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Small charity takes out big bold loan to boost nature in Wales

Pentwyn to be a blueprint for reversing the decline of Welsh wildlife

A small charity with big plans for nature's recovery is launching an appeal to help breathe new life into Pentwyn – an upland farm in the Welsh Marches.

Last year, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust took out a loan to buy 164 acres – about the size of 80 rugby pitches – in a bid to help wildlife fight back and tackle climate change, river pollution and flooding across central Wales.

It now needs to raise £1 million to secure the future of the land at Pentwyn for people and nature. Additional funds are also needed to restore the land – for example, £1,000 could pay to plant 300 metres of hedgerow.

Iolo Williams, Wildlife TV presenter and Patron of Radnorshire Wildlife Trust, says:

“In Wales we've lost beautiful birds such as the nightingale and corn bunting – and the haunting call of curlew and purring of the turtle dove may soon disappear too. Much-loved animals such as red squirrels and water voles, which were once widespread in Wales, are now only found at a few sites and are threatened with extinction. Nature is in crisis, and we need to help wildlife fightback fast.

“We're appealing to people everywhere to help us secure and protect this land for the future. Nature needs it and so do we because time spent in natural places soothes our souls and makes us feel good – people will be welcome at Pentwyn. Please donate if you can – nothing is too small to help!”

The land at Pentwyn, near Llandrindod Wells, will be transformed from an intensively farmed landscape into a humming, buzzing and chirruping oasis where the calls of threatened birds can be heard once more. It sits beside other wild land so there is potential to help wildlife thrive across a wider area by expanding and connecting habitats and increasing nature's resilience to climate change.

Wales is close to the bottom of the international league table of 240 countries for nature:

- A 2021 report found that Wales has lost around half of its wild animals and plants
- One in six species are threatened with extinction, including water voles & red squirrels
- Over 60% of protected rivers in Wales exceed phosphate pollution limits

At Pentwyn, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust will allow natural habitats to recover, creating wetlands, scrub, and potentially new woodland, as well as increasing plant diversity to ensure the landscape is better equipped to cope with climate change.

By restoring nature, the landscape will also retain more rainwater, filtering it and releasing it more slowly – this will help to keep the nearby River Lugg clean and healthy.

At least 30% of the world's land and seas should be protected by 2030 to prevent the destruction of the planet's biodiversity.

James Hitchcock, Chief Executive Officer of Radnorshire Wildlife Trust, says:

“Welsh wildlife is under a huge amount of pressure, but everyone can do their bit to help us restore nature to Pentwyn. This project will benefit us all – it'll be somewhere to enjoy a wander through the wild, listen to the waterfall, see the flash of a wood warbler, and watch butterflies' flit across a wilder hillside.

“Pentwyn will also store more carbon, help tackle the climate crisis, stop rainwater washing off the hill too quickly and help reduce pollution levels in the River Lugg. Creating more space for nature will have the added benefit of boosting tourism and creating more green jobs.”

Despite the small size of the charity, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust cares for 19 nature reserves and is one of the driving forces trying to get better protections for rivers such as the Wye to stop the high level of pollution.

People can donate to the Pentwyn appeal here:

<https://www.rwtwales.org/appeals/wilder-pentwyn-appeal>

ENDS

Images and footage (including of Iolo Williams at Pentwyn) are in this [DROPBOX](#). Please note that these are for one-off use only in connection with this story and Radnorshire Wildlife Trust. All images and footage must be credited.

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Editor's notes

- Raise funds for Pentwyn! Donate [here](#).
- See press release about the purchase of Pentwyn [here](#).
- This land is adjacent to [Cnwch Bank](#) and has Ffridd habitat (a mosaic of thorny bushes, gorse and grassland), hill grazing rights and in-bye land on the shoulders of the hill. The land is adjacent to [Fronwen Wood](#), at the southern border, which gives woodland connectivity and extends the ecological connection of the contiguously managed land. Increasing woodland cover around this border would be of great value.

