



a million voices for nature  
miliwn o leisiau dros fyd natur



November 2011

## Planning for the future

The reserve will shortly be applying to Conwy County Borough Council for permission to make some further improvements to the facilities at Conwy.

The centrepiece would landscape the grass and gravel area between the Visitor Centre and the coffee shop, but the proposals also include changes that will enhance wildlife-watching at the reserve, and installation of solar panels that would help to heat the water used in the coffee shop and toilets.

We are awaiting news on a major funding bid that would enable this work to happen, but already the generosity of visitors has raised over £27,000, thanks to volunteers in the RSPB Conwy Support Group. This shows huge support for what we are proposing, for which we're very grateful.

More details of the plans are inside, and if the Council approves our plans and we receive good news on funding, the first work will start later this winter, though the major changes will take place next autumn and winter.

If you'd like to know more about the plans, please speak to staff at the reserve.

### In this issue...

- Plans for improved visitor facilities
- Book now for Christmas events
- The first million steps for nature
- Tunnel Vision: 20 years on
- Pumpkin Birds swoop in



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Tel: 01492 584091 [www.rspb.org.uk/conwy](http://www.rspb.org.uk/conwy)

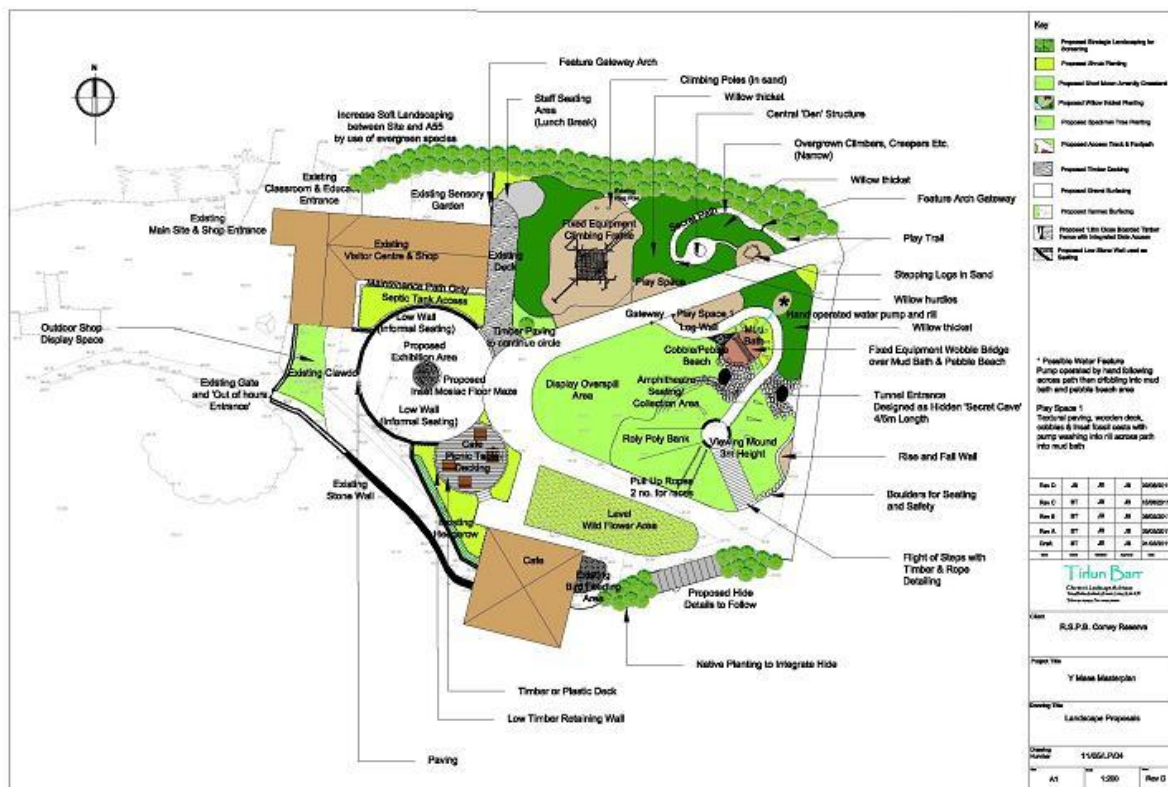
## Planning for the future

The reserve will shortly be applying to Conwy County Borough Council for permission to make some further improvements to the facilities at Conwy. There are several elements of the project, not all of which require planning consent, but which are collectively included in a funding bid that we hope to hear about very soon:

