

St Dogmaels Community Council Cutting Contract Progress to Date and Proposals for 2022-23 (including PCC contract areas)

1. Update on Progress to date in 2021-22
2. Recommendation/Proposal for change to 2021-22 CC Contract
3. Recommendation/Proposals for the 2022-23 Contract CC & PCC Contract

1. Progress to Date

We have now completed the first quarter of this year's contract where the CC agreed additional works to include identified Health & Safety issues and to run an extended Biodiversity pilot, both on CC, PCC land (request) and one small area of unregistered land.

Health and Safety (CC & PCC)

The additional H&S works had previously been carried out on an 'as necessary' basis or an Ad Hoc basis by volunteers. For 2021-22 it was agreed that it would be sensible to include these items into the contract to ensure a) the necessary work was completed and b) a more accurate costing could be forecast. It was also noted that an ageing population of willing volunteers and Covid-19 meant that relying on this for known works was not sustainable in the long term. It should also be noted that some of the H&S works also had a biodiversity improvement impact and vice versa. E.G. Reduced cuts on the banks around the 'Disabled Access path' would reduce erosion and subsequent debris/soil deposits being washed on to the path causing a slip hazard.

To date not all of the new introductions have been tested as they are due later in the calendar but those that have been carried out have proved successful and there has been a marked improvement in the reduction of hazards on paths and less water over run (the latter will be particularly important during the winter months). There has already been a noticeable improvement regarding erosion on the banks above the disabled access path, where the reduced cutting schedule has allowed plants to re colonise the banks and this is helping to stabilise the bank, and as I mentioned earlier has allowed the plants to flower and set seed, so improving the biodiversity. Pembrokeshire CC carried have carried out our requested work at their Netpool car park and cleared the surface of silt and trimmed back the boundary hedge which had become very overgrown (Thanks to Mike James and PCC).

Overall feedback has been positive from people using the paths and a definite safety improvement is apparent.

Biodiversity Pilots

Community Council Areas

In addition to the area at Y Feidr nr. Ty Johnny (on the approach to the village) which has been managed for wildlife since 2018, the whole of the Pinog (from Alexandra Gardens, the disabled access path to the rear of Penally), the Sewage mound area by the slipway and the culvert mound outside Penally front access were main areas selected for the pilot in 2021-22.

Although the weather in 2021 has been very different to the previous year, and therefore our observations made last year have not necessarily been repeated in this period, for the spring and early summer period, some definite improvements have already been noted. By reducing the cutting on the landward side of the Pinog path there have already been signs that plants are re colonising

the areas that have been left uncut through the spring including; the early white flowering scurvy grasses and Yellow Flag Iris. So, a good sign of the pilot's success.

The Sewage Mound (near the slipway) which previously was a tangled mass of old brambles, thus becoming very unsightly and a dumping ground for various waste items was cut to ground level at the end of winter. This has resulted in a surge of flowering plants coming through, some healthy regrowth of the brambles (good for insects and Children Blackberry picking) and a reduction in fly tipping.

Elsewhere where reduced cutting has been introduced have also shown an improvement to the general biodiversity of these areas.

As you are all aware at Y Feidr a software glitch meant it was inadvertently cut earlier than planned, obviously this had an adverse impact on some of the early summer flowering plants BUT on a positive note it means we will be able to monitor this earlier cut with previous years later cuts and compare the outcome. It also allowed us to re seed some low growth areas (Thanks to Gill W. for supplying the wild seed). One big benefit it has prompted an improvement to software we use and hopefully this will now be more robust.

There is one final area to report on 'the Culvert Mound outside Penally'. This is as far as we are aware unregistered land. A nearby resident initially showed an interest in maintaining this as a wildflower site, so as an offer of goodwill we agreed to carry out a spring and late summer cut to help. Whilst it was showing to be a very successful site through spring and into the summer at the beginning of June the whole area was sprayed with weed killer (photographs previously circulated). This has effectively destroyed all growth and made the site effectively unviable. With the exception of Penally Mound the Pilots have already shown that with some changes to the management of areas biodiversity improvements can be achieved. As we are only part way through the season time will tell if the pilots continue in that way. There will be some ongoing changes to timings re the early spring cuts but these are within the existing contract period, ending March 2022. **Feedback to date from talking to residents and visitors has been very positive and the scheme has raised much interest.**

Pembrokeshire County Council Areas

Working with Pembrokeshire CC we had 3 pilots running.

One at Maes y Dre (opposite the Ferry Inn) this has been running for a number of years and has been very successful and popular. This year has been no exception and despite being partly cut in error in the Spring there has been a good display of flowers. In fact, the inadvertent spring cut has allowed us to observe what impact this has had and we shall be monitoring the outcome. Early indications seem to be showing that in wetter/colder years like the current one, this later spring cut may actually help. One change we requested was that the steeper bank next to the road be cut in full (as opposed to a 2ft H&S cut) as exceptional growth was making the site potentially dangerous due to the height of the vegetation, and if left would have caused problems to the Contractor. Due to the ongoing success of this site I would recommend we (with PCC's agreement) continue with this pilot.

The other two pilots, new for the 2021-22 contract, have not been so straight forward. Both were introduced at the Maes Hyfryd Estate and involved one road side verge and a sloped area near the bus stop. From a biodiversity aspect they worked well and were a success (see separate reports) with a good variety of wildflowers over the spring. However, whilst some residents were very positive, some were not so keen on the areas being left uncut and approached the Contractor, PCC and a Community Councillor to complain. This was mostly concerning the roadside verge and, in the May, meeting the CC requested it be cut, for reasons uncertain the slope site was also cut in early June, effectively curtailing both pilots. It should be noted that whilst both sites were promising from

a pure biodiversity aspect and despite consultation having been carried out in 2020, to which there were no objections there is obviously a very different split of opinion between local residents. Unless the residents can come to an agreement between themselves, it is my opinion that even if we carried out a full consultation exercise we would not obtain a consensus of opinion at the current time. I understand both sites of these will now revert to the previous (2019-20) cutting regime for the remaining period of the contract.

General Contract Items (CC & PCC)

As far as I am aware have been no issues raised, the contract work is running to plan and there no new issues that have been identified for inclusion in the future.

2. Recommendation/Proposal for change to 2021-22 CC Contract

Based on the above.

CC Contract

- a. The planned cut of the Culvert Mound outside Penally in September 2021 be cancelled (Map ID 9 t).

3. Recommendation/Proposals for the 2022-23 Contract CC & PCC Contract

Based on the above

CC Contract

- b. The Culvert Mound outside Penally be removed from the 2022-23 contract (Map ID 9 t) (NB. The original decision was this to be initially included in 2021-22 contract with possible option to continue to assist the local resident if requested)
- c. All other contract work be continued for the 2022-23 contract

PCC Contract

- d. The Pilot at Maes Hyfryd Verge (Map ID 6 e) not be continued in 2022-23
- e. The Pilot at Maes Hyfryd Slope (Map ID 6 c) not be continued in 2022-23
- f. All other contract work be requested to be continued in 2022-23

Further detail in documents attached Village Map, Alexandra Gardens Map, Pinog Map and Contract(s) spreadsheet

M Kendall 10/7/2021