



BIODIVERSITY

Wild Flower Management & Tree Regeneration

Marie Fowler, RCT CBC Green Spaces Development Officer

Email: marie.fowler@rctcbc.gov.uk

Biodiversity in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Wild Flower Grass Management

- Grass Management Background:
 - Culture
 - Structure
 - 2020 a turning point
- Our aims
- Delivery so far
- Lessons learnt

Tree Regeneration

- Our concept
- Projects
- Our focus

Wild Flower Grass Management

- Grass management background:

- Culture:

- Regular mowing of amenity, parks & road verges (4 week turn around)
 - 'I am paying council tax, you should be cutting my grass'
 - Cultural split between North and South of borough
 - Existing pilot scheme – started about 10 years ago; purchase of Cut & Collect machine; focus on Church Village bypass & other large wet countryside sites

- Structure:

- Streetcare – street, housing & play areas grass
 - Countryside – countryside sites
 - Parks – park sites

- 2019/20 a turning point:

- Creation of Climate Change Scrutineer Group (Cabinet members, 2 local environmental organisations, various RCT department representatives)
 - Approval of our Wild Flower Grass Management Policy (early 2020)
 - Inter-department collaboration & commitment for delivery
 - Covid 19 – 'nature got to shine'



Aims

- Essentially it is managing our grass verges and open spaces with biodiversity in mind. Promoting the native seed bank. Managing – not abandonment!
- Empower our staff to take ownership and grow in the process
- Enable public access and enjoyment through path creation and citizen science projects – community engagement
- Increase the number of grass verges/ parks/ cemeteries managed for pollinators year on year



Delivery so far...

- Access to grant funding – enabled purchase new machinery
- Machinery delivered in Sept 20 with subsequent operator training course delivery
- Additional staff training: why we are doing this, why it is important, how they can help us gather data, their role as front staff, encourage two way communication
- Delays due to C-19 for cutting – weather condition issues
- Staff commitment already showing through taking pictures before and after as well as giving feedback on machinery and sites.



Lessons learnt

- Procurement – allow delays from procuring machinery to getting it road ready
- Communication – never assume people will remember; it's good to talk
- Training will only go so far – practice makes perfect
- Ensure cutting starts earlier next year to avoid weather related issues
- Resolve budget issues early – i.e. which department will take ownership of what.

Tree Regeneration

- Our concept:
 - RCT – existing floristically rich, varied habitats
 - Mass tree planting – put these habitats in jeopardy
 - Leave native habitats and focus on real problem areas – urban landscape
- Project:
 - Tree planting programme in parks, cemeteries, recreational grounds – winter 2020
 - Joint partnership research project between USW (University of South Wales), RCT & NRW (Natural Resources Wales)
 - Aerial photograph comparison/ GIS (phase 1)
 - Ground trothing (Phase 2)
- Our focus:
 - Let natural regeneration take place on our countryside sites and overall landscape
 - Benefit: no imported species, no carbon footprint to get plants to us, no plastic use, right tree in the right place
 - Educate community re - benefits of all types of habitats to combat climate change



