
Pollinator Policy

Nadine Morgan, Ecologist



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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Pollinator Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 It is widely recognised that pollinators play a vital role in the security of our food supply and the quality of our natural environment. There has been an ongoing decline in the numbers of pollinators and therefore action is being taken by both Welsh Government and Westminster to try and halt this decline.

1.2 Welsh Government published their Action Plan for Pollinators in July 2013, which sets out their strategic vision, outcomes and areas for action to improve conditions for pollinators and halt their decline. The Action Plan for Pollinators since been reviewed: Review 2013-2018 and Future Actions.

2. Pollinators and their Habitats

2.1 Pollinators within the Action Plan are defined as:

“all bees, some wasps, butterflies, moths and hoverflies, some beetles and flies”.

2.2 Traditionally pollinators rely on habitats made up of meadows, hedgerows, woodland edges, unimproved grasslands, hay meadows, clover rich grasslands, orchards and arable crops. A change to agricultural practices, changing land use and intensification has resulted in a decline in these traditional habitats. Alternative habitats can be provided in gardens, parks, open spaces and road verges.

3. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council’s Statutory Duties

3.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Section 6, The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

3.2 As a Local Authority we have a duty that requires the council to seek to **maintain and enhance** biodiversity and in the exercise of their functions in relation to Wales, and in doing so **promote the resilience of ecosystems**, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.

3.3 Section 7 of the Act specifies a list of priority species that should be used to guide decision making in implementing their biodiversity duty. [S7 Species list](#) contains pollinators.

3.4 The Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan & The Local Nature Recovery Action Plan

3.5 The Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) for Wales was launched in 2015 by the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board. It sets out how Wales will deliver the commitments of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The NRAP for Wales was reviewed in 2019 to refocus the document in

light of rapidly changing policy and environmental change, including the declaration of a climate emergency¹ by the Welsh Government in April 2019. Two main articles of legislation influence the NRAP for Wales, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015², and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016³. Since the review of the Wales NRAP⁴, the Welsh Government also declared a nature emergency in Wales, in June 2021.

- 3.6 The [Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan](#) was produced as part of The Resilient Greater Gwent project⁵. It is a strategic document, set in the context of national and regional legislation and policy drivers, aiming to halt and reverse negative biodiversity trends identified in both the State of Natural Resources Report and the Greater Gwent State of Nature Report. It provides guidance for public bodies and organisations, as well as helping guide the Local Nature Recovery Action Plans (LNRAPs) which focus more on local action to promote biodiversity in each Local Nature Partnership (LNP) area found within Gwent.
- 3.7 The Blaenau Gwent & Torfaen LNRAP has been produced in partnership with Blaenau Gwent & Torfaen LNP, it will supersede Blaenau Gwent's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) 2015.
- 3.8 The plan will identify local priorities for nature recovery, which will include habitat and species on which actions will focus on. It will also seek to reflect the values of local people and provide a focus for local initiatives.

4. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Approach

- 4.1 Recognising the importance of pollinators as part of an ecosystem services function.
- 4.2 We will achieve this by:
- Reducing the number of cuts to grassed areas – This will allow a longer growing period, enabling plants to set seeds and encourage greater diversity of plant species
 - Introduce perennial native wildflower mix to formal beds and where appropriate to other urban area green spaces. Planting schemes in all other public areas will directly reflect the policy. *
 - On A & B highways routes, where safe to do so, change the time of verge cuts and reduce to 2 cuts per year.
 - Identify opportunities for the development of meadow areas within amenity and open spaces.

¹ [Welsh Government makes climate emergency declaration | GOV.WALES](#)

² [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015: the essentials \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

³ [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Nature recovery action plan | GOV.WALES](#)

⁵ <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/countryside/resilient-greater-gwent/>

- Continually review our grass cutting and planting practices ensuring compliance with emerging legislation and best practice.
- Continue to develop more habitats for solitary bees e.g. bee bank, grasses, tree holes and bug hotels.
- Reduction in herbicide and pesticide usage: continue to monitor any herbicide usage and actively reduce the amount applied annually. Ensure where usage is required, that techniques etc implemented are kept up to date with best practice.
- Encourage local community groups to avoid using herbicides and pesticides and if required use organic wildlife friendly alternatives or natural pest control
- Utilise the appropriate signage, such as the Nature Isn't Neat interpretation boards, to raise awareness of the changes in practice and the underlying reasons.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the changing practices. We will visit sites that have been subject to the changes to see if pollinator supporting habitats have been created and sustained.
- Apply to the [Bee Friendly Caru Gwynyn](#) scheme which will accredit Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as a Pollinator Friendly council.

*The mix will be subject to variation dependent on the success of the varieties, localised growing condition and any health and safety concerns.



Signage at Beaufort Woodlands LNR and Junction to South Griffin Terrace



Pollinator monitoring with volunteers at Bryn Bach Park LNR, Small tortoiseshell butterfly

Appendix 1.

Location of altered cutting regimes.

During the summer of 2010 the Council commissioned Sturgess Ecology to assist with an audit of biodiversity of a selection of its road verges (Table 1) and to make recommendations, outlined in the [BG Highway Verge Management Report 2011](#), for management that would be beneficial to biodiversity.

Road	Location
A467	Llanhilleth to Brynmawr (A465)
A4046	Aberbeeg (A467) to Carmeltown (A465)
A4048	Pochin Houses to Duke's Meadow (A465)
Bryn Serth Road	Nant-y-croft to Rhyd-y-blew (A4046)

Table 1. Road verges that were audited in 2010.

A total of 13 sections of the four identified highways were surveyed (mostly between approximately 1 and 2 km long). Sections were generally excluded if they were in urban areas, or with no vegetated boundary, or were recently re-seeded, or where probable features of interest were limited to less than 50m or so. In some cases, steep verges beside very busy roads with no refuge areas were avoided for safety reasons.

In terms of nature conservation value most of the verges support features of local nature conservation value, and several sections of the verges were clearly of sufficient quality to qualify as SINCs. The main features of nature conservation value are summarised in the following table. Yellow shading indicates verge sections which include features of County significance and which are SINC designated.

Reference number	Name	Main features of nature conservation significance
1	Bryn Serth Road	Neutral and acid grassland with Crowberry and Grass Vetchling.
2	A4048 Tredegar Bypass (north)	Neutral / acid grassland. The majority of the verge is of no more than local value. The Rough Hawk's-beard on the east side is potentially of SINC value.
3	A4048 Tredegar Bypass (south)	Damp neutral grassland is of local value.
4	A4048 Bedwellty Pits	Heathland, acid and neutral grassland, flush, scrub / woodland, with Crowberry, Lady's Mantle and Sphagnum mosses.
5	A4048 Pochin Houses	Heath vegetation.
6	A4046 Ebbw Vale (south)	Sparsely vegetated ground with calcareous grassland flora and scrub (some from seed-mix) is of local value.

7	A4046 near Waunlwyd	The flower-rich grassland (from seed-mix) is likely to have local value for invertebrates.
8	A4046 west of Aberbeeg	Woodland ground flora is of local value.
9	A467 Llanhilleth	Semi-natural woodland flora above the top of the rock face is of SINC quality. The rock exposure and Stone Parsley are of local interest.
10	A467 north of Crumlin	Lesser Sea-spurrey is of local value.
11	A467 near Nantyglo	Neutral grassland/ wood edge flora (with large population of Wood Bitter-vetch).
12	A467 near Blaina	Neutral grassland/ wood edge flora of local value. The single plant of Wood Bitter-vetch is potentially of SINC value.
13	A467 near Rose Heyworth	Small areas with Grass Vetchling and Marsh Orchids are of local value.

Table 2. Nature Conservation Significance

The management recommendations outlined with the [BG Highway Verge Management Report 2011](#) has since formed the basis for ongoing works on the identified high verge area over the subsequent years, working with Neighbourhood Services.



Ox eye daisy and red campion growing on A4048-Tredegar By Pass

In 2021, Acer Ecology Ltd was commissioned to carry out two [botanical and invertebrate surveys](#) on 16 grassland sites (including roadside verges), within Blaenau Gwent County Borough. The sites surveyed are shown in Table 3. Working as part of multi-disciplinary teams with Neighbourhood Service, additional sites have implemented a relaxed mowing regime as shown in green in Table 3.

Where possible, other appropriate green spaces are also identified and a relaxed cutting regime implemented as shown in Table 4.

Road	Location
A4048 Tredegar By-Pass	Ashvale Roundabout & area to Lyndsey Gardens
A4048 Tredegar By-Pass	Area between Crown & Ashvale Roundabouts (2 x 200m2)
A4048 Tredegar By-Pass	By garage roundabout
Rassau	Banking from Honeyfield Rd to old HoV , Roundabout, Junction from Bryn Serth Rd to Rassau Rd
A4046	Cemetery Roundabout & verges
Steelworks Rd	Steelworks Rd / Lime Ave entrance roundabout
Steelworks Rd	General Offices car park
A4046	Parkway roundabout Waunlwyd Banking
A4046	Cwm by pass junction
A467	Llanhilleth Park Traffic Lights – extending verges, Llanhilleth Sports Pavilion
A467	Warm Turn, Adjacent to Play Area
A467	Rear of Tesco
A476	Between Blaina roundabout & Rising Sun Junction
New Road, Nantyglo	Banna Banking
A467	Brynmaur roundabout bankings
A467	South Griffin Terrace Junction (additional to verge maintenance)

Table 3. Sites of nature conservation significance for pollinators and local biodiversity.

Site	Location
Ebbw Vale Cemetery	Ebbw Vale
Former Glyncoed School site	Ebbw Vale
Pant Y Fforest Playing fields	Ebbw Vale

Table 4. Additional green spaces with management changes implemented.



