through cutting and burning and Moel Famau and Moel y Parc commons are both now in the Tir Gofal scheme. Specialist equipment has been purchased to help manage the uplands and help the fire service, Denbighshire Countryside Service and landowners tackle heathland fire situations. Over 1000 acres of bracken have been controlled through a programme of spraying; sheep can now be seen grazing areas of mountain they haven't been able to get to for over 40 years. About 5 acres of heather moorland, damaged by off-road vehicle use, have been restored on Llantysilio Mountains.

Getting about

Over the past three years, working in partnership with local authority transport departments, bus routes have been linked to walks in the area and the Clwydian Ranger Bus Service continued. The 'On Your Doorstep' campaign has splashed spectacular images of the area on the back of local buses raising the profile of the area and encouraging people to visit by bus.

Up to the Challenge

Enabling young people of all abilities to work together to complete a number of tasks in the countryside has been one of the most rewarding elements of the Heather and Hillforts Project. The team and confidence building tasks involved, getting birds back to their nests, transferring water without touching the container, hitting targets with a cannon and rescuing an object by filling a pipe with water. Everyone enjoyed the day and had a sense of achievement.

Understanding Our Uplands

Over half a million people visit the Clwydian Range, Llantysilio Mountains and surrounding area annually but many are unaware of the natural and historic significance of this special landscape. By using both traditional techniques and new technology we have been able to create a number of resources that show the project area off at its best:

- A brand new website with an interactive map, games, walks and a timeline introducing characters who have used the hills in the past
- Educational Resource Chests for schools
- A series of Interactive Heritage Trails where visitors can access the audio points through their mobile phone on site or by downloading free mp3 versions from the website
- A beautiful HD DVD of the project area including an aerial flyover and a virtual flyover, allowing switching between the landscape of today and the Iron Age 2500 years ago - you can even land at Penycloddiau and explore the hillfort
- Work has begun at the Bwlch Pen Barras car park at Moel Famau, in partnership with the Forestry Commission, to create a 'sense of place' car park. Using features from the past in our design, the new car park will be sympathetic to the beautiful countryside and will add another layer to the visitor experience

The three year Heather and Hillforts Project is a £2.3 million initiative for upland conservation work and has received a grant of £1.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

For more information please visit

heatherandhillforts.co.uk and you can now follow us on twitter! Visit www.twitter.com/HeatherHillfort or join our Facebook Fan Page for more updates from the project.



A King of a route - The Brenig Way

Our Regional Routes Warden has been walking and researching forgotten footpaths in South Denbighshire to create a new walking route linking Corwen and Llyn Brenig.

This route takes in the beautiful scenery whilst aiming to provide passing trade to support businesses in local villages. The Brenig Way will be about 33 miles in length. An Assistant Regional Routes Warden has joined the team to ensure that the 100+ fingerposts, way markers, and stiles go in and that the route is cleared of vegetation.

We would be grateful of any help - if you'd like to volunteer get in touch on 01978 869616.

The Brenig Bus

A new bus service (No 72) is now running from Corwen to Llyn Brenig Visitor Centre and Archaeological Trail.

The bus runs every day - twice a day in the week and three times a day at weekends. It offers an invaluable service for local communities, and presents a whole range of new opportunities for walking in this remote and beautiful area. www.traveline-cymru.info

Hoisting the Green Flag

Loggerheads Country Park was awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award. The Green Flag Award scheme began in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country.

The scheme is a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas.



Clwydian Range - A Sustainable Tourism Destination

The Rural Development Fund administered by Cadwyn Clwyd and the Clwydian Range Sustainable Development Fund has enabled implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Clwydian Range.

Here are the highlights....

- ▶ The Clwydian Range Tourism Group now has over 80 business members. The first Sustainable Tourism Forum was held in October 2009. The group celebrated receiving the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas in November 2009. The website clwydiancountry.co.uk has been translated into German, French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch.
- ▶ A Loggerheads Management Plan and Interpretation Plan have been developed.
- ▶ A Hydro Report to investigate if and how Pentre Mill at Loggerheads can generate electricity.



- ▶ A ramp boardwalk has been completed at Loggerheads linking the Leete Path to the bridge. This accessible circular riverside trail is a huge asset to the park. Over 800 children took part in our first accessible circular Easter trail.

- ▶ Capturing the Clwydian Range magazine edition 4 was published.
- ▶ Enhancement of the Clwydian Range brand to strengthen the profile of this stunning Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This will help to raise awareness of the Clwydian Range and all that it has to offer to visitors, encouraging a quality experience, longer stays and return visits.
- ▶ Christmas at Loggerheads Country Park was a successful pilot family experience.

And some things to look out for...



- ▶ 526 people used the free daily shuttle bus that linked Loggerheads and Moel Famau Country Parks every half hour throughout the summer holidays. We are hoping to repeat the service summer 2011.
- ▶ Events to celebrate 25 years of the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation.

- ▶ Jubilee Tower 200th birthday celebrations leading to a party on the 24th October 2010: www.jubileetower200.co.uk.
- ▶ New interpretation and signage at Loggerheads Country Park.
- ▶ A leaflet for the Clwydian Range.