

BRECON NATURE WALKS

6 short walks exploring the green spaces and wildlife of Brecon



BRECON BEACONS



PARTNERIAETHAU NATUR LLEOL
LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIPS

CYMRU



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

Brecon – a ‘Gateway to Nature’

Brecon lies at the heart of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, overlooked by some of the highest mountains in southern Britain. But you don't have to head for the hills to get out amongst nature – there are plenty of wonderful green spaces within walking distance of the town centre. They provide a variety of habitats for many species of wildlife, some of which we have highlighted in these walks. Brecon is a true ‘Gateway to Nature’.

In nature, ‘connections’ are paramount – no species can live independently, and the purpose of these walks is to bring to life how the varying landscapes and habitats you will walk through connect together, connect with our urban environments and ultimately connect to us.

By going on these walks, we hope this will not only be beneficial to your health and wellbeing but increase your understanding of nature in Brecon and how it plays its part in the wider natural landscape. We all know that connecting with nature is beneficial and we would like to deepen your connection.

These walks take you past many interesting places to spot wildlife in many shapes and forms at different times of the year, from veteran trees to hotspots for otters. It also includes initiatives planned and delivered by local groups to help conserve and enhance the wildlife in and around Brecon which have been funded by the Local Places for Nature (LPfN) Fund.

Find out more and get involved

For further information and to get involved in nature conservation:

Brecon Beacons Local Nature Partnership

<https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Local-to-You>

Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority

<https://beacons-npa.gov.uk/environment/>

The local **Wildlife Trust** has information on wildlife, volunteering and how to promote wildlife in your garden. <https://www.welshwildlife.org/>

Brecon Gateway Ecological Data Report 2024

compiled by the **Biodiversity Information Service, Powys and Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (BIS)** <https://www.bis.org.uk/>

Wildlife recording:

LERC app <https://www.lercwales.org.uk/app.php>

or **BIS** https://www.bis.org.uk/get_involved/submit_a_record

There are several apps available for identifying plants, birds, insects but submitting a record as well really helps to monitor species.

There are many other organisations and local community groups too!



The Walks

The walks can be undertaken as a longer circular walk or as individual shorter walks which can be linked as you choose. **All individual walks start and finish at Brecon Bus Interchange.** All routes are on public rights of way.

The routes are selected to be as accessible as possible. The description is based on this grading system. Occasional features on Grade 1 or 2 walks are noted and an alternative route given where possible.

- Grade 1:** Routes which are barrier free, have negligible gradients and solid or compacted surfaces. Most have seats.
- Grade 2:** Routes with some sections with slightly looser surfaces and slight gradients. May have gates but no stiles. May have occasional seats.
- Grade 3:** Routes with occasional long or steep gradients, a narrow path in places and may have muddy or stony surfaces and narrow gates. May not have seats.
- Grade 4:** Routes with sections that are narrow with steep gradients and may have poor surfaces in places. Gates may be narrow and there may be stiles and steps. Unlikely to have seats.

What to take

Sensible footwear (walking boots are best for Grade 3+ walks) and appropriate clothing for the time of year are advisable. Binoculars and a camera are useful to capture the moment!

Safety

Please take care along all routes. Hazards include traffic, slippery or muddy paths, paving and slopes. Some routes are beside rivers which are often fast flowing.

Dogs

Please keep your dog under close control and ensure it is on a lead near livestock and on open land during the ground nesting bird season (beginning of March – end of July) even if there is not a sign. Please clear up after your dog.



Complete circular walk

Distance: 13.5 miles /21.7km

Grade: 4

Route
3

Pen y Crug

Distance: 4.5 miles /7.2km

Grade: 4

Habitats: Hedgerows, open hill and river.

Route
4

The Prom and Gurkha path

Distance: 3.5 miles /5.6km

Grade: 1-3

Habitats: River and meadows.

Route
5

Llanfaes

Distance: 3 miles /4.8km

Grade: 1-2

Habitats: Rivers and hedgerows.

Route
6

Island Fields and the canal

Distance: 2.8 miles /4.5km

Grade: 1-2

Habitats: River, meadows and canal.

Route
2

Priory Groves

Distance: 2 miles /3.1km

Grade: 2-3

Habitats: River, woodland and hedgerows.