### Y Maes @ RSPB Conwy

The grass and gravel area between the Visitor Centre and Coffee Shop will be transformed into a multi-use space for all, the 'village square' of the reserve: a place for everyone, throughout the year.

New landforms will turn the featureless grass into hillocks and hummocks to provide elevated views across the reserve. Natural features and native plants will introduce more children to nature, stimulating learning through play and their own imaginations. Mounds, tunnels, hollows, boulders, trees and logs will provide a challenging and inspirational environment to explore nature close-up. Play "equipment" will mostly be made of natural materials, placed organically in the landforms.



A new events space will provide a better surface for Farmers' Markets, Gardeners' Markets and the other events we organise through the year, and there will be a proper picnic area that will be fully accessible to wheelchairs. The area behind the coffee shop will be turned into a wild flower area, planted with pollen-rich species to encourage insects.



How the new landscape might look to a duck, by Alan Gray

### **New views**

On the edge of Y Maes will be a new 'observation room', built into the earth bank between the coffee shop and boardwalk. Large windows at the front will look across newly-created lagoon-edge habitat and the Conwy Valley beyond, and it will provide a small events space for a range of activities.

We are also looking to create a new view over the deep lagoon at the Glan Conwy end of the reserve, ideally at ground-level so visitors can get a wader's eye view of the world, overlooking the main high-tide wader roost.

### **Car park**

We're not terribly proud of our car park, and this project provides a one-off opportunity to upgrade it. We want to improve the surface along the in/out routes and near the Visitor Centre, increase the number of spaces for blue-badge holders, widen the entrance and provide a footpath along the south side so that you don't have to dodge the traffic as you walk back from the estuary or arrive from Deganwy.

### **Water from the sun**

Our south-facing coffee shop is ideal for solar panels, and we'd invest in solar thermal tubes that would heat the water used in the hand-basins and the coffee shop, including the dishwasher. This would make a big dent in the greenhouse gases that are emitted from the electricity we use, and save money on fuel bills that we could spend on wildlife conservation.

### **Next steps**

Getting planning permission is likely to take a few months, but would enable these improvements to be made during the next three years. We'll give visitors plenty of notice before we start, and there will be some access restrictions to parts of the reserve, particularly during any improvements to the car park.



# Events and activities throughout the winter

## Free walks and self-guided activities

Every Saturday morning

[Guided wildlife walk](#)

## November

Saturday 5 and  
Sunday 6 November

Saturday 26 and  
Sunday 27 November

[Binocular and telescope  
demonstrations](#)

Sunday 27 November

[Tree Treasure Trail](#)

Wednesday 30  
November

[Conwy Farmers' Market](#)

## December

Saturday 3 and  
Sunday 4 December

[Naturally Christmas](#)

Wednesday 21 December

[Christmas Farmers' Market  
and Campfire](#)

24 December-1 January

[Christmas/New Year opening  
hours](#)

Tuesday 20 December

[Muddy Puddle Club:  
Christmas Campfire](#)

Thursday 22 December

[Winter Solstice Walk](#)

Monday 26 December

[Boxing Day Walk](#)

## January

Sunday 1 January

[New Year's Day Walk](#)



**naturally  
Christmas**  
AT  
**RSPB Conwy**  
on Sat/Sun 3/4 December  
11a.m. till 4 p.m.

**Santa Trail**

- FOOD FOR THOUGHT
- John Davies WOODCARVER
- Tombola Etc.
- Games
- Create A decoration
- Local Crafts
- facepainting
- CREST CO-OPERATIVE
- Christmas Stocking fillers

**and BARGAINS A'PLENTY**

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Regd charity England and Wales no. 207676, Scotland no. 50037654



## Your lagoons: where are they?

Our plans, announced in the last e-newsletter, to pump saltwater from the Conwy estuary into the lagoons, hit a snag in mid October. We were hoping to use the saltwater to eliminate the invasive weed *Crassula helmsii* in the Shallow Lagoon.

