

# New PNP Project Officer

Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership (PNP) has secured funding for a temporary project officer to deliver our Local Places for Nature programme and develop future projects. We are pleased to welcome Aethne Cooke on board!

Aethne started off as a volunteer with the Devon Wildlife Trust and has worked in the nature conservation sector since, mostly with the Countryside Council for Wales and over recent years in a free-lance capacity. She has many years experience as an intertidal surveyor and commissioning projects to provide information on the status of marine habitats and species.

Aethne says "I started off with the intent of a career in land-based conservation, but diverted to the marine environment somewhere along the way. I look forward to bringing this full circle again and working with the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership and the people involved with making a difference to nature in Pembrokeshire".

If you have ideas for local projects and would like help developing them into please get in touch with Aethne

([aethne.cooke@pembrokeshire.gov.uk](mailto:aethne.cooke@pembrokeshire.gov.uk)) or me ([Anthony.rogers@pembrokeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Anthony.rogers@pembrokeshire.gov.uk)).

**Ant Rogers**  
PNP



Aethne Cooke

## PEMBROKESHIRE NATURE PARTNERSHIP



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**Ant Rogers — Biodiversity Implementation Officer**  
[anthony.rogers@pembrokeshire.gov.uk](mailto:anthony.rogers@pembrokeshire.gov.uk) 01437776146

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# Pembrokeshire Bird Group

One of the (few) positives to come from Lock-down, was having time to revamp and extend the Pembrokeshire Avifauna - the website about birds in Pembrokeshire (<https://pemsavifauna.co.uk/>). This will always be a work in progress, as things change from year to year, so there is always more to add. In addition to the species texts from the main Pembrokeshire Bird Atlases, there are plenty of extracts from the county bird reports - first and last dates of migrants, for example, and all the records of rare species.

We've also been producing the Pembrokeshire Bird Diary - short monthly illustrated podcasts, each showing the highlights of bird-watching in that month: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?app=desktop&list=PLYWN9zt1fis9vfjDMegnVnJioGVI4a-J>.

**Annie Haycock**  
Pembrokeshire Bird Group



Photo: Trevor Theobald

## New Ranger for South West Pembrokeshire

Hi I'm Vicky Sewell, the new South West Area Ranger with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. I'm really looking forward to getting to know this beautiful area more and the people



**Vicky Sewell**

that live here. For those of you I have met already thanks for your warm welcome and to those I am yet to meet I am very much looking forward to meeting you!

I cover the South West Region which stretches from Nolton Haven around Marloes and Dale Peninsulas, across as far as Milford Haven as well as the western banks of the Daugleddau Estuary up as far as Canaston Bridge.

Part of my role is to work with communities and offer volunteer support as well as guide and monitor recreation, tourism and visitor management. Please inform me of any news, issues or reports you have. To contact me email:

[vickys@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk](mailto:vickys@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk) or call 07866771123

**Vicky Sewell**  
PCNPA



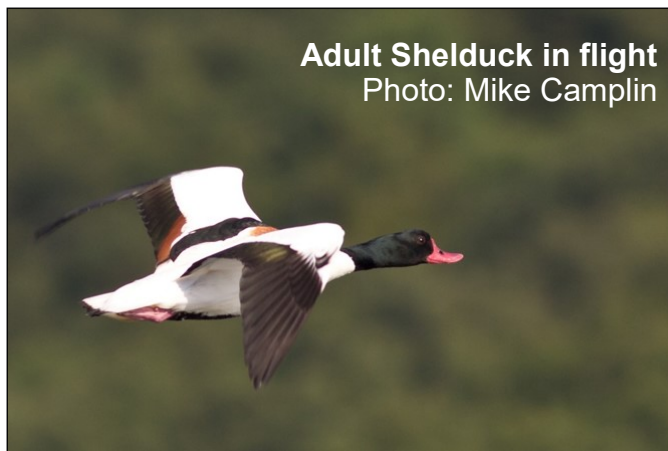
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Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

## Shelduck in the Milford Haven Waterway

A throw-away comment from Jack Donovan, the fondly remembered county bird recorder for Pembrokeshire in the early 90s, first planted the seed of an idea to survey summer breeding Shelduck in the Milford Haven estuary. The suggestion was not wasted on Jane Hodges, the ecologist for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority at the time, and the first survey of many was soon carried out.