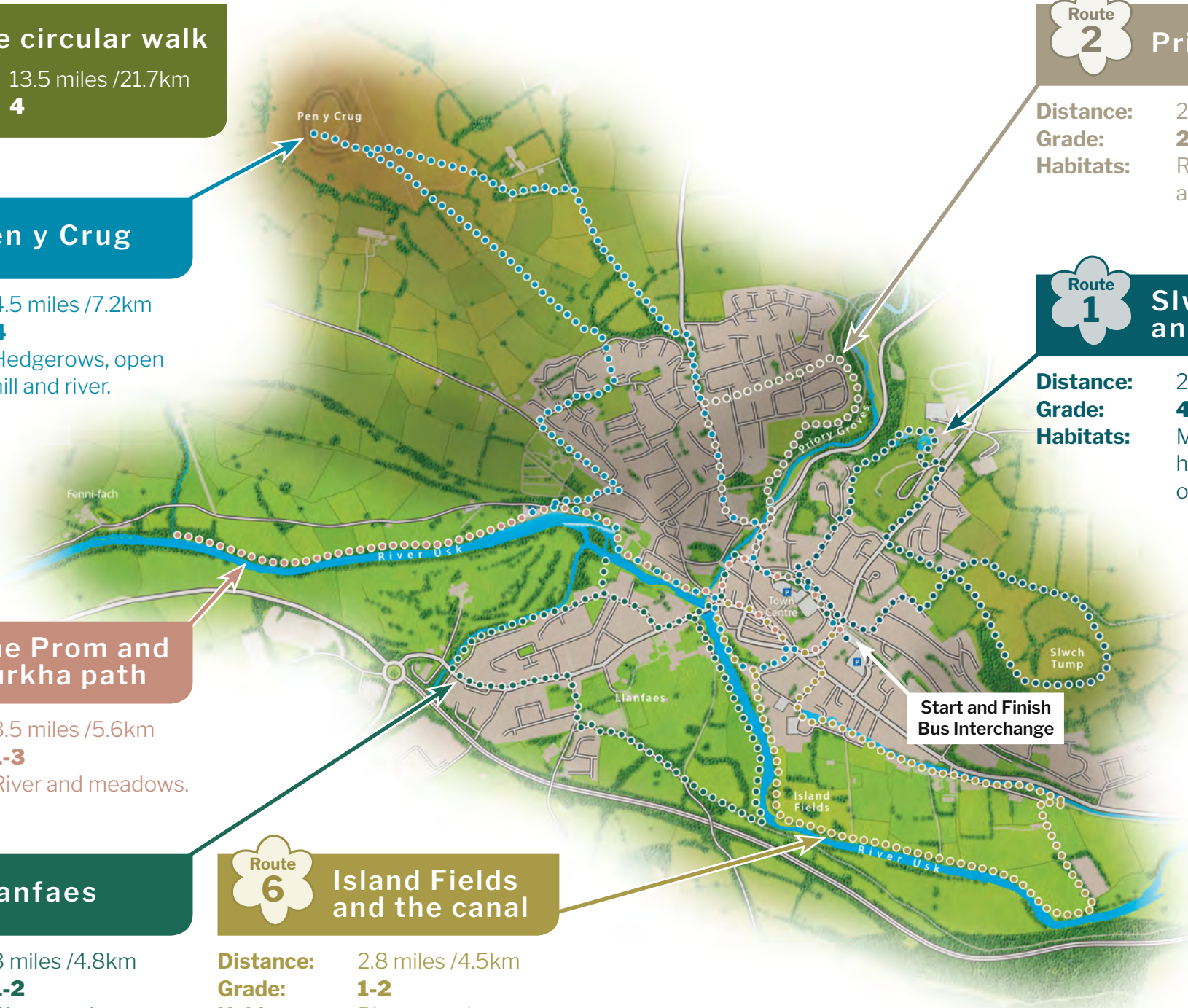
Route
1

Slwch Tump and Penlan

Distance: 2.5 miles /4.1km

Grade: 4

Habitats: Meadows, hedgerows and open hill.



Start and Finish
Bus Interchange



600 metres

Route 1

Slwch Tump and Penlan



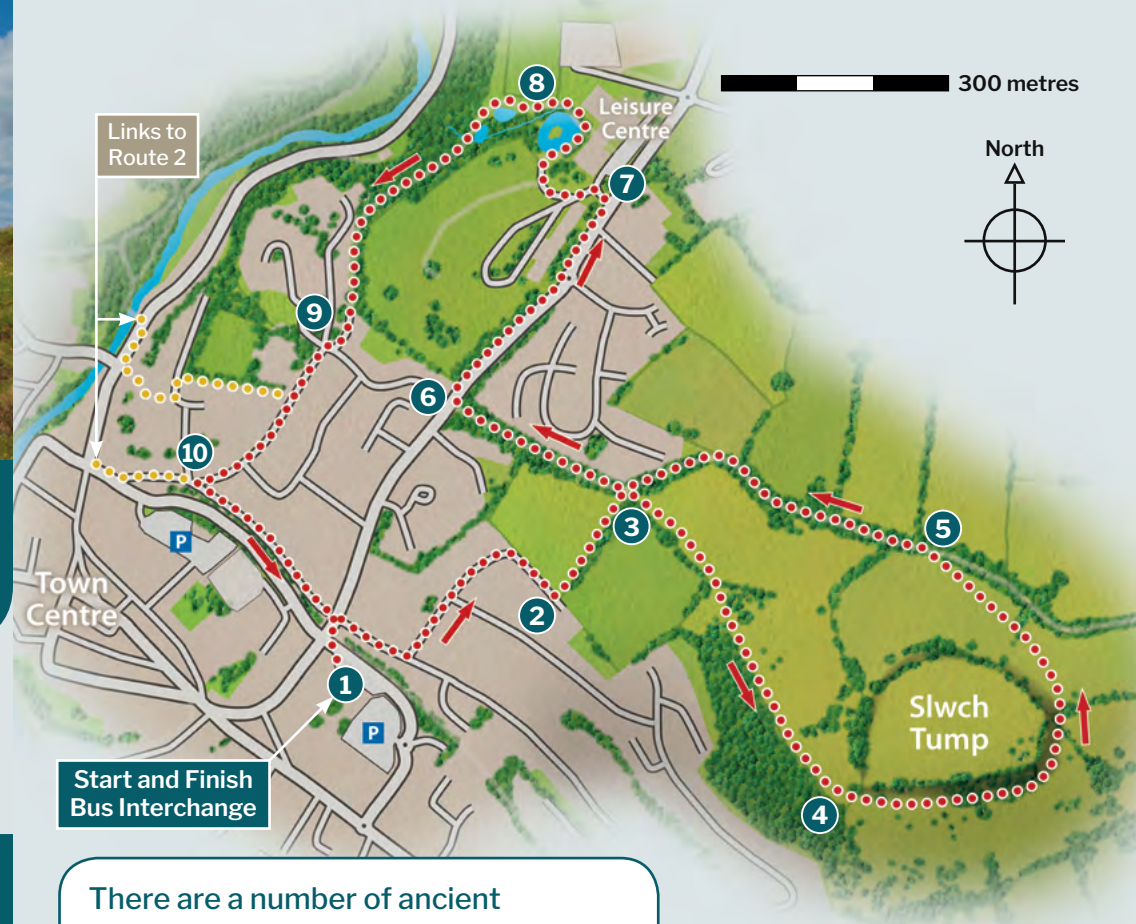
Distance: 2.5 miles / 4.1km
Grade: 4. Four steps at start of path. Stiles with dog gates. There may be livestock.
Habitats: Meadows, hedgerows and open hill.

