

Can your green space be better - *for people and wildlife?*

Did you know that:

- Good quality green space can affect how people feel - it can increase physical recreation and enable children to interact with nature.*
- A study shows that everyday contact with nature is beneficial for healthy ageing in older people.*
- By taking action to benefit wildlife - pollinators or hedgehogs, birds or bats, you can also enhance areas so that they provide higher quality green space for local people.



Hedgerows & trees



Hedgerows are vitally important as they provide food and shelter to many species, including those that need particular help such as dormice and bank voles which use hedges to move around. They are also important habitats for nesting birds.

- As Town and Community Councils you have been managing your own land for years and recently more parks and sports grounds have been leased to many of you from the County Council.
- As well as managing these sites as important sites for public recreation, there are opportunities within most parks to manage suitable areas for wildlife as well.
- For Town and Community Councils the Welsh Government's Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty upon them to 'seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity' when they carry out their functions, including when managing land.
- Managing areas for wildlife can provide opportunities for community groups, volunteers and schools to become involved, contributing to their health and well-being.
- The healthier Carmarthenshire's natural environment is, with a variety of habitats and species, the more resilient it will become. The parks and public open space you manage can contribute to this.
- Changing the management of your green space does not need to cost extra money, in fact in some cases it may be possible to make a saving. Read on for some suggestions as to how you can do this.

- Can you lay the hedge to improve the structure?
- Is there an opportunity to plant/restore a hedgerow - especially if it connects existing habitats?
- Manage your hedgerows in the winter months when the woody growth is dormant. All work during the bird nesting season (March to August) should be avoided.
- Allowing your hedges to grow for 2-3 years before cutting will provide a plentiful supply of berries for birds over the winter. Berries usually form on 2-year old wood, so aim to cut less than half your hedges each year.
- Can you plant more trees? If grassy areas are not regularly used then why not try something else - it could save money in the long run.
- If you have to fell a tree, replace it with two or a small group!

Grassland



*Research shows that abundance of both flowers and flower-visiting insects increases significantly with reduced mowing, helping pollinators.** Why not experiment and vary the mowing regime in different areas and see what works best for pollinators - and people!*

- The easiest thing you can do is identify and enhance existing areas that have the capacity to provide a food source and shelter for pollinators. This is often the most cost-effective way as well.
- Can you cut some areas less often and cut higher to allow more plants to flower? Grass will grow at a different rate depending on the weather during the growing season but why not delay your first cut until mid-April and then mow to every 5-8 weeks and see what happens? Use signs to explain why you are doing this. Setting the mower blade at a minimum of 50-60mm should allow low-growing species like daisies, clover and selfheal to flower. They can keep their heads below the mower or have time to spring up and flower again.
- Can you collect up the mowings? This will help encourage more flowering plants in the grass. If your mowing machine cannot collect then for smaller areas can local volunteers help rake it up and create a habitat pile or compost heap?

- Are there some areas of grassland where you can let the grass grow long and manage like a hay meadow? Here you would ideally cut the grass in late summer and remove the cut material, helping to make the grassland more flowery. Are there local contractors who could undertake this work or perhaps a local farmer could cut and bale it for the use of the hay?
- In some areas you might wish to sow seed mixes that benefit pollinators. Choose these areas carefully. It might be better to manage the habitat that is there already, to encourage the flowers that are already within it. Also choose your seed mix carefully - ensure that the seed or plants that you are introducing are native and preferably from a local source.



*<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2016/11/09/green-space-mental-wellbeing-and-sustainable-communities/>

**<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/53372/>

Formal areas



You may well have formal areas that you wish to maintain but there are still opportunities to help biodiversity here.

- If you have formal areas of planting, flower beds/containers or hanging baskets, select a proportion of plants from pollinator-friendly species of shrubs, annual or perennial plants to provide food for pollinators from spring to autumn.
- Pesticides are harmful to pollinators and other invertebrates that help sustain our natural environment and are the food for other wildlife.
- You might use herbicides to control weeds and grass. Apart from invasive species is their use really necessary? Could you save money by using less?
- Peat usage - there are viable peat-free composts that, if used, will help save our important peat habitats.

Other



There are a myriad of opportunities to take positive action. You and your communities know your sites - however small the area there are always options.

- Do you know what wildlife lives in or uses your park - are there any important/protected species? If so, how can you enhance the site for them?
- For biodiversity projects 'tidiness' is not a priority, sometimes just leaving a small area go wild can be beneficial.
- Create habitat piles - dead wood and piles of leaves are good for a range of species!
- Are there opportunities to erect bat and bird boxes or to build a bug hotel?
- Invasive species - It is illegal to allow Japanese knotwood or Himalayan balsam to spread - can you take action to tackle them?
- Why not become a 'Bee Friendly' community and make Wales a pollinator-friendly country by taking action as part of Welsh Government's scheme?

Useful links

Here is a small selection of guidance / advice that may be useful to you when managing your land:

- Healthy for Bees: Healthy for People - Managing the grounds of public buildings for pollinators. Natural Resources Wales. <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/news-and-events/blog/public-places-natural-spaces/?lang=en>
- Creating healthier places and spaces for our present and future generations: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Creating%20healthier%20places%20spaces.pdf>
- Wales Action Plan for Pollinators: <https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Wales-Action-for-Pollinators>
- Become Bee Friendly - a brand new initiative aimed at communities including Town and Community Councils that want to make Wales a 'pollinator-friendly' country. <https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Wales-Action-for-Pollinators>
- Learning to Rethink Parks - report from an HLF and NESTA programme to test new ways of managing public parks. More details at: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks>
- Buglife. Managing Urban Areas for Pollinators. This includes advice for public parks but they have a range of advice on their site: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/managing%20urban%20areas%20for%20pollinators.pdf>
- WCVA - Making Space for Nature: <https://www.wcva.org.uk/what-we-do/invest-in-nature-cymru/ms4n?seq.lang=en-GB>



We can help!

The Council has a range of guidance on protected species that we can provide and the Conservation Section would be happy to work with you to look at the management of the park that you manage and care for.

For more information contact:

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"Access to, and engagement with, this natural environment is associated with positive health outcomes, including improved physical and mental health, and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and other chronic conditions".

Creating Healthier Places and Spaces for our Future Generations. Public Health Wales 2018

