

LAUNCH OF THE RIVER BARLWYD PARTNERSHIP - WORKING FOR A LIVING RIVER!



Exciting plans are afoot in Blaenau Ffestiniog as local groups, businesses, and national organisations get together to save the River Barlwyd. The river, which is a Main River and flows into the Dwyryd estuary, is currently classed as a 'Dead River'.

'The state of the river has been of great concern to us locally for a long time and a number of individuals and individual organisations have been trying to improve the situation, but this is the first time that so many people have got together to try and do something about it' says Paul Thomas Town Councillor for the Tanygrisiau area.

Doug Oliver of the Countryside Council of Wales says 'I haven't seen a Pied Wagtail on the river for several years. These birds feed on bugs that live in rivers. The fact that these birds aren't living near the Barlwyd shows that there aren't any bugs living in the river which shows that the river is polluted in some way.'

The Partnership will work together to reduce the pollution going into the river and to encourage local people to look after it.

Tim Owen from the Environment Agency says 'There are a number of reasons why the river is a Dead River. Firstly, historically there has been pollution flowing into it from local industry, and then there's all the rubbish thrown into it. We're not going to be able to solve the problem overnight but beginning to work in a Partnership is a very important first step'.

Lee Oliver from Keep Wales Tidy says 'Its unbelievable how much rubbish is in the river. And that's something that local people can change. Either by not throwing rubbish or phoning the Council if they see someone fly-tipping.'

The Partnership was established after a very successful clean up day in April 2008 when over 30 local residents came out on a Sunday morning (in the snow!) to clean the river.

Sara Ashton from the Green Town Project that's co-ordinating the Partnership says 'The enthusiasm that has been shown for the scheme is truly fantastic. Not only by local people, but also by the Town Council, local businesses like the two quarries, and local groups like the angling societies. Support from national organisations is also important and we're really pleased that they have been keen to work with us, the community, in this innovative way.

Mel Goch ap Iorweth from the Cambrian Angling Society and a Town Councillor adds 'We're really pleased to be part of this Partnership. Getting the river back to being a living river is so important. Not only for the fish stocks but for wildlife in general, and for people who live in the area. We would then be in a position to enjoy the river rather than turning our backs on it. This is a chance for the people of Tanygrisiau and Blaenau to take pride in where we live'.

The work of the Partnership has recently been buoyed by Welsh Slate, who have commissioned experts The River Restoration Centre to explore how to begin improving the river.

The partnership will be organising a number of activities so that local people can learn about the river and get involved in looking after it. For more information contact the Green Town Project on 01766 832214 or saraashton@gwynedd.gov.uk

Information for Editors

The River Barlwyd Partnership is co-ordinated by the Green Town Project. The green Town Project is a Bowydd and Rhiw Communities First Project. The aim of the project is to enable the community of Bro Ffestiniog to use our local environment and the environment generally as a resource for developing the local economy, the community and its culture, dealing with social problems, improving the health and welfare of the population, raising capacity and by means of education in its broadest sense, creating a population of stakeholders who are environmentally lively and motivated. By these means, we will also be safeguarding the area's environmental heritage and contributing towards global sustainability. The project is strategic and integrated. The project is funded by Communities Forst, CAE, and the Countryside Council of Wales.

For **MORE INFORMATION** about the Green Town Project or about the River Barlwyd Partnership or for **PICTURES** contact Sara Ashton ar 01766 832214 neu saraashton@gwynedd.gov.uk