Roll on nearly 30 years later and systematic surveys of summer breeding Shelduck in the estuary have continued every year since by boat, a valued service provided by the Port of Milford Haven. Two exceptions exist when circumstances forced the estuary to be surveyed on foot – the first in 2015 due to engine failure and more recently in 2020 owing to the coronavirus pandemic. Although Jane has retired, she has continued to survey breeding Shelduck every year in the estuary and has been the sole surveyor throughout.



**Adult Shelduck in flight**  
Photo: Mike Camplin

Surveys of summer Shelduck populations were one of the first of a series of long running environmental projects to be funded by the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group (MHWESG: <https://www.mhwesg.org.uk/>) back in the early 90s. There are numerous surveys of wintering populations of Shelduck around the UK, but the MHWESG's survey of the summer breeding population is 'unique to Wales', so say the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO: <https://www.bto.org/>) who were asked by the MHWESG to review the Shelduck dataset. The BTO identified that trends of Shelduck numbers in the Milford Haven estuary correlate well with national oscillating winter trends for Shelduck elsewhere in Wales and the UK. This suggests that the local population is likely to be influenced by the same large-scale factors affecting national populations, for example climate change.

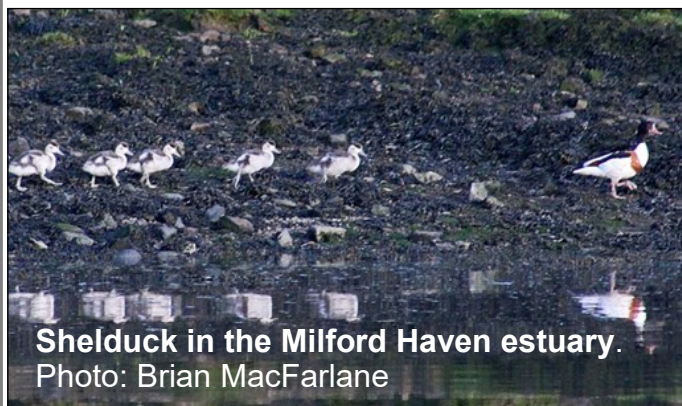
Paul Howells (Dragon LNG Ltd and MHWESG chair) commented that "the study of summer Shelduck in the estuary has

created a lengthy dataset that will, if continued, allow future researchers to assess and interpret the impact of environmental change in the estuary. We are benefiting now from the foresight that members of the MHWESG had nearly three decades ago to understand the relevance of long-term monitoring."

Shelduck in the Milford Haven estuary are recognised as being part of the north-west European breeding population. Shelduck migrate from their summer breeding grounds (i.e. the Milford Haven Waterway) to a moulting location, and then back to their breeding country for the non-breeding winter period. There is no ringing of Shelduck in the Milford Haven Waterway to know where local Shelduck migrate to in July before they return in the winter, but known Shelduck moult grounds in northwest Europe include the Elbe estuary in the Wadden Sea and other large estuaries in the UK.

The Milford Haven estuary historically held nationally important numbers of wintering Shelduck within Great Britain with a five-year mean count peak of 1,564 between 1982/83-1986/87. This count fell to 387 between 2014/15-2018/19 (387) meaning that numbers no longer qualify as nationally important.

**Aethne Cooke**  
MHWESG Project Coordinator  
[mhwesg@gmail.com](mailto:mhwesg@gmail.com)



**Shelduck in the Milford Haven estuary.**  
Photo: Brian MacFarlane



# DNA Barcoding Reveals New Records at Local and National Levels

Thanks to support from the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership the Pembrokeshire Fungus Recording Network (PFRN) has been able to progress DNA barcoding of fungus collections over the winter period. DNA was extracted from dried collections of material and the barcode region amplified. The resulting amplicons were forwarded to Aberystwyth University for sequencing as part of a project funded by the British Mycological Society.

