

Monmouthshire County Council Highway Verge Maintenance and Pollinator Policy



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



In 2014 MCC introduced a Pollinator Policy due to the need to safeguard and help reduce the decline in pollinators and local habitats – not an easy process and it was scrutinised by Members on a number of occasions.



Why did we make a policy?

- To support Welsh Governments Action Plan for Pollinators.
- Legal duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- We wanted to make a commitment and what better way than making a policy.
- We recognise the role we have in making significant positive impacts.



Why was it a difficult process?



- The initial aims of the policy were to allow us to reduce the amount of highway verge mowing carried out, for reasons of biodiversity and sustainability.
- We were at the time carrying out two full cuts to our network with the first cut commencing in April and the second cut in August.
- Our desire was to reduce to one full cut only.
- Members rejected this due to concerns of safety and perception of aesthetics.



Why was it a difficult process?



- Monmouthshire has 2600km of highway verge and hedgerow.
Of which 1832km are rural single carriageway.



What happened next?



- We undertook a full risk assessment in accordance with the Well Maintained Highways Code of Practice.
- The risk assessment took into consideration the core objectives: **Safety**
Serviceability
Sustainability
- We realised we had to make a compromise, but also needed to increase public support and awareness of our pollinator initiative.



How did we do this?



- We proposed carrying out two full cuts commencing in May to all C and R routes, one full cut to A & B routes with the second cut being a safety cut only.
- We received two petitions – one disagreeing with the reduction in cutting to A&B routes with 163 signatures, the other supporting the change with over 1000 signatures. This reduction in cutting gave a very small saving to the Council.



○ We proposed reducing the amount of annual bedding we purchased and to sow more bee friendly, low maintenance, urban annual seed mixes for the following reasons:



- The bedding we planted was not beneficial to pollinators.
- It was grown in heated glasshouses.
- It was high maintenance.
- Proposed net savings to the Council in excess of £45k. Members started to take note!
- The overall savings also allowed us to plant urbanised bee friendly floral seed displays to high impact areas, e.g. roundabouts and other areas. These are a huge success.



Councillors finally supported the policy!



What next?



- The implementation of the policy enabled us to move forward and assess other areas of which we could assist pollinators, sustainability and biodiversity of which we:
- Looked at reducing the number and height of cuts to other grassed areas.





Sow Yellow Rattle to specific areas.





What next? Continued...

- Identify opportunities for the development of meadow areas within amenity open spaces.
- Continue to review grass cutting and planting practices ensuring compliance with emerging legislation and best practice.
- Utilise the Bee Friendly Monmouthshire logo to raise awareness.



- Monitor the effectiveness of changing practices.



Where are we now two and a half years on?



- We have undertaken a process of continual annual improvement of which are identified and evidenced within the Councils Service Improvement Plan.
- We have reduced grass cutting to areas of open space in support of biodiversity and sustainability of which total 165,779m²
We have sown Yellow Rattle to a total of 20,385m²
- We have increased the areas we sow bee friendly annual and perennial urban seed mixes to a total of 9,277m²
- We have a total of 59 sites of specific floral interest within highway verge of which equate to 57,060m²



Where are we now two and a half years on?



- We have reduced our highway verge mowing to one cut to all routes, cutting between June and July, with an additional safety cut carried out to A and B routes in September. We carry out a safety cut to specified visibility junctions during April/May giving a total reduction of 2,600,000m²
- We identify these areas with either the Monmouthshire Bee Friendly logo or coloured stakes.
- Savings achieved to the Council for the reduction in grass cutting equates to £50k.
- Total savings since the introduction of the pollinator policy equate to £95k per annum.



Supporting tools developed as part of the Green Infrastructure Pollinator Action Plan for Pollinators in South East Wales project



Pollinator Evaluation and Grading system (PEGS)



SCORE	VALUE FOR POLLINATORS
0-3	Poor value for pollinators, high potential for improvements
4-7	Moderate value for pollinators, room for some improvement
8-12	Good value for pollinators

GIS database

Case studies: offices / social housing/
historic site / school site.



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