Ebbw Vale Cemetery wildflower conservation area support a population of dingy skipper butterflies which are of local biodiversity importance.

Cross working with our Education department and Neighbourhood Service, several school sites have also implemented changes to their grass cutting regimes, shown in Table 5. Ongoing work with the Biodiversity Officer, Education and Neighbourhood service continue to encourage other schools, where appropriate, to designate areas within their grounds as uncut wildlife areas.

School	Location	Comments
ALC- Roseheyworth Campus	Roseheyworth	Have No Mow Zone on the low-level bank by the KS1 yard and we also have the large area to the left of the main double gates onto the site, referred to as the top plateau. This area is approximately 30 – 40 square metres that is left as natural habitat.
ALC- Six Bells Campus	Six Bells	The new Forest School area at the south end of the site has a wild grass area around the perimeter fence.
ALC- Tillery Street Campus	Abertillery	Have an untouched area to the left of the drop off loop so this falls between our road/drive and the back lane of Tillery Street itself. The KS2 area at the rear of the building has a big grass area that has been developed into the Forest School area. This was only developed last summer, waiting for the contractor to return to plant wild flower. Also, have the area that surrounds the MUGA which is left as natural habitat.
ALC- Secondary Campus	Abertillery	Unknown
All Saints R.C Primary	Ebbw Vale	All the grass is cut on the school grounds, the field area is only cut during the summer months
Beaufort Hill Primary	Ebbw Vale	There is an area behind the demountable classroom that is left uncut. The rest of the school including the field is cut
Blaen Y Cwm Primary	Brynmawr	All the main areas where pupils play sports etc are cut regularly we have an Ground Maintenance SLA with Blaenau Gwent. The forest school field is not cut unless it becomes too long and becomes a safety hazard, try to keep everything to a minimum.

		The other areas kept as untouched as possible is the area by the pond and the grounds through the red gates on the left as you enter school while the grass is cut we plant a variety of flowers, fruit trees, and fruit bushes to help support our local wildlife and environment
Bryn Bach Primary	Tredegar	A wildlife area which is left uncut (in the top right of playing field below woods and pond). The field and surrounding areas are cut regularly
Coed Y Garn Primary	Blaina	Have sent the grass cutters away at the start of May and said that they will not require mowing until after May! When they return, we will leave quite a lot of our grass uncut, like they did last year, as they leave our wildflowers grow. There are several areas of the school grounds that we have handed over to nature too
Deighton Primary	Tredegar	Unknown
Ebbw Fawr Primary	Ebbw Vale	all managed for wildlife except for sports field area
Ebbw Fawr Secondary	Ebbw Vale	Unknown
Georgetown Primary	Tredegar	Within school, the cutting that takes place is mostly for health and safety purposes- hedges, brambles, bushes etc. Keep the Forest Classroom uncut and as natural as possible. But note most of the grounds is hardstanding.
Glanhowy Primary	Tredegar	Unknown
Glyncoed Primary	Ebbw Vale	Unknown
Rhos Y Fedwen Primary	Rassau, Ebbw Vale	Areas are demarcated to be left as uncut wildlife areas
Sofrydd Primary	Sofrydd	Has a wildlife area that has been left for nature.
St Illtyd's Primary	Llanhilleth	Unknown- very little grassland mostly hard standing
St Josph's RC Primary	Ashvale, Tredegar	Uncut areas where we have planted trees and on uncut area where pupils can sit with the daisies and dandelions!
St Mary's CIW Primary	Brynmawr	Currently the school field is cut, Nursey area, grass verges around the perimeter of the school and the path leading to the main entrance. The area that is fenced off around the pond and back of school is all left for wildlife and wildflowers. Obviously, the forest area isn't touched either.

		Last year we asked them not to cut during May and we hope to implement this in following years. Just in case it is cut we have screened some areas to observe changes during May
Willowtown Primary	Ebbw Vale	The school grounds are cut around every 4-6 weeks. The area behind our nursery and reception classrooms (the steep banking) is sectioned off and is never cut.
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	Blaina	Areas left uncut for wildlife
Ystruth Primary	Blaina	Unknown

Table 5. Schools which have implemented changes to their grassland management

Further guidance for schools have been set out in [Biodiversity and School Grounds Guidance Note](#)



Through a more relaxed mowing regime, Rhos Y Fedwen Primary Recorded their first Bee Orchid –a species of local importance

The Natural Environment Team also has strong partnerships with Aneurin Leisure Trust and Tai Calon who also manage green spaces associated with their estates. Opportunities have been identified to connect BGCBC owned site to partner organisation sites, ensuring maintain and enhancing biodiversity but also promoting ecosystem resilience.

Contact

For further information, contact:

Nadine Morgan, Ecologist: Nadine.Morgan@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Gwyn Teague, Team Manager-Natural Environment: Gwyn.Teague@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk