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Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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What is Biodiversity? Why is it important?

Biodiversity is short for Biological Diversity which is the variety of all living things!

It is important because we are a part of nature and cannot live without it. The diversity of living things is continually being lost everywhere because we have not historically valued it as much as we should.

The vast majority of countries all around the world signed an agreement to preserve this 'biological diversity'.

All statutory bodies must, by law, now have regard to biodiversity in everything they do or possibly face large fines. This might seem like an additional or difficult task but it need not be.

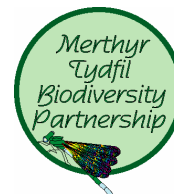
This newsletter will give

some recent examples of large and small projects which have done just this with little additional effort and cost, and in some cases savings by using resources more effectively and appropriately.



There is also help available from lots of different people and organisations,

depending on what is needed.



The Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership has created a 'Biodiversity Action Plan' for Merthyr Tydfil to help any person, business or organization to be aware of and work together to keep and improve the most important habitats and species in Merthyr Tydfil.

If you would like any information on Biodiversity and how you can help or ensure that the law is being upheld please contact

rolf.brown@merthyr.gov.uk

Planning for Biodiversity— MTCBC Planning Department

Following wildlife surveys across the County Borough over the last few years MTCBC is set to designate over 50 new Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) as part of the Local Development Plan process.

'This reflects the little known fact that, for its size, our County Borough has one of the greatest concentration of important habitats in Wales, ahead of 2 National Parks!' explains the Countryside Officer.

This will help to protect the most important biodiversity in the County Borough for the next 15 years.

The Local Development Plan is due to be examined by an independent Planning Inspector in autumn this year.

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Special points of interest:

- 60% of the worlds population rely on plants directly for medicine
- The current rate of species extinction is the greatest since the vanishing of dinosaurs 65 million years ago
- The biggest cause of extinction is loss of habitat
- Biodiversity is a key long-term sustainability indicator

MERTHYR TYDFIL BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

Biodiversity Good Practice



Parc Taff Bargoed —MTCBC Parks Department

Over 10 years after the physical transformation of the former Deep Navigation/Taff Merthyr Collieries by the local communities and Groundwork Merthyr & RCT the Parc Taff Bargoed has been transferred to Merthyr Tydfil CBC to manage.

The Parks Department currently employ Wardens to oversee activities and improvements on the park, helping and



educating visitors and working with the communities 'Friends of Parc Taff Bargoed' Group.

The Wardens have a keen interest in biodiversity and have already worked with others to build an otter holt, clear litter & plant trees.

With support from the Regeneration Department a Big Lottery 'People and Places' Grant is being applied for which will include biodiversity and heritage improvements as well as involving children in learning about the natural environments within the park.

Irrespective of whether or not this grant bid is successful the Parks Department have agreed to work with the Countryside Officer and communities to identify how parts of the park could be managed differently to improve

wildlife. One simple example is to reduce the frequency or timings of grass cutting in specially designated wildlife zones, which would also have the benefit of saving money!

The park is a good example of how nature and leisure activities can co-exist with a wide range of activities being held on the park including fishing, canoeing, horse-riding, mountain biking, skateboarding, walking.

It is also clear that local people both appreciate and understand this:

'The park is a lovely place to walk or bike ride in. People appreciate the natural beauty on their doorstep' PM—Bedlinog Resident

Grazing—MTCBC Estates Department

The Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Estates Department has helped to improve biodiversity across the whole of the Borough.

By working with the Ecologist, who visited all of the Local Authority grazing sites the Department now has a much better idea of how many animals are suited to grazing each piece of land.

It is not only important for wildlife that

the land is not overgrazed ('poached'), but sometimes also for the welfare of



the animals. It can also help people who want to keep animals understand how much lands they need to provide enough food for their animal without the need to buy a lot of extra feed.

Another advantage is what the land looks like,; if it is overgrazed the land can look messy and muddy, whereas if it is grazed to the right amount there will be more flowers in the field making it much better to look at.

Ty Gwyn Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre — MTCBC Landscape Architect & Regeneration

Upon the closure, demolition and removal of Ty Gwyn Day Centre buildings an unsightly area remained in the middle of Merthyr Tydfil.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Regeneration Department funded the improvement of this very visible area with help from the Landscape Architect.

Involvement with the Local Authority Biodiversity Officer also ensured that

the small area was also improved for wildlife at the same time with no extra cost, just a little more thought!

Whilst planned to not need much maintenance, the area will be planted with a range of colourful and scented plants which will be equally attractive to wildlife and passers by alike.

This small patch will be a small wildlife oasis for plants, insects and birds in the middle of the urban town centre of

Merthyr Tydfil.



Sandbrook Day Centre Organic Gardening Project — MTCBC Integrated Adults Services

Sandbrook Day Centre has made a big commitment to helping improve wildlife as much as they can.

The Day Centre clients now have more opportunities than ever to get involved in a wider range of outdoor activities including collecting local tree seeds, growing trees, looking after natural areas, growing food naturally.

In fact, when the existing project was discussed with the Local Authority Biodiversity Officer it ended up with more opportunities and even managed to get some funding from the Countryside Council for Wales.

Whilst it is just starting to develop there is a lot of scope for it to develop, already there are people who have traditionally not used the outdoors wanting to try to come and enjoy the fresh air

and join in the activities.



The whole project is sustainable with timber being bought locally from trees which come from woodlands managed for nature conservation, biological pest control being used to reduce the need for slug pellets and poisoning of birds.

The flowers and vegetables are either

enjoyed by the growers or sold to the public with the waste being composted and used to grow more plants.

It is expected that staff, Day Centre clients and the public will learn how easy, healthy and enjoyable it can be to be outdoors in the garden and how it is possible to help to make improvements for wildlife. In fact, encouraging wildlife by installing bird, insect, hedgehog and frog boxes will help the plants by encouraging animals which eat slugs, aphids, caterpillars, snails, and other common garden pests.

The added advantage to growing herbs and vegetables is that now Day Centre clients and staff have year round work rather than previously just the spring and summer flower bedding seasons.

A New Site of Special Scientific Interest in Merthyr Tydfil — Countryside Council for Wales & MTCBC Planning Department

A new, expanded Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) called Cwm Glo a Glyndyrus has been notified by the Countryside Council for Wales.

The new SSSI, the west of Merthyr Tydfil and south of Heolgerrig covering 181 hectares, is of special interest for its extensive areas of marshy grassland, neutral grassland and acid grassland associated with other habitats such as woodland and heath. It has been

identified as one of the best sites in Britain for its *'outstandingly diverse assemblage of grassland fungi, including 32 species of waxcap'*.

The fact that waxcaps were present on the site was identified by members of Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership following training on how to identify fungus. This shows the importance of training local volunteers in biodiversity issues.



Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Fish & Otter Pass—Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association, MTCBC Regeneration Department, Environment Agency

Otters and salmon are once again passing through the heart of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre after many years absence due to pollution and physical barriers.

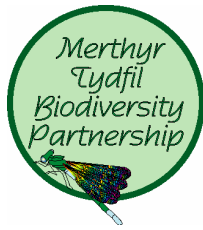
The Local Authority, Environment Agency and Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association have worked hard over many years to get the project developed and finished.

The fact that these large iconic animals

are back here just shows how the biodiversity of the river has improved after years of pollution.

This has partly helped Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association host the first ever Home Nations International Fishing competition ever to be held on an 'industrial river' (Taff) later this year, showing that projects to improve nature can reap economic rewards.





MERTHYR TYDFIL BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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Biodiversity Links

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk—Wales Biodiversity Partnership

www.ukbap.org.uk— UK Biodiversity Action Plans

www.ccw.gov.uk— Countryside Council for Wales

www.sewbrec.org.uk—Local Biological Records Centre

www.naturcymru.org.uk— Nature of Wales Magazine

www.vineproject.org.uk— Values In Nature and the Environment

www.nerc.ac.uk— Natural Environment Research Council

www.jncc.gov.uk— Joint Nature Conservation Committee

www.habitat.org.uk— Wildlife & Environmental News Service

Penmoelallt SSSI

Merthyr Tydfil & District Naturalists Society

The Merthyr Tydfil & District Naturalists Society have worked in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales and Forestry Commission Wales, with Cycoed grant funding, to manage Penmoelallt woodland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



Whilst Penmoelallt SSSI is within RhonddaCynonTaff County Borough Boundaries and the Brecon Beacons National Park the closest residents are those in Merthyr Tydfil.

The footpaths, signposts, interpretation,



car parking, artwork and woodland classroom have enabled community groups and individuals to explore the woodland, containing the unique Ley's Whitebeam, more easily.

The Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalists organize educational events in the woodland classroom for local groups such as the Brownies..

They also have a traditional 'charcoal burner' which uses the wood from the

agreed woodland management scheme to make charcoal and show people how traditional skills can be used to make money whilst benefiting biodiversity.

If you are interested in learning more about Penmoelallt or would like to join Merthyr Tydfil & District Naturalists Society please contact:

Merthyr Tydfil & District Naturalists Society, Brynheulog, Vaynor Lane, Cefn Coed, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 2HW