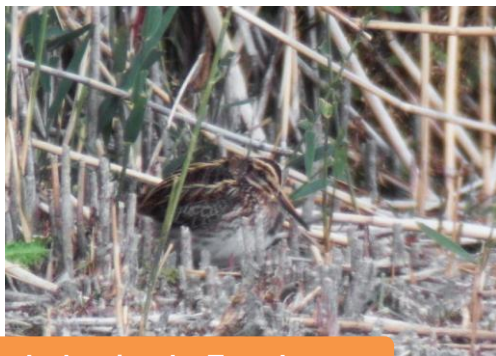
Unfortunately, the outside funding was withdrawn just days before the pumps were supposed to arrive. Obviously this was extremely disappointing, and means that we have lost our chance for a few months, as we won't get the high tides that we need until next spring.

We'd been deliberately keeping the freshwater on the Shallow Lagoon low in preparation for the works. Now the work has been postponed, we will pump fresh water from the Afon Ganol when it's available, though that requires some prolonged periods of rain falling in the hills above Colwyn Bay. We are still working with various agencies in order to find a long-term, funded solution to the *Crassula* problem and the challenges of maintaining water levels in the lagoons through the summer months.

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## Recent sightings

The undoubted highlight of October was the reserve's first **great white egret**, found on the estuary on 14 October. Unfortunately, it was only with us for a day, and may well have been the same bird that turned up at RSPB Ynys-hir shortly afterwards.



Jack snipe, by Tony Lovett

**Redwings** have been arriving from Scandinavia over the last few weeks, while an increase in **jays** and **skylarks** also suggests migrants on the move. **Water rails** have been more evident in recent weeks, while a few hundred **starlings** are roosting in the reeds each night – hopefully the first of thousands arriving from Russia.

Small groups of **whooper swans** and **pintails** have dropped into the reserve, fresh in from the Arctic, but quickly moved on, though the **black-tailed godwits** are staying longer.

Among the other wader highlights, a **jack snipe** showed well in mid October, bobbing away in an island of cut reeds. We also saw a few **knot**, **golden plover**, **spotted redshank**, up to 3 **greenshank** and **curlew sandpiper**.

The RSPB is running a competition between its wetland reserves during the winter, the "Passage Waders Challenge", to see which reserve can attract the greatest variety of waders on its managed pools. So far, admittedly after only a month, we're currently ranked third in the country. Not bad for a tiny reserve!

## Your pictures and your tweets

We get some great photos of the reserve and its wildlife on our [web community pages](#) and the [Flickr](#) group set up by local photographers. Why not visit to see more, or register today and add to our picture portfolio?

We select a Photo of the Month from the images posted by visitors and announce the winner on our [Twitter feed](#). September's winner was a Ruff by Adrian Foster and October's was Mal Delamare's close-up picture of a hoverfly.



Hoverfly, by Mal Delamare



Ruff, by Adrian Foster

### Tweet, tweet!

Follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) for all the latest reserve news



[@charlieoak](#) Charlotte Teviotdale  
Beautiful day for a visit to [@rspbconwy](#) hoping for some good spots and some nice cake! What more could you ask for?



[@AngTherese](#) Angela Slate  
Thanks to the staff [@rspbconwy](#) for hosting the Pumpkin Bird Hunt, my son loved it!



[@localhero01](#) Anne Rogers  
My son took this lovely portrait of a robin at [@rspbconwy](#) today [#birds](#)  
<http://yfrog.com/kknt3wnj>



[@TuHwntirBont](#)  
Had a few hours off today so walked round [@rspbconwy](#). Views down the Conwy Valley stunning & ponies much admired by 2yr old son.



## Snippets



Lots of youngsters enjoyed our take on Hallowe'en, following clues on the trail of a family of Pumpkin Birds that 'nested' on the reserve. Others followed progress on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), with some of the photos featuring in *The Daily Post*.

### A bigger view

Visitors to our coffee shop have a better view of the wildlife thanks to three new RSPB telescopes donated to the reserve. They have been donated in memory of Patricia Moulton, David Read OBE and John K. Parker. Thousands will enjoy using the 'scopes, and we thank their families for them.

Leaving a [legacy](#) or making a donation [in memory](#) of a loved one are fitting ways to help the RSPB's conservation and education work.



## North Wales Weekly News

### Reserve warblings

There'll soon be another way to keep in touch with the reserve's news, through a monthly column in the *North Wales Weekly News* by reserve manager Julian Hughes. Look out for the first instalment on Thursday 17 November.

## Tunnel at 20: how the reserve was built

this is  
where  
we came  
from

dyma  
fel oedd  
hi i  
ddechrau

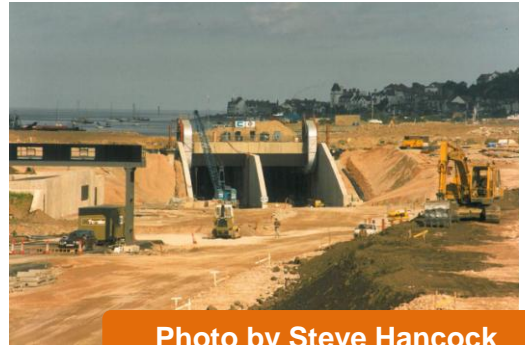


Photo by Steve Hancock

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the A55 Conwy Tunnel didn't pass un-noticed by the local media, with an excellent piece on [BBC Wales Today](#) that featured the reserve. The world's first immersed-tube tunnel was a ground-breaking piece of engineering, which required three million tonnes of silt, sand and mud to be pumped from the estuary. And that's the land that was used to shape and create RSPB Conwy.

We have put together a collection of photographs, memories and mementoes donated by local people and the archives of the *North Wales Weekly News*. These are on display in the coffee shop from next week until the end of the year. Our thanks to all the local people who have loaned us items and photographs. We'd be pleased to hear about your memories too!

### The first million steps...

A programme to rally the UK to help tackle the crisis facing nature has received overwhelming support, with people taking over one million steps in just six months.

The RSPB's Stepping up for Nature movement is one of the most ambitious nature conservation charity efforts in the world, and one step has been taken every 18 seconds since it started in March. The RSPB launched Stepping Up for Nature to help tackle the catastrophic declines in bird species and other wildlife, and the damage and destruction of their habitats. We believe that small individual steps can make a big difference, and if everyone acts together nature stands a chance. Steps include any effort to help nature both in the UK and overseas, and are separated into four categories; giving, doing, volunteering and campaigning. The RSPB has marked the first million with a special video report.

Thousands of steps have already been taken at Conwy, particularly by more than 50 volunteers who undertake a wide range of activities at the reserve.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the RSPB and we currently have opportunities for people who could give us half a day or more a week in the Visitor Centre. We're looking for some extra meet-and-greet volunteers who can welcome visitors to the reserve, answer their queries and enthuse about wildlife. Full training will be provided. If you'd like to take some more steps at Conwy's visitor centre, please contact Angela Rogers





## RSPB gift membership - you'll make their day

*“My granddad spends so much time in the garden enjoying wildlife and birds, so I was surprised to hear he wasn't an RSPB member. I thought it would be an excellent Christmas gift for him, as he is so difficult to buy for. He loved the gift and has visited a couple of his nearby reserves. He is also much better at identifying the visitors in his garden - he tells me all about them every time I visit him.”*

Lucy

We can't even begin to protect wildlife and their precious habitats without members like you. We're sure there are more people like you, and you already know them. We can arrange for a gift membership to start on any date of your choice, and we can give their welcome pack to you or send it directly to them. And for youngsters, we've got our Wildlife Explorers Club – gifts that last a whole year.

Pop into RSPB Conwy Visitor Centre and we'll sort out a great gift membership. The reserve benefits directly from every new membership.



The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing – help us keep it that way. Registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654

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