

# Ammanford Town Council



## Site visit – 14.8.24 Rachel Carter

Ammanford Town hall and Council offices, Iscennen Rd, Ammanford, Carmarthenshire SA18 3BE

### Observations

Weather was very warm and dry. Ammanford Town Council consists of four wards in the urban area of Ammanford with approximately 2621 dwellings.

The local area has a history of coal mining, stone quarrying and tinsplate works. It occupies an area west of the River Amman and is within the boundaries of Carmarthenshire unitary authority.

There are no designations within 2kms of any of the sites visited. All sites visited were below 100metres.

The Council does not currently have a Biodiversity Action Plan and has not submitted a Section 6 Report for the 2019 or 2022 reporting rounds.

We visited two main sites: Ammanford park and Ammanford recreation ground.

Ammanford Town Council owns and manages the park, and the grounds are maintained by Carmarthenshire County Council under a service level agreement. The park is situated in the Town centre and includes a large children's play area, Cricket ground, