



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Case Study

Torfaen turns tide on mowing regime



Blaenau Gwent & Torfaen Local Nature Partnership has used Local Places for Nature funding to diversify Torfaen's mowing regime

In 2020, staff in the Ecology and Landscape Team at Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) worked with Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Coordinator Vee Brannovic to capitalise on positive public responses to lockdown's uncut grasslands and roadside verges. Vee supported the Streetscene team to make dramatic changes to management of public grasslands to enhance them for biodiversity and wellbeing. Welsh Government's Local Places for Nature (LPfN) funding provided new machinery, surveys, mapping and staff time to implement changes to mowing.

'The relationship between the Ecology and Landscape Team and grounds maintenance staff has changed dramatically,' says Vee. 'There's been a new refreshing collaborative approach to decision-making to include the careful management of a selection of grassland sites. The mowing changes have been included in the Council's new Climate and Nature Emergency Plan. Previous work by staff at TCBC to develop best practice in grassland management for biodiversity helped to kickstart changes on a much larger scale.'

Since the new regime started in 2020, surveys carried out by contractors have highlighted a number of newly unmown areas as 'of substantive nature conservation value'.



A bank of wildflowers flourishing thanks to new mowing regimes in Croesyceiliog



New machinery for cut and collect management

∴ NATURE NETWORKS ∴

The Council is reviewing the way it manages public grassland with the aim of benefitting wildlife and local communities. Longer grass, cut annually with cut grass removed, is the most sustainable way of increasing native wildflowers and the species that depend on them and we aim to move towards this management on more sites over the next few years. This will create a more nature rich environment that also benefits wellbeing.

For more information, please contact Streetscene team on 01495 766810 or visit

- www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/LeisureParksEvents/NatureAndConservation/Nature-Networks

TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH



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Example of information sheet given out by Streetscene team to inquisitive passers-by

As a result, two sites in Torfaen, that were previously mown frequently, qualify as 'Local Wildlife Sites' due to the diversity of wildflowers now growing.

Behind the scenes, the Ecology and Landscape Team Leader worked with elected Members and senior TCBC staff to raise awareness of the benefits of changing mowing practices and the most sustainable approaches to achieve this. In previous years, areas have been seeded with colourful wildflower mixes but recent research is showing that allowing native species to grow and spread naturally over the spring and summer, then cutting and collecting in the autumn or winter, is the most beneficial and cost-effective way to increase wildflowers.

Vee and the team are carrying out further surveys on road verges which will hopefully increase the number of designated sites, and further demonstrate that grassland management is making a real difference to nature in Torfaen. Other work has been carried out to update the mapping of grassland management, to enable operational staff to view a site and its recommended management while they are working. This has also helped to highlight priority areas to change mowing practices and improve connectivity between sites in the future.

Golf Road residents

In 2020, an area at the top of Golf Road, Pontypool, was included in the list of sites to be managed for wildflowers. However, a group of residents expressed concern at the proposal. Staff from the Ecology and Landscape team arranged to meet the residents to discuss those concerns. At first, the residents were adamant that they wanted the site to be managed as it always had been, i.e. frequent cuts all summer to keep the grass short. After a discussion, a compromise was reached, and an agreement was made to trial a change of cutting one patch of the site. The rest would be maintained as before. If the trial worked, then the wildflower area would be expanded. By the end of the meeting, the residents had asked if they could plant some wildflowers themselves. These were provided through the Local LPfN funding and were planted by residents. The site is still a work in progress but demonstrates the importance of dialogue and inclusion when considering changes on greenspaces.

Current management of the site, in 2022, is to continue to cut the path sides and middle of the site, leaving the sloping edges to grow over the summer. Wildflowers have been planted along the edge to accelerate the move towards a meadow.



Leaving edges longer to encourage wildflowers



Wildflowers planted supplied by LPfN and planted by residents



Local residents looking after the site