Two notable finds from Pembrokeshire collections have already surfaced:

The first county record for *Hygrocybe constrictospora*. This collection was found on the Stackpole NNR and was confirmed using a DNA barcode. Specimens are very similar to a widely recorded species, *Hygrocybe insipida*, but can be separated through careful examination of the spores by microscopy. As the name suggests, most *H. constrictospora* spores show a slight constriction to the otherwise oblong to cylindrical shape. Further details of this find can be found in the Spring 2021 PFRN newsletter ([www.pembfungi.org.uk](http://www.pembfungi.org.uk)).



The first UK record for *Clavulina etrusciae*. A *Clavulina* collection was found in woodland near Hundleton in 2018 which did not fit well into existing keys and descriptions for the genus. Subsequent sequencing of the collection revealed it to represent a species only recently described from Italy. An article providing full details of the find has been submitted to the Field Mycology journal for publication later this year.

David Harries  
PFRN



## Growing Better Connections Update

The Growing Better Connections project has had a busy winter! <https://www.cwmarian.org.uk/gbc>

Project staff have been coordinating the launch of the **CLEAN project on the Afon Nyfer** (Catchment Level Environmental Action Network) from the source of the river near the Frenni Fach, to the sea at Newport, which aims to respond to the challenge of restoring and enhancing healthy



habitats in and along Pembrokeshire's rivers. A network of nature conservation and community organisations has been formed to deliver this work - including Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, West Wales Rivers Trust, Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership, Newport Area Environment Group, Community Councils and Nevern Anglers.

Between February and March over 20 volunteers, from those organisations and from amongst the amazingly dedicated riverside communities in the area, took water samples and collected observational survey data to establish baseline information about the river's current state of ecological health. The data collected this Spring will inform the future work of conservation and community organisations to find how best to focus what they do to improve the wellbeing of the rivers and the people who live near them. You can find out more by reading this blog: <https://www.cwmarian.org.uk/post/clean-rivers-project-on-the-afon-nyfer> .

As part of Growing Better Connections' series of **Local Woods for Local People** events, we have created a short film to inspire anyone interested in finding out more about how to be part of a community woodland - or set one up. The film gives some fascinating examples of the power of community action from people in Wales who understand from practical experi-

ence why community management of local woodlands is so important. Community woodland is: ordinary people doing extraordinary things, reclaiming their landscapes and bringing them into community stewardship, remembering their heritage and re-visioning their future, balancing nature, jobs, community and access to land. Watch this film and be inspired to create places that you want to be in every day, which also meet the needs of others in your local community.

This blog tells you more: <https://www.cwmarian.org.uk/post/local-woods-for-local-people> and you can watch the video on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=39sG9lys0lc&feature=youtu.be>

And finally... we had a beautiful day in the sunshine near Tegryn recently, with Growing Better Connections staff and helpers planting some of over **3,500 hedge trees** that will be planted thanks to the project. Our landscape connections work with hedgerows this year also includes over 500 metres of new fencing and a new permissive path near the Frenni Fawr - more on this later in the Spring!

**Holly Cross**  
Growing Better Connections  
[holly@cwmarian.org.uk](mailto:holly@cwmarian.org.uk)



## Skills for Bees: Cymru – Where are Pembrokeshire's Bumblebees?

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust needs your help to search out bumblebees in Pembrokeshire and beyond.....

Pembrokeshire is home to some very special bumblebees. We have 23 out of the 24 UK species, including some of the rarest. In the Preseli hills, we have one of Britain's most beautiful bees – the bilberry bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*). On the flower-rich grasslands of the south coast, we have one of the last remaining populations of the UK's most threatened bumblebee, the shrill carder bee (*Bombus sylvarum*).



**Bilberry Bumblebee**  
Photo: Clare Flynn

Bumblebees are a familiar and popular sight in gardens and play a vital role in pollination, but most have suffered declines in Wales, just like everywhere else. They continue to face pressures including the loss of their flower-rich habitats, use of harmful chemicals, and climate change.