- 1 From the Bus Interchange, cross to the opposite side of the road at the lights. Turn left on the other side and follow the pavement round into Camden Road. Take the first left up Camden Crescent.
- 2 Near the end of the road there is a footpath on the left. Go up the steps, through the gate and up the slope.
- 3 Go through the gate at the top of the field and then turn immediately right through another gate.



Green woodpeckers can be seen probing the anthills here. They suck up **ants** with their long, sticky tongues. Listen for the distinctive laughing sound they make in flight.

Hawthorn trees look spectacular when they blossom in May. In autumn their bright red berries are a feast for birds.



There are a number of ancient hedgerows around Slwch Tump. Hedgerows are important as 'corridors for wildlife', providing food and sheltered pathways for creatures to move around. Free-standing trees highlight where other hedgerows once criss-crossed the area. There are several local projects funded by the Local Places for Nature (LPfN) Fund and other organisations to increase the number of hedgerows in and around Brecon. Standing dead trees look lifeless, but are important for a wide range of fungi and insects. Cracks in the decaying timber provide shelter for **bats**, whilst **woodpeckers**, **owls** and other birds nest in larger holes.



In autumn **waxcap** fungi appear in a range of bright colours across the closely grazed areas of grassland.

Continue straight on, keeping right and on level ground at a faint fork in the grassy path. Where the path obviously forks, take the left fork uphill to continue on around Slwch Tump Iron Age hill fort. Although a major earthwork, the hill fort is surprisingly hard to spot – the ditches and ramparts are mostly obscured by hedgerows and bracken.

- 4 At the two stiles, cross the stile in front of you and turn left to head more steeply uphill to the embankment – the fort ramparts. You should have fine views of the Central Beacons and the Usk valley.

Follow the path to the right to walk anti-clockwise around the fort (stiles) to an ancient sunken path – Slwch Lane.

- 5 Turn left and follow Slwch Lane down to Cerrigcochion Road. Take care at the end of Slwch Lane - you emerge suddenly onto the main road.

Slwch Lane



- 6 Cross the road and turn right to continue up towards the college and Leisure Centre at Penlan.

Most of the fields around Slwch Tump are not intensively farmed, allowing a rich variety of wildflowers and other plants to grow. These provide food and cover for a wide range of insects and other animals. The field above the fork is rich in wild plant species, one of the best in Brecon. Ponies sometimes graze above the ramparts as well as sheep. Mixed grazing can help wildlife to flourish due to ponies eating and trampling plants such as bracken and gorse.

Slwch Lane is a fantastic wildlife corridor, the old hedgerows and mature trees provide plenty of cover for birds and animals. Look out also for holes and trackways through the hedges, where **foxes, badgers** and other animals regularly cross the lane to the fields on either side.

- 7 Pass the college and just before you reach the Leisure Centre, turn left towards the college entrance. There is a path with some steps by the wooden bollards on the other side of the entrance road. Take this path to the ponds. *(To avoid the steps, take the first right and follow this road around to the right. You will see the pond ahead.)* Turn right and walk along the footpath around Penlan Ponds.
- 8 Continue along a boardwalk to the end of the path at a road junction.
- 9 Go straight ahead down Belle Vue Road, past the school to the T-junction.
- 10 Turn left along Alexandra Rd. At the end (blocked off for cars) you will be at the lights by the Bus Interchange.

Penlan Ponds have attracted a wide range of wildlife, including rare **great crested newts**. They are very hard to see, but the ponds are also a good place to spot **dragonflies** and **damselflies** during the summer.



The UK population of **great crested newts** is internationally important and they are legally protected due to their declining numbers.

Link to Route 2

From Point 9 go straight ahead down the road for 75 metres, then turn right along the footpath by the Infants' school. At the end of the path turn left on the road and then right to the top of King Charles steps. *(These steps are cobbled, steep and can be slippery when wet. There is a handrail).* At the bottom, turn right and after 30m cross the road and iron footbridge to join **Route 2** at Point 3

Or, to avoid the steps: Continue to Point 10 At the T-junction, turn slightly right, past the junior school on Mount St. Then turn right downhill to the traffic lights and join **Route 2** at Point 2

Priory Groves



Distance: 2 miles /3.1km
Grade: 2-3. Some sloping paths and uneven ground.
Habitats: River, woodland and hedgerows.

- 1 From the Bus Interchange, go straight across at the traffic lights and continue along Heol Gouesnau, past the supermarkets.
- 2 At the next traffic lights, turn right along the street of Georgian houses known as The Struet. 50 metres after passing a road junction, cross the road, and then cross the iron footbridge over the River Honddu.

You are now in Priory Groves, a beautiful woodland along the River Honddu which is a Special Area of Conservation. Priory Groves is predominantly **beech**, but with a good variety of other trees. The steep sided river valley is home to a wide variety of birds including **nuthatch**, **treecreepers**, **great spotted woodpeckers** and **blue** and **great tits**. The trees are often bustling with woodland birds – it's worth pausing for a few minutes to watch and listen. On the river you may well see a **heron** fishing or the **dipper** 'dipping'. The Honddu is shallow, rocky and shaded here. **Atlantic salmon**, **brown trout** and other fish make their way upstream in search of gravel beds to spawn. The river is also home to **otters**.



*The bridge is a great place to watch for **dippers** – named for their habit of bobbing up and down as they stand on rocks.*



- 3 Follow the path around to the right. There is an information board here with more wildlife information and also explaining the history of Priory Groves. There are many paths through Priory Groves to explore further, but for this walk, follow the tarmac path uphill past an impressive large **redwood** tree. This **redwood**, along with the tall **beech** trees are remnants of the former formal planting of the Groves. Continue to the lower entrance to the cathedral graveyard where the path bends right and there is another information board.



Common woodlice are a wood's recycling system, eating almost anything and recycling vital nutrients. They can often be found under dead and decaying wood – one of a woodland's most important micro-habitats. Decaying wood recycles nutrients back into the soil, providing food and breeding areas for rare animals. Look around Priory Groves for plenty of examples of fallen and standing deadwood which often hosts spectacular collections of fungi in autumn.

A detour to the cathedral grounds is worthwhile. The main path through the cemetery is lined by an avenue of **large leaved lime** trees and there is another large **redwood** – note the spongy bark. After dusk, you will often hear the screech of a **barn owl** or the tu-wit tu-whoo of **tawny owls** calling. In the cathedral grounds you will also find a beautiful garden restored by the Green Minds Ecotherapy group www.breongreenminds.co.uk partially funded by the LPfN fund to hold wildlife workshops and create more habitats for wildlife.

Continue to the right past the well to a path junction where the path becomes gravelled/compacted soil. Follow it around to the right. The LPfN Fund enabled the Friends of Brecon Groves and Prom community group to plant a community orchard in the nearby playing field and create a woodland sculpture trail with carvings of wildlife found in Priory Groves. Continue on for about 400m.

The steep slope of the woodland means that in many places you get a close up view of tree roots on your left, whilst on the right you are looking into the highest branches of trees growing below you. Look out for **rooks** nesting in large rookeries and **jackdaw** 'clatterings' (the name for a group of jackdaws) in the tree tops.

Priory Groves is a fantastic place to walk throughout the year. In early spring there are carpets of white **wood anemones** which bloom in the sunshine beneath the leafless trees. Later they are replaced by **bluebells** which prefer the shady conditions as the leaves return to the trees. Autumn is also a magical time to visit when the trees put on a spectacular display of colours.

- 4 Turn left uphill past the wooden fox sculpture. Priory Groves extend northwards beyond this point and you may wish to explore further. Bear left along a path known as Fox's Lane which runs between houses.

Fox's Lane is a valuable 'wildlife corridor', the hedgerows giving important cover for breeding **garden birds**, **slow worms**, **hedgehogs** and for providing **autumn berries**.

Hedgehogs rely on hedgerows and woodland edges for shelter and food. A **hedgehog's** favourite food includes **beetles**, **earwigs**, **earthworms** and **caterpillars**. Their numbers are in serious decline in the UK and they are legally protected. People can help them survive by putting out some meat-based pet food or special hedgehog food and leaving a leafy, wild area for shelter in their garden.



Cross the road of bungalows (Pendre Close) and continue straight on until you reach the main road (Pendre B4520).

- 5 Turn left and follow the road down past Brecon Cathedral to the bottom of the hill. At the T-junction, turn right. At the traffic lights turn left and follow Heol Gouesnou back to the start.

Link to Route 3

At Point 5 turn right up the road. After 250 metres, follow the **Route 3** instructions from Point 2



Distance: 4.5 miles / 7.2km
Grade: 4. Rough path, steep in places. Stiles on return route.
Habitats: Hedgerows, open hill and river.

- 1 From the Bus Interchange, go straight across at the traffic lights and continue along Heol Gouesnau, past the supermarkets to the second traffic lights. Turn right here along the street of Georgian houses known as The Struet. Turn left up Priory Hill following signs to the Cathedral, visiting the Cathedral and grounds if you wish (see *information in Walk 2*).

Continue up the main road from the Cathedral (Pendre) staying on the right hand pavement for about 600m.

- 2 After passing the junction for Maes y Ffynnon on your left, continue up the main road for about 75m, then look for a track with a brideway signpost, also on your left. Cross the main road to this track.

Follow the track uphill for about 800m.

If you are lucky, you may hear the distinctive warble of the **curlew** between March and July. **Curlews** are endangered but have been successfully breeding on nearby farmland. 100 years ago **red kites** were almost extinct in the UK. Thanks to conservation programmes these stunning birds are now a common sight again.

- 3 At a junction, turn left uphill, following the signpost.

The track shows its history here, being 'sunken' between high banks topped by hedgerows. Look out for the fine mature **oak** tree and a good example of hedgelaying, where the stems have been woven horizontally to conserve it as a habitat and create a living stock-proof barrier.

Continue past Crug Villa and up a rougher, narrow path to a gate onto the open hill.

Head uphill on grassy paths to reach the trig point. Dogs should be kept on leads due to livestock and ground nesting birds.

Pen y Crug is 'common land' owned by a landowner but where neighbouring farmers have the right to graze their sheep and ponies. They also harvest bracken each autumn as winter bedding for livestock. It is crowned by an impressive Iron Age hill fort with the ramparts clearly visible. From the top at 331m, you have a 360 degree view of the area including Brecon, the Usk Valley, the Central Beacons and the Black Mountains. Here you may well see **red kites**, **buzzards**, **meadow pipits** and **skylarks**.

In the autumn, Pen y Crug is a regionally important site for **waxcap** fungi. Though not naturally rich in wildflowers, acid grassland includes pretty species like **harebells** and **creeping cinquefoil**.

Buzzard



Red Kite





You'll often hear **skylarks** before you spot them as their song seems to fill the air. The males sing as they rise high in a vertical flight, before tumbling back to earth in a series of steep dives. They are most vocal during the breeding season in spring, when their singing prowess is a display of stamina to impress the females.

4 From the top of Pen y Crug there are two return options:

To avoid stiles: Head back down to the gate and track the way you came. At the main road, turn right for 75 metres then turn right and immediately right again on Maes y Ffynnon. Follow this road for 200 metres, then look out for a sign to Maen-du Well and pick up the route again from Point 5

Or: Follow the path back down to a stone marker then turn right to the field boundary where there is a stile.

There are several high stiles on the way down, not all have dog gates. Beware of sheep or cattle in the fields. At the bottom stile you are at Maen-du Well.

As you cross the stile, notice more ancient hedge banks, **hazel** and **hawthorns** and the **veteran sycamore tree** near the top here.



- 5 Maen-du Well dates from the mid-1700s. You will see a small stone building with a water course coming from it. Inside the building you will be able to see the well-pool – the spring is here.



Yellow iris is one of the native plants which thrives in the watery habitats around Maen-du Well. Its dramatic flowers appear between May and August.



Maen-du Well

From the well, head towards the road following the gravel path to the right and, at the well signpost, cross the road to the houses opposite. There are narrow lanes between the houses. Take the nearest lane (or any lane heading in that direction) and follow it through the estate until you reach a large playing field with fine views of the Central Beacons, Usk Valley and Black Mountains.

Even in built up areas, gardens can be a haven for wildlife. There are many examples on this walk of how people are gardening to support wildlife. At the field you will see some veteran oak trees with hollows and crevices supporting a large number of birds and insects.

- 6 Cross the top of the field, heading towards the end of the play park. Turn right at the end, through the gate, then left along a path which brings you to a road. Turn left and follow the road, going straight across at the mini roundabout. At the end of the road, turn left onto Cradoc Road and walk downhill passing the cemetery with its fine views.

Turn first right into Fenni Fach Road. (The first 50m has no pavement, so take care.)

- 7 You will reach the Promenade by the River Usk, where there is a cafe, toilets and an information board on the area. The River Usk is designated a Special Area of Conservation or SAC. Turn left here and, with the river on your right, follow the river path to the road and the bridge where the River Honddu meets the Usk.

Cormorants have become a common sight along this stretch of the river. Traditionally they rarely strayed far from the coast, but in the last few decades a different subspecies has spread from Europe. These birds prefer to nest inland around lakes and rivers.



This path is a good place to walk at dusk during the summer to see **pipistrelle**, **Daubenton's** and **noctule bats** hunting for flying insects over the river.



- 8 Turn right on the road, go straight across at the traffic lights and continue along the river path. (There are steps down – the alternative is to continue straight through the town centre).

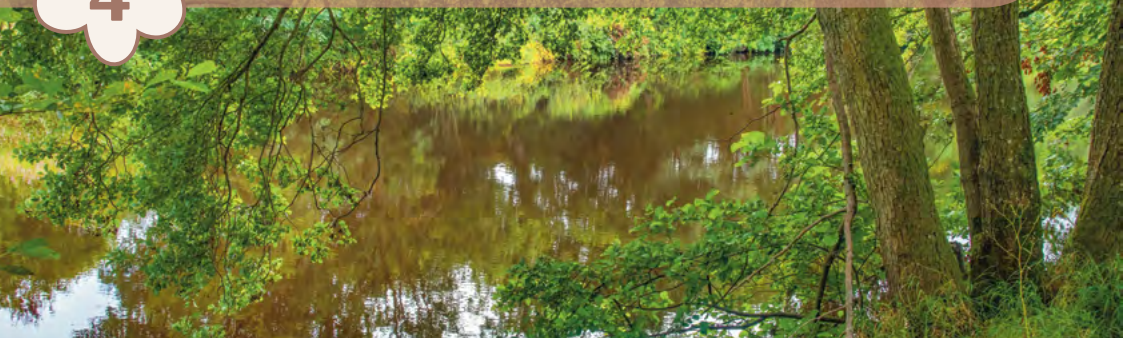
When you reach another road, take the path on the left through the tranquil garden of Y Gaer museum/library. When you reach the main road, cross via the zebra crossing. Turn right, then bear left along Free St which takes you back to the Bus Interchange.

Link to Route 4

From Point 7 follow the **Route 4** instructions from Point 3

Route 4

The Prom and Gurkha path



Distance: 3.5 miles /5.6km
Grade: **1-3.** Easy access along the Prom. Gurkha Path is narrow and uneven and can be slippery. It can flood when the river is high.
Habitats: River and meadows.

- 1 From the Bus Interchange, turn left at the lights along Free St. At the end, turn right and continue through the town centre, past St Mary's Church.

Peregrine falcons are the UK's largest falcons and have been spotted each year on the church tower from late summer, feeding on **thrushes, pigeons** and other birds. A falcon swoops down on its prey at up to 200 mph.

- 2 Pass the shops then take the left fork and head down Ship St. You will reach the traffic lights by the Usk bridge. Cross to the narrower road opposite, cross the bridge over the River Honddu and immediately turn left to walk along the Promenade at the kiosk café.

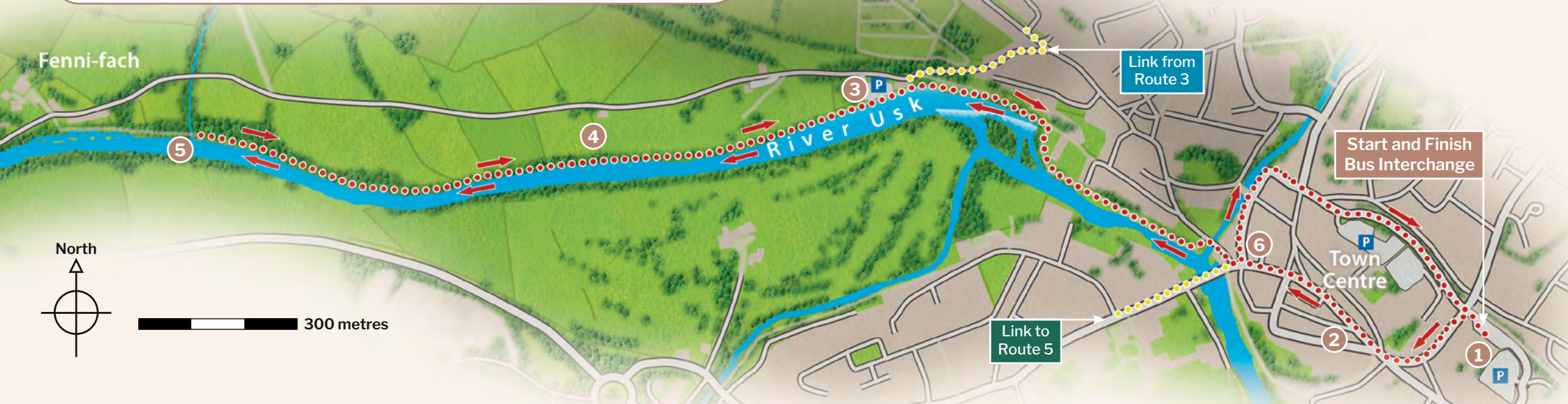
There is an information board here with details of wildlife in and around the River Usk such as **atlantic salmon** and **lampreys**.

Continue alongside the River Usk along the mostly flat, hard surface path, passing the weir.



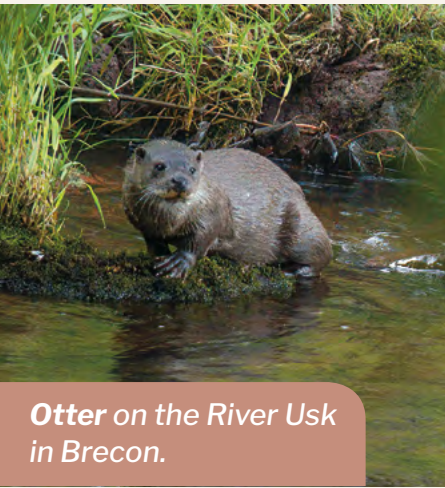
Heron

A **heron** is regularly seen fishing near the weir. Fish passes here allow **atlantic salmon** to swim more easily upriver to spawn in late autumn. Up to five years later in the spring, the young **salmon** or 'smolts' swim back down through a second fish pass to the Atlantic to mature and later return to the Usk to complete the cycle. Visit at dusk and you might see the **Daubenton's bat** skimming across the water catching flies. It can use its tail and feet to scoop insects from the surface of the water.



Fork left after about 100 metres to reach the café and car park.

- 3 Continue on the river side path past the playground and playing fields.



Otter on the River Usk in Brecon.

You may be lucky and see **otters** swimming and playing in the early morning, between the weir and the start of the Gurkha Path. Feeding mainly on fish, they require clean rivers which have an abundant source of food and vegetation along the banks to hide their secluded burrows or 'holts'. In the fields, the LPfN fund has provided some fruit trees for the community orchard, good for pollinators and for people.

- 4 The gate at the end of the field is the start of the Gurkha Path. It is so called because a group of volunteers from the local Nepali Community worked with National Park Wardens to improve it. There are more details on the path here <https://visitbrecon.org/the-gurkha-walk/>



Gurkha Path volunteers

There may be livestock in the field beyond so keep dogs on the lead.

Follow the river path for about 800m to a path direction sign. This path is subject to flooding and access can change.

Please note that the Gurkha Path suffered severe storm damage in November 2024, whilst this booklet was being prepared for publication. Work to repair or re-route the path was ongoing at the time of writing. For your safety, access to the whole of the Gurkha Path may be limited. Please observe the instructions on any signs you encounter.

Watch out for waterfowl, jumping fish, **kingfishers** and **grey wagtails** depending on the time of year. Overhanging branches provide shade; leaves and insects fall from these into the water which are important food for aquatic insects. Above the path to the right, flower-rich meadows are cut for hay in the mid-summer and then grazed by sheep or cattle. Meadow plants include **clovers**, **common cat's ear**, **buttercups** and **cornflowers**.



With its bright yellow belly the grey wagtail is more colourful than its name suggests. They can often be seen hunting insects along the water's edge.

- 5 At the end of the path retrace your steps back along the river and along the Promenade until you reach the small bridge across the Honddu again. Turn right across the Honddu bridge to the traffic lights.

- 6 Turn left and follow the road with Brecon Castle and glimpses of the River Honddu on your left. When you reach another set of traffic lights go straight across and follow Heol Gouesnou back to the start.

Brecon Prom in Autumn



Link to Route 5

At Point 6 Turn right onto the bridge over the River Usk and follow **Route 5** instructions from Point 2



Llanfaes



Distance: 3 miles /4.8km
Grade: 1-2.
Habitats: Rivers and hedgerows

1 From the Bus Interchange turn left at the lights and walk along Free St. At the end, turn right and continue through the town centre, past St Mary's church and the shops. (See Route 4 for nature information) Take the left fork and head down Ship Street to the traffic lights by the Usk bridge. Turn left to cross the bridge.

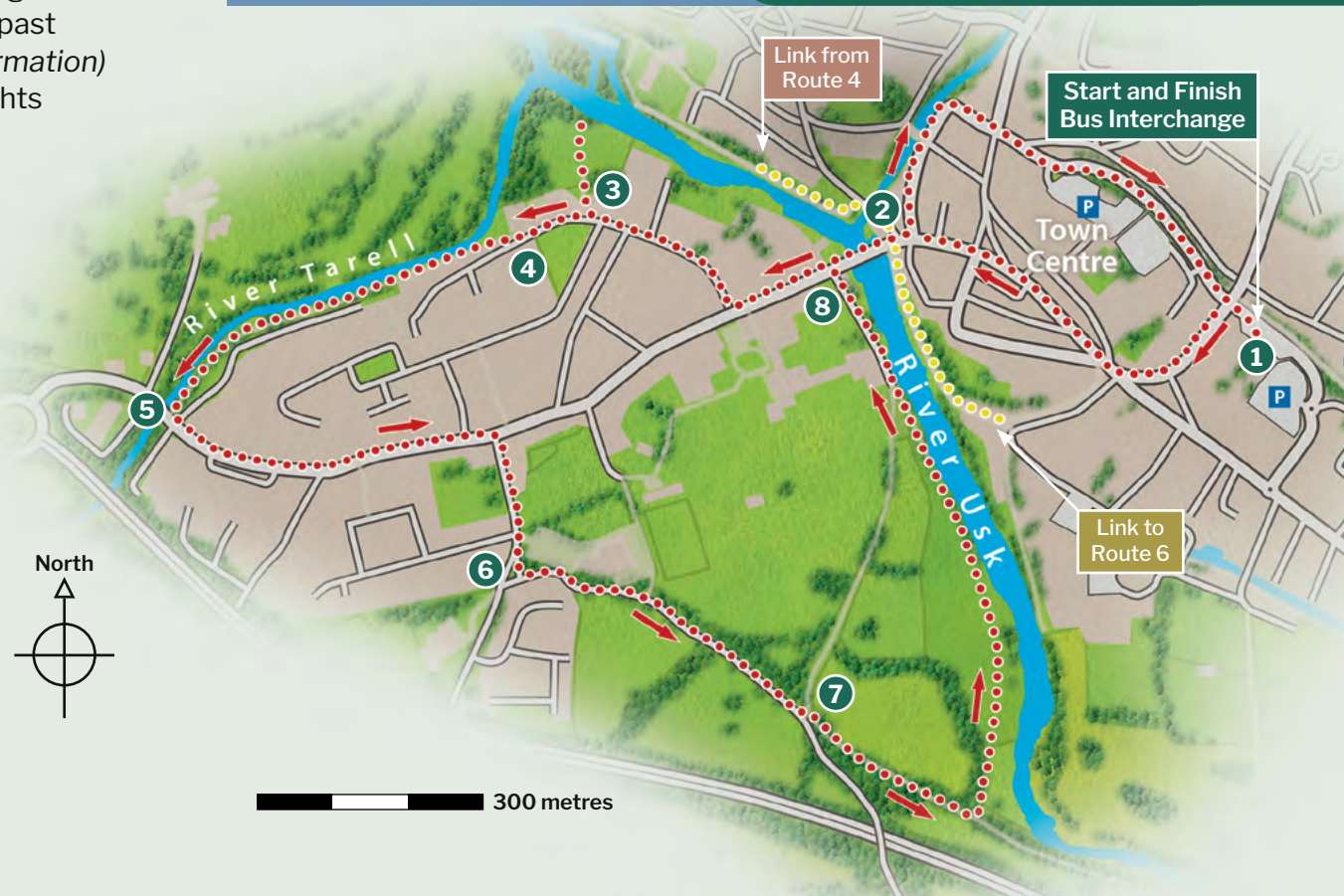
2 Cross the Usk Bridge into Llanfaes.

Otters have been spotted from the bridge at dawn and you may see **salmon** or other fish swimming below. In summer the bridge is a good place to watch **sand martins** and **swifts** feeding on insects above the river.

Atlantic salmon



Swifts eat, sleep and mate on the wing, only landing to lay eggs and raise their young. Flying millions of miles in a lifetime, they are Britain's fastest birds in level flight – reaching around 70mph! Watch out for 'screaming parties' when they tear around in groups, calling out to each other. **Swift** numbers have suffered serious decline in recent decades in the UK. A recent project, funded by LPfN, successfully raised awareness of their plight locally, and a number of swift boxes have been installed to help them nest in Brecon each summer.



Pass Christ College and turn right at the traffic lights onto Silver Street.

- 3 After about 200 metres you will see on your right an entrance to a small park which is worth visiting. This park has alternative views of the river and is at the confluence of the Rivers Tarell and Usk.

Here there is a small woodland and community orchard. You may see a variety of birds from the riverbank including **dippers, goosanders** and **kingfishers**.

Kingfishers are regularly seen on the river – usually just as a flash of bright blue as they zoom past.



- 4 From the park, continue a little further along Silver Street and then fork right along a tarmac path following the River Tarell.

The Tarell is one of three rivers on which Brecon is built. It starts near Pen y Fan and flows northwards to Brecon. It is designated as a Special Area of Conservation for its three fish species of **lamprey, twaite shad** and **Atlantic salmon**, as well as **otter**. Along with the Usk and the Honddu it is important for foraging **bats** at dusk.



Lampreys are primitive, eel-like fish. They use their sucker-like mouths to attach to other fish and feed on their bodily fluids.



- 5 When you reach the main road, turn left for about 450 metres, passing the Drover's pub. Turn right up the road just after St David's church.
- 6 Continue on until, just past the primary school entrance, you see a lane on your left. Turn left along this lane for about 450 metres. It is a quiet lane but there is no pavement, so please listen out for approaching traffic.

This old lane with its ancient hedgerows is good for spring birdsong and foraging **bats**. There is a good view of a splendid mature field **oak** at the second field gate on the right.

- 7 Where the lane curves right and goes uphill, turn left then immediately right through a gate to continue on a footpath. After 300 metres, take the first path left across the wooden footbridge and follow the river path back towards the town. There is a narrow kissing gate at the end.
- 8 When you reach the main road, turn right and cross the bridge. At the traffic lights go straight across (bearing slightly left). Follow the road with Brecon Castle and glimpses of the River Honddu on your left. When you reach another set of traffic lights, go straight across and follow Heol Gouesnou back to the start.

