

NFWI-Wales Natural Heritage Project to Preserve, Protect and Plant Urban Trees

Training Day Report

2 September 2019, Broneirion, Llandinam

Background

A third Training Day for Volunteer Federation Co-ordinators was held on 2 September 2019 at Broneirion, Llandinam. Co-ordinators from ten federations in Wales met for the third time to report on the progress of the project in their federations, and to share ideas with other Co-ordinators for the final phase of the project.

Summary of the Introduction

Mair Stephens, Chair of the Federations of Wales Committee, welcomed everyone to the training day and thanked all for attending. Mair also welcomed the two speakers for the day; Tom Jenkins from Forest Research Wales and Gareth Coles from Voluntary Arts Wales.

Project Update from NFWI-Wales

Mair thanked all Federation Co-ordinators for their hard work over the last two years and their contributions to the project. Mair explained that there had been a wide variety of activities and ways WIs had been involved in the project since the last training day in October 2018.

Mair reminded everyone that the project had been extended until the end of March 2020 and therefore the NFWI-Wales Office would be gathering information in preparation for the final report. She also reminded Federation Co-ordinators to keep the NFWI-Wales Office updated by sending in any photographs and information relating to the project.

Since the last training day in October 2018, Mair explained that there had been two steering committee meetings and another would be held in autumn 2019, and Julie Jolliffe, Federation Co-ordinator for Carmarthenshire, had joined the steering committee group to represent the Federation Co-ordinators.

Mair reported that NFWI-Wales had been invited to attend the Tree Health and Citizen Science Meeting held in Bangor in February 2019. Kelly attended from the Wales Office to give an introduction to the project and a brief update of how members had been getting involved. Mair reported that the project had been reaching other organisations even on a GB level at events and meetings.

Morning Speaker

Tom Jenkins – Forest Research Wales – ‘A changing climate for trees’

Tom began his presentation by informing everyone of his job role and the aims of his presentation, which was to raise awareness of the changing climate, both physical and societal for trees. Tom also explained that there would be two themes; firstly the threat to trees and secondly the opportunities for strengthening our tree based resources and benefits. Tom updated members on new pests and diseases and that if spotted, they could be easily reported using an on-line tree reporting system – TreeAlert – which citizens could use to report their findings. There were also other on-line systems that citizens could use, including ActionOak.org and Obervatree.org.uk.

Tom discussed native trees in Wales and the need to focus on conservation rather than preservation and ended his presentation with questions from members and by explaining how members can help in their own ways. This included the suggestion that the same species of trees could be planted together rather than with other mixed species.

Federation Co-ordinator Updates

Each Federation was given a slot to explain the progress of the project within their WIs and the ways in which members had been engaging with the project. They were also given the opportunity to bring craft items which had been made as part of the project and other materials.

Sir Gâr/Carmarthenshire Federation

Julie Jolliffe was pleased to update everyone that Carmarthenshire Federation had successfully planted 1250 trees since the start of the project. Members in Carmarthenshire had been interacting with lots of community groups, the local MP and local councillors. Julie had also been working with the Ex-Town Mayor and had also been encouraged to apply for a grant and had received £500 to plant trees in Carmarthen town centre. Julie also reported that members had recently written and produced a play inspired by the project and members had dressed up as trees for the play. She had also brought many craft items which had been produced by members, including knitted birds, a tree identification wall hanging which featured tree leaves of different species and tree inspired poetry.

Gwynedd Meirionnydd Federation

Tree Co-ordinators from Gwynedd Meirionnydd Federation reported that they had held a tree walk with Gwynedd Council in Barmouth. They also reported that members had been locally adopting trees and monitoring them as part of the project. Llanuwchllyn WI received 105 trees from the Woodland Trust and were planted in partnership with a local school.

Tree Co-ordinators had been engaging with traders on the high street in Bala to ask them to display the Woodland Trust “We Heart Street Trees”. They also discussed the project with the traders and explained the importance of street trees on the high street. Federation Co-ordinators had been continuing to fight against the removal of 275 trees around Bala Lake, and they reported that if the trees were felled they would ensure they were part of the fight and the replanting process. The Co-ordinators reported that they would be meeting with Russell Horsey to help prepare for the next meeting with Natural Resources Wales.

Glamorgan Federation

Susan McPhee, Federation Co-ordinator for Glamorgan reported that they had been working on planting trees in three areas in Glamorgan; Barry, Swansea and Port Talbot. A tree champion in Barry had been engaging with the Barry Action for Nature also and would hope to plant trees. It was also reported that she would work with a local community home to plant trees, and also Pam Grey, Federation Co-ordinator for Glamorgan, would work with Dunvant Horticultural Group to plant trees.

It was also reported that Federation Co-ordinators in Glamorgan had engaged with the Swansea Tree Forum Group.

Anglesey Federation

It was reported that out of the 16 WIs that make up Anglesey Federation, 13 had been involved in the project. Tree Champions had been involved with schools in Anglesey and the Federation Co-ordinator hoped to work with Llanfair PG school to plant an Oak and Silver Birch later in the year. This was also the case for other WIs which would look to plant more in autumn 2019. It was reported that members had been involved through craft workshops and Menai Straits WI had yarn bombed a tree.

It was also reported that there would be an exhibition to display craft materials and other items that had been created as part of the project in October 2019. The Exhibition would be a chance to recruit new members and to promote the project.

Powys Brecknock Federation

Federation Co-ordinators reported that they had been measuring trees and had planted trees outside the Village Hall in partnership with local community council members. It was reported that the Federation had held two craft workshops and had another planned for 24 September 2019 to show off the work completed. There had been a summer trip for members to visit an arboretum to look at trees, and the theme of their county show was ‘Bees & Trees.’

Gwynedd Caernarfon Federation

Gwynedd Caernarfon Federation had held two guided walks as part of the project with tree specialists for both occasions. Members had been taking part in different arts and crafts and there would be an exhibition at the end of the project. Trees had

been ordered from the Woodland Trust for planting in the autumn, and local councils would help members plant them. It was felt that the tree training also fitted in well with the training that WI Climate Ambassadors received.

Clwyd Denbigh Federation

Federation Co-ordinator, Eirian Roberts reported that they had received an extra £500 for nominating trees for the Tree of the Year. They also worked with local school children and the National Trust to plant trees in the local community and the National Trust also donated an 18 foot tree for planting. Members had been monitoring and recording trees using the OPAL and Treezilla websites, whilst other members had been involved in craft. They would have a stall at the Council Meeting in October to engage more members.

Clwyd Flint Federation

Federation Co-ordinator for Clwyd Flint reported that there had been three training days in partnership with the local council. Members had also attended a tree party and had worked with the local tree officer where members took part in tree identification quizzes. The Federation would look to acquire wild service trees for each of the 10 WIs that have taken part in the project and hoped to find planting sites with public access. Bagillt WI had reported success in planting trees and hedgerows. The Denbigh and Flint show had the theme 'Woodlands' and there were beautiful craft items on show.

Members attended a Training Day in Wepre Park, which included speakers Iwan Edwards from North Wales Wildlife Trust and John Purchase who demonstrated grafting techniques and discussed heritage fruit trees with the group.

It was also reported that tree champions would hold a tea party on a derelict playing field in Flintshire, and gain signatures from the public to stop Flintshire County Council selling the land.

Ceredigion Federation

Lynne Lloyd and Anne George, Co-ordinators from Ceredigion Federation, reported that the Federation had held a number of walks. Members had surveyed trees in the federation's Jubilee Woodland which had been planted by WI members. It was reported that since the last training day, WI members had worked with school to plant trees. WI members in Aberystwyth worked with Plasgrug School to plant 100 trees and members in Tregaron worked with Tregaron School to plant 100 trees also. The school then ordered a further 200 trees to be planted.

A knitting group had been set up in Ceredigion with 15 members to knit 43 birds as part of the project and which will be on display at the Eisteddfod in 2020. The Federation would also be holding another guided walk at the end of September 2019 to mark the project in Llanilar.

Powys Radnor Federation

It was reported that half of the WIs in Powys Radnor Federation were involved in the project and members had mostly been involved through craft. Some WIs had ordered tree packs, including New Radnor who had ordered an Urban Tree Pack.

The Federation had also produced a questionnaire for all WIs to participate. It asked members to list the amount of trees in their gardens and to name the species. The Federation then produced a pie chart to demonstrate the different species of trees in the area.

Llandrindod Wells WI had been in contact with the Powys County Council as part of the project. Other WIs had taken part in craft workshops and produced Dorset Buttons and had been willow weaving. The theme for the County Show and Victorian Festival had been inspired by the project also. The federation had also produced cards to sell, showing the 'inchy' leaves that members had crafted.

Projects Future

Mair encouraged discussion on the future of the project and whether there were any ideas to move the project in a different direction or whether it would come to a natural end. Some Co-ordinators suggested that there could be a resolution inspired by the project, whilst others thought that it would be an idea to continue to raise awareness of trees at council meetings and by encouraging people to look at trees in more scientific ways. It was also suggested that WIs could work with schools similar to the previous 'Gardening with Schools' project as there was a lack of understanding amongst children of tree species and their importance to communities. There was also a suggestion that there could be a WI Urban Tree Day where all WIs celebrate the project by organising their own activities, for example, holding woodland walks or guided walks.

Afternoon Speaker

Gareth Coles – Voluntary Arts Wales – 'Creative Responses to the project'

Mair introduced Gareth Coles who encouraged ideas about how craft could be used to capture the involvement of members in the project, there was a suggestion that there could be a national exhibition to celebrate craft from the project, a virtual report or a booklet.

Everyone then took part in a group craft session to make tree inspired drawings shaped as lungs.

Summing Up

Mair explained that the need to record all information at this stage of the project was vital, and it was also important to share it with the NFWI-Wales Office in

preparation for the final report. She suggested that if members took photographs or tweeted, to keep the office updated. She also reminded the room that the OPAL website would run until summer 2020, but to continue to monitor and plant more trees as there were many other resources that could help.

Mair welcomed questions and thanked all for attending the Training Day.