- In 2021 a report found that Wales has only kept around half of its wild animals and plants – see report from Natural History Museum and RSPB [here](#).
- The Senedd has declared a nature emergency in Wales – see [here](#).
- According to [The State of Mammals in Wales](#) Report, 1 in 3 native mammals in Wales are at risk of extinction.
- **30% of land must be protected for nature if wildlife is to thrive and survive once more – this target has been set by the UN [Convention on Biological Diversity](#).** This is an agreement between countries, with 3 main goals: to protect biodiversity; to use biodiversity without destroying it; and, to share any benefits from genetic diversity equally. The CBD has proposed that at least 30% of the world’s land and seas should be protected in the next decade to prevent the destruction of the planet’s biodiversity.
- **The last [State of Nature in 2019](#) report highlights that Wales’ wildlife continues to decline:**
 - One in six species in Wales are at risk of extinction.
 - Of the 3,902 species assessed in Wales, 73 have been lost from Wales already, with birds like turtle doves and corn buntings now gone from Wales’ skies.
 - Where we have been able to measure the abundance of species in Wales, it is also down. Numbers of butterflies have fallen by 52% since 1976 and the numbers of species that require more specialised habitats, such as the high brown fritillary and grayling, have declined by more than three quarters.
 - Wales’ terrestrial mammals also fare badly with greater than 30% of species at risk of disappearing altogether. Species like red squirrels and water voles, which were once widespread in Wales, are now in a few sites and under real threat of extinction.

The evidence from the last 50 years follows a similar pattern to the global picture and shows that changes in the way we manage our land for **agriculture** and the ongoing effects of **climate change** are having the biggest impacts on nature in Wales.

Pollution is also a major issue. Whilst emissions of many pollutants have been reduced dramatically in recent decades, pollution continues to have a severe impact on the UK’s sensitive habitats and freshwaters, and new pollutant threats are continuing to emerge.

[NRW State of Natural Resources](#)

The loss of biodiversity is accelerating globally at an unprecedented rate with around 1 million animal and plant species now threatened with extinction, many within the next few decades (IPBES, 2019). The five most important drivers are land and sea use change, direct exploitation of species, climate change, pollution, and invasive non-native species. **In the UK, agricultural intensification has been identified as having the single biggest impact on biodiversity.**

[Wales](#) has 12% of land protected as SSSI – but of this, 68% of SSSIs are in unfavourable condition

The 2020 [State of Natural Resources Report \(SoNaRR\)](#) states that:

- 66% of river water bodies fail to achieve good ecological status under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) classification.
- three species associated with rivers, white-clawed crayfish, freshwater pearl mussel and southern damselfly - are at risk of extinction in Wales.
- the latest salmon and sea trout stock assessments show a continuing decline; and
- one of the major causes is continued widespread agricultural diffuse pollution, resulting in elevated nutrient (such as nitrogen and phosphorous) and sediment in freshwaters.

In 2021 [Natural Resources Wales stated](#) that over 60% of protected rivers in Wales exceed **phosphate pollution limits** - this includes the River Wye. These rivers support some of Wales' most special wildlife like Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, white clawed crayfish, and floating water-plantain. Currently, there are minimal regulations controlling farm pollution in Wales; it is mostly governed by voluntary 'good practice' guidelines called the Code of Good Agricultural Practice (CoGAP). As seen highlighted above, voluntary measures are not working.

Pentwyn includes the River Lugg Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is a tributary in the River Wye catchment.

The Marches

The Marches straddle the English-Welsh border, and at the heart of the Marches lie the counties of Shropshire, Montgomeryshire, Herefordshire and Radnorshire. Criss-crossed by the Severn and Wye rivers, once rich in wildlife, the area retains some of its wild heritage with stretches of stunning landscape.

The Marches landscape is dominated by farming and forestry which has accelerated the loss of some of the remarkable wildlife that once thrived here. During the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, The Wildlife Trusts' 'Wilder Marches' programme seeks to work in partnership with local land managers and communities to reverse the decline of nature, bringing back wildlife across the land.

Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

Radnorshire Wildlife Trust is a registered charity, part of the federation of 46 Wildlife Trusts working across the UK to protect and restore nature, inspiring people to connect and take action for wildlife. The Trust has over 1000 members and currently manages 19 nature reserves covering over 400Ha of land. Visit <https://www.rwtwales.org> to read RWT's previous press releases, sign up for RWT's e-newsletter, or join online.