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giving
nature
a home

Conwy Connections Bulletin

Enhancing RSPB Conwy for people and nature

Wow! It's almost too good to believe that Conwy Connections is nearly complete. We've had excellent feedback from visitors already who like what we've done, and that's a reward in itself.

While we've been building Y Maes, The LookOut and painting the mural in the Tal-y-fan hide, it's been great to chat with so many people who have been interested in what we're doing. We've endeavoured to be as green as possible with this project, amply demonstrated by our straw-bale building. We've had such great help from volunteers and we've worked with some great contractors who shared our vision.

The other morning, as the sun warmed the reserve, I stood on the steps in Y Maes, looking at how the makeover has transformed the place in the last eight months. RSPB Conwy has been enhanced in so many ways, while continuing to provide a whole variety of habitats and homes for all sorts of nature, and giving everyone the opportunity to experience wildlife. We have built it, now we want you to come and enjoy it!

Julian Hughes,
Reserve Manager



Julian working
with straw
bales ▶

Updates

Car park

Considerable changes were made to half of the car park last year. Thanks to the support and flexibility of the major funders, the Communities and Nature project, we managed to find enough funding to improve the other half too. Work finished in time for the summer holidays. We've said bye-bye to the pot-holes, once and for all - our hard-working volunteers who used to fill the potholes regularly are particularly delighted!

The Vardre Viewpoint

A new viewing screen at the south end of the reserve has been built, to overlook the islands in the deep lagoon, and we've created a new footpath from the Ganol Trail. All the hides and viewpoints at Conwy are named after the hills and mountains you can see from the reserve. This viewpoint is named after the hill in Deganwy, and it opens up new views of the reserve and its wildlife that we've never had before.

Tegi

Saying that everyone involved in the Conwy Connections project loves Tegi, is an understatement! After all, he is the friendliest wetland monster in the world!! Tegi is now open to the public. Artist Richard Hackett (who also created the Tal-y-fan mural) kindly painted the eyes of Tegi, and the result is a vivid splash of colour as Tegi's coat turns green.



Updates

Sculpture

This will be the very final piece of the project, which will be installed very soon. We're keeping it under wraps for now. On a sunny morning in early June, some of us went to see it being created and we were blown away. You'll certainly know that you've arrived at a place that is giving nature a home.

The LookOut

After three months of heavy grafting, 450 straw-bales and numerous cakes and cuppas to keep the energy of the team going, we have an eco-building that we can be proud of. Our very own straw-bale building is a fantastic space, offering stunning views across the lagoon. A BIG thank you to everyone who made this possible.

Y Maes

Since Y Maes has been created, we have seen so many children using their imagination in this new space. We can proudly say that it is having the impact that we were hoping for. It's great to see parents relaxing on the benches while children are left to play freely on the climbing frames, spotting the occasional frog and the odd insect. The tunnel's graffiti was created by the artist Dime One, aka Andy Birch from Old Colwyn, with help from the Wildlife Explorers. Local sculptor Mike Owens has created a wing-shaped wooden bench, inspired by birds at the reserve. There is still some work to do this autumn, including a willow teepee, wildlife meadow and planting. By spring 2014, it will be looking even more lovely and vibrant.



Some of the volunteers that helped build The LookOut ▶



The LookOut ▶

◀ Laura chatting to Huw Jenkins, BBC Radio Wales

Meet Laura

Laura Kudelska joined the RSPB in May 2012, as Conwy Connections Project Officer. Managing a project of this kind, including seeing all the elements through, as well as keeping funders, contractors and everyone involved happy, takes a certain character!

Before joining the RSPB, what did you do?

I worked for an educational residential company for six years, as an outdoor education instructor and as a manager for one of their centres, and after I left there, I set up a wind turbine factory.

When you started working for RSPB Conwy, did you know much about the charity?

Yes, I did a degree in Environmental Biology so I was very much aware of the RSPB. I actually wanted to work for the RSPB - it wasn't just the job, it was the organisation as well.

You're quite a keen environmentalist, would you say?

Yes, very much. I grew up in the countryside and spent most of my childhood running around woodlands and rivers. I entered many competitions when I was a child. When I was 12 years old and in the Guides, we came second in one competition and met David Bellamy! I was very proud of that one!

What would you say was the highlight of the last ten months?

The LookOut is the one element that my sweat and tears went into. It's been very satisfying to see it completed. However, Tegi, built by Gwyn who did the drainage, is still probably my favourite element of the project. He's got so much character and the kids love him.

I remember you getting very excited about drainage...!

Yes, the drainage was one of the first elements of the project so it felt like three months of paperwork and talking to people was finally starting to take shape. It was a big moment!

What has been your lowest point?

We had a few moments with the planning authority with two elements of the project. Those were a little stressful. However, we did get everything done on time so it was fine in the end.

The concept was to encourage more families and the community to reconnect with nature. Has it worked?

I think very much so. You just have to go and watch families out there using the space that's been created - it's really changed the dynamics of this area of the reserve, which is great to see.

We wish to thank Laura for all her hard work. All the best to you!

Conwy Connections Photo Album



Alastair (RSPB Staff) clay rendering The LookOut



Dime One (aka Andy Birch) graffiti-ing the tunnel



Crown Estate staff, volunteering on The LookOut – thanks guys!



Farmers' Market day on Y Maes



Filling The LookOut roof with straw



Clay tree inside The LookOut



Visitor enjoying The Vardre Viewpoint



Cuppa time at The LookOut



Tal-y-fan hide mural by Richard Hackett

Katie-jo Luxton's round-up

I would like to congratulate all the unsung heroes that made Conwy Connections happen. A brilliant team has made this happen.

These projects start years before you see any dump diggers arrive! A special thank you must go to the RSPB Conwy Support Group. They smashed their fundraising target by doing everything from baking cakes and making jams to growing plants and selling second hand books.

A big thank you to all of our funders - so many shared our visions and came on board to make it all possible. All the RSPB Cymru fundraising staff, Conwy reserve staff and volunteers should feel proud of themselves for dedicating hundreds of hours of their time to see the project through.

Last but not at all least, I would like to congratulate our two young presenters, Efa and Peter – they will remember this forever. They certainly have the talent to make a career of this! Their contribution will last in the social media-sphere for a long time to come.

I hope you all enjoy the reserve's new look and facilities and thank you all for visiting our new home for nature at RSPB Conwy.

Katie-jo Luxton, Director RSPB Cymru

"The Making of Conwy Connections" the movie!

Tape Community Music and Film crew have dedicated hours of their time since last October to produce a short film capturing the developments as they happened. At the Discovery Day (see below for details), you'll get a chance to see the premiere of this film! Thank you, Tape crew, for your hard work and a big congratulations to Efa (9) and Peter (8), for being great presenters. Who knows, we might see you presenting Springwatch in the future!

"The group has worked really hard creating the films and are really excited to be taking part in the project. Their creativity and enthusiasm has shone throughout the film making process resulting in a portfolio of work to be proud of. We hope that you are able to join us at the premiere of the main film or at one of the screenings at Discovery Day."

Neil Dunsire, Tape Community Music and Film



RSPB Conwy DISCOVERY DAY Saturday, 31 August

10am - 4pm, Suggested donation of £1

Join us for a fun-filled day of discovery for all the family! We'll be exploring nature, having fun in the new play space, and making giant bubbles with Dr Zig!

Wildlife walks, local produce and plants, minibeast making, a Record-Breaking Bird Show...and loads more!

check out our website for
more events information.

RSPB Cymru would like to thank those whose donations support RSPB Conwy nature reserve and visitor facilities, including The Crown Estate, Cemlyn Jones Trust, Environment Wales, Tesco plc, Conwy Town Council and RSPB Conwy Support Group.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654

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www.rspb.org.uk/conwy

conwy@rspb.org.uk

01492 584091

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