

Precious Pearls; a brighter future?

Embargoed to 1st September 2018

Following the success of Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust's appeal to save the Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly last December – '*PBF: A New Hope*' – timely habitat work and good Spring weather helped bring about increased numbers at most sites. With more funding now secured, will the future for this rare, threatened species soon be brighter?

For over 20 years, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT) has been working to protect and enhance the remaining populations of Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF) in Montgomeryshire. With poor weather and declining habitat quality in recent years, the poor PBF was suffering; populations were getting dangerously low.

However, thanks to the generosity of all who donated to the appeal (#PBFANewHope) last winter, MWT was able to undertake work on over 6 hectares of habitat, to improve its suitability for the butterfly. When it eventually arrived, this was followed by a warm, dry spring; perfect weather for this delicate insect to spread its wings, breed and lay its eggs. Adult PBF numbers were up at most sites; after five successive years of decline, this was a relief!

This is a fantastic glimmer of hope for the PBF, but more consistent habitat management is needed to maintain the momentum. With that in mind, MWT is delighted that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has been able to fund our work on the species. The 'Precious Pearls' project is now underway and will run until December 2019. This funding will allow us to undertake more habitat improvements, continue the long-term monitoring for the species and search for new sites, as well as involving local communities, schools and volunteers in work to save the butterfly.

Linda Ashton, Senior Partnership, Access and Recreation Officer for Natural Resources Wales said:

"Wildlife is an important part of our environment, our heritage and our culture in Wales and it's vital to support projects like this through our grant aid programme. This funding will help the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust continue their important work to protect the rare Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly so we can see it thrive in years to come."

Tammy Stretton, MWT Conservation Officer, said:

"The Pearl-bordered Fritillary is now found on just eleven sites in the whole of Wales, eight of which are in Montgomeryshire. Without our help, there seems little doubt that

we'll lose it forever. With that in mind, we are delighted to have secured this new funding to help safeguard the species for future generations to enjoy."

**Photos: Contractor cutting bracken & scrub for PBFs, 27th February 2018
Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly**

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For more images, interviews and additional information, please contact Tammy Stretton: tammy@montwt.co.uk / 01938 555654.

Notes for editors

1. For more information on the work Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust has been doing for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly and to view our short film narrated by Welsh Naturalist Iolo Williams - '*Montgomeryshire's Precious Pearls*' - see our website: <http://www.montwt.co.uk/what-we-do/projects/pearl-bordered-fritillary>
2. Pearl-bordered Fritillary information: <http://www.montwt.co.uk/species/pearl-bordered-fritillary>
3. PBF: A New Hope appeal information: http://www.montwt.co.uk/PBF_ANewHope



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