**Enthusiastic survey volunteers**  
Photo: Clare Flynn

The first step to successfully conserving bumblebee populations is to know where they are hanging on, and how many remain. But for many species in Wales, we have very little up-to-date data on this – **we need more sightings as a matter of urgency.**

**Skills for Bees: Cymru** is a new BBCT project (2021-2024), generously funded by the Moondance Foundation. Through training days and mentoring focused on identification and monitoring, we will help people to become bumblebee recorders, both for the BBCT's citizen science scheme, BeeWalk, and bumblebee recording more generally. We will be working in partnership with other conservation organisations and special interest groups as well as existing recorders (let us know if you'd like to be part of it!) to bring bumblebee monitoring into the management plans of nature reserves and other special sites. In Pembrokeshire we will be working with staff and volunteers in the National Park initially but hope to roll out training to other groups as the project develops. Discovering new sites for rarer species such as the beautiful Bilberry bumblebee, threatened Shrill carder and other scarce species, will also be a significant part of the project's aims.

If you would like to get involved or find out more, please contact our Skills for Bees: Cymru project officer, at [Clare.Flynn@bumblebeeconservation.org](mailto:Clare.Flynn@bumblebeeconservation.org) or follow us on Twitter @buzzingwales

**Clare Flynn**  
Bumblebee Conservation Trust



## Wild About Woodlands Appeal Continues to Grow

From woods to hedge banks, coastal valleys to orchards and fields, our trees are under threat and we need more of them in our landscape. In the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park we expect to lose at least 90% of all ash trees. Ash is also a key component of Pembrokeshire's woodlands and is one of the most common hedgerow trees.

As a response to this threat, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust's Wild About Woodlands appeal was set up to plant and protect an additional 1,000 much needed trees. "We want to create new woodland corridors across the National Park for wildlife to grow and thrive. From Hazel to Oak, Willow to Mountain Ash these trees provide homes, food, protection and connections for the wildlife around us. Trees also play a vital role in offsetting our carbon footprint and the detrimental impact that we as humans have had on our precious landscape." (Elsa Davies LVO Pembrokeshire Coast Trust chair)

The project will address key threats to the condition of traditional boundaries, trees and woodlands. Also raise awareness of the

value of these habitats. £4,500 has been raised so far with help from best-selling illustrator Millie Marotta, who is providing an exclusive colouring sheet for everyone who donates. We are extremely grateful to those who have donated so far and the Trust would like to thank The Greener Camping Club and their members, who have donated 250 local provenance trees toward the project.

To donate online and find out other more about the Trust's partnership with Millie Marotta visit:

[www.pembrokeshirecoasttrust.wales/how-you-can-help/wild-about-woodlands/](http://www.pembrokeshirecoasttrust.wales/how-you-can-help/wild-about-woodlands/)

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust is a new charity, having launched in spring 2019. We care for conservation, community, culture and our coast and want to lead the way in protecting them. We want to help keep all that is special and unique about the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park landscape here for future generations. Website: [www.pembrokeshirecoasttrust.wales](http://www.pembrokeshirecoasttrust.wales)

**Jessica Morgan**

[support@pembrokeshirecoasttrust.wales](mailto:support@pembrokeshirecoasttrust.wales)

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Photo: Trevor Theobald



# PNP Contact Details

**Biodiversity Implementation Officer:**

Ant Rogers. Tel - 01437 776146

[anthony.rogers@pembrokeshire.gov.uk](mailto:anthony.rogers@pembrokeshire.gov.uk)

Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership website:

<https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/biodiversity>

Wales Biodiversity website:

[www.biodiversitywales.org.uk](http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk)

# Nature Newsletters

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

*PNP 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.

# PNP Members

amphibian and reptile conservation gwarchod amffibiaid ac ymlusgiaid

bluestone national park resort

buglife Cymru

Bumblebee Conservation Trust

CLA CYMRU

Darwin centre

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales

Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol National Trust

Ffrindiau Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro

PCF Coastal Forum

Plantlife

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