Link to Route 6

From Point 8 turn right onto the bridge over the River Usk and then turn immediately right down the steps to take you to the river bank and walk along the river path. When you come out onto the road turn right past Harp Terrace and continue to the right of the small car park along Scout Lane. Follow **Route 6** instructions from Point 3

To avoid the steps: At Point 8 turn right onto the bridge over the River Usk and then go up Ship Street. Continue straight through the town centre. Just after the zebra crossing turn right directly in front of Y Gaer, the museum. Follow the path through the museum gardens and down a slope. At the bottom of the slope walk past Harp Terrace and continue to the right of the small car park along Scout Lane. Follow **Route 6** instructions from Point 3

Island Fields, River Usk and canal



Distance: 2.8 miles / 4.5km
Grade: 1-2 if avoid steps
Habitats: River, meadows and canal

1 From the Bus Interchange, turn left at the lights and walk down Free St.

2 At the end of the street there are two options:

Either, turn right and continue through the town centre, past St Mary's church and the shops. Take the left fork and head down Ship St to the Usk bridge. Turn left down the steps just before the Usk Bridge, to take you to the river bank and walk along the riverside path.

Riverbank vegetation is cut and cleared occasionally to reduce the risk of flooding further upriver.

When you come out onto the road, turn right past Harp Terrace and continue to the right of the small car park, along Scout Lane.

Or, to avoid steps: Turn right and then cross the road at the zebra crossing. Head left to the gardens in front of Y Gaer, the museum. Follow the path through the gardens around the museum. These have been planted to attract pollinators. Continue down a slope and at the bottom walk past Harp Terrace and then straight on along Scout Lane.



- 3 Continue straight on, past the Scout building until you reach a gate into Island Fields, bordering the River Usk.

Although a beautiful riverside walk, in summer the river bank gets overgrown with **Himalayan balsam**, an invasive non-native species. National Park staff and local volunteers work hard each year to control the balsam because it smothers native wild plants. On open stretches, the exposed shingles at low water are important for rare beetles. In summer, you may see **sand martins** flying in and out of their nesting holes in the steep sided river bank. Watch out also for **dippers** and **grey wagtails**.



Follow the grassy riverside path through some gates, for about 1 mile /1.6 km. There are several obvious paths on the left which will shorten the route if you wish and take you to the canal. Otherwise, continue until you reach a left turn by the sewage station.

- 4 Turn left here, go through the gate and follow the rough track which serves the sewage station. (You can if you wish, continue on for about 2.5.miles/ 4km until the path meets the canal near Brynich Lock).

The track ends near old lime kilns used in the 19th century – an information board explains. They are also good habitats for **bats**. Turn right then sharp left after 100 metres at the path junction by the canal.

Canals are excellent corridors for wildlife. Fish found in the canal include **roach, dace, chub, perch** and **eels** and they can often be seen at the canal basin next to the theatre. There are also a variety of ducks – a good place to see ducklings in spring.



- 5 Follow the canal back towards the town, to reach the canal basin and theatre.

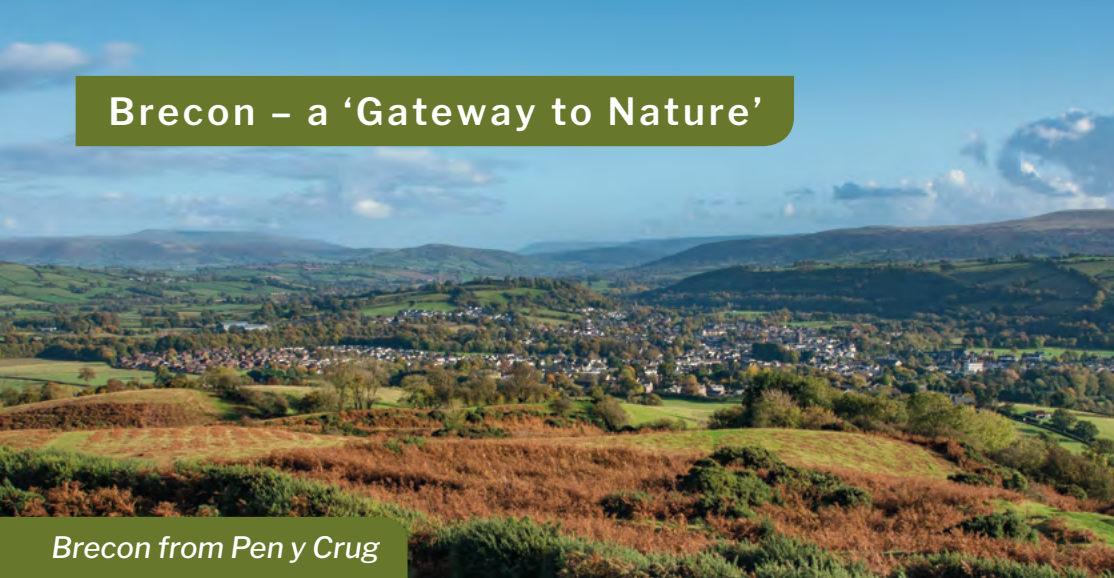
Look out for Watton allotments where the allotment holders are striving to be as wildlife friendly as possible by obtaining a grant from LPfN to install bird boxes, hedgehog boxes and insect hotels.

- 6 Follow the road around to the right and turn right at the mini roundabout. At the T-junction, cross the main road and go down the little street to the left (Little Free St). At the end, turn right into Free St. This will take you back to the junction by the Bus Interchange.



Sand martins dig nest holes in the riverbank. They lay their eggs and raise their young here each summer, before migrating back to Africa for the winter.

Brecon – a ‘Gateway to Nature’



Brecon from Pen y Crug



River Usk



Priory Groves



Canal Basin and Theatre



Llanfaes Bridge



Elephant hawk moth



Common blue butterfly



Common toad



Wren

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The six walks in this booklet guide you through a variety of habitats with information on different species of wildlife you can look out for on the way. They also provide beautiful views of the stunning scenery of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. They can be undertaken as a longer circular walk or as individual shorter walks which can be linked as you choose.

Download the walks or pick up a booklet and enjoy all that Brecon, 'a Gateway to Nature', has to offer!



Produced by Brecon Beacons Local Nature Partnership supported by staff from Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority.