

St Dogmaels Cutting Contract 2021-22 Proposals **Rationale for the Proposed Changes**

PRACTICAL

1. To include required work in the contract rather than relying on the use of volunteers. In recent years there has been a huge drop in the number of volunteers coming forward to help in the village and this has been exacerbated by the current Covid-19 situation and particularly the more complex logistics in organising work parties.
2. To try and balance the cutting regime so that where possible growth is left to act as a stabiliser to reduce potential bank and path edge erosion (See Photographs below).
3. Reduce soil “washout” and erosion. Problems in erosion and slippage were noted in 2020 (see 2. Above), this has caused soil and debris to be washed onto surfaced paths which in turn makes them slippery (H&S Risk) and unsightly.
4. Erosion of path side banks in the long term may have caused enhanced stability issues leading to potentially expensive remedial work.
5. To enable the Biodiversity group to evidence any benefits by recording and monitoring the impact of the changes. This will enable more accurate detail to future contract planning.
6. Health and Safety has taken priority in all of our considerations and proposals.

BIODIVERSITY

1. As a by-product of 2.,3.4. above there is potential that as wild plants re(colonise) the areas where the proposed changes are suggested they will not only help to stabilise the soil but if carefully monitored will potentially enhance the biodiversity for pollinating insects but also improve the aesthetics for residents and visitors.
2. Liaison with residents during our planning work for the contract has indicated that there is strong support from Residents to manage some sites for the benefit of wildflowers and insects (pollinators). We would have liked to have held more consultation but Covid-19 made this difficult
3. Certain areas e.g. the Pinog have already been identified as ‘semi-wild’ areas (St Dogmaels 2011 Biodiversity report) and are already ‘high value’ wildlife areas. The work carried out by the CC and other groups since the 2011 report has already helped to improve them e.g. Removal of INNS (Invasive Non Native Species) such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam (Village wide), and additionally control of plants falling within the injurious Weeds Act 1959 e.g. Creeping and Spear Thistle and Hemlock Water Dropwort (Pinog)[An extremely poisonous plant often mistaken for an edible plant and which has caused the most Human fatalities in the UK].
4. The stunning display of wild flowers this summer on Maes Y Dre bank opposite the Ferry INN is an example of what potentially can be achieved just by changing the cutting schedule. Both residents and visitors have commented on how wonderful the bank looked and how many insects and Goldfinches were attracted to this area. This has encouraged us to consider potential further sites around the village, which may have the potential to be improved for wildlife in a similar way.

AIM

1. To carry out a 1 year pilot so that chosen sites can be monitored to gauge improvements (or not) for;
 - a. Erosion
 - b. Visual Attractiveness
 - c. Biodiversity (in particular wildflowers and Pollinators)
 - d. The general well-being and health of Residents (Reactions)
2. To develop a more efficient and effective cutting regime that produces an environment which will be more appreciated and enjoyed by residents, visitors and wildlife.
3. To minimise additional work intervention in addition to that contracted.

REFERENCE

Photos



Erosion along Disabled Access Path Bank (below car park)



Erosion & Shredded branches Grass Triangle Near Culvert



Erosion and damaged vegetation alongside Pinog Path

GUIDANCE

In order to assist in the draft these proposals advice and information was sourced from the following; PCC's guidance on Highway Verge Mowing and Roadside Nature Reserves, PLANED's 2011 Biodiversity report on the Pinog area, Plantlife.org, Butterfly Conservation, Bumble Bee conservation, Dr Deborah Zavier (Swansea University), local knowledge (residents) and Monmouthshire County Council (website).

Mick Kendall,
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On behalf of Cllrs : G Wislocka, R Davies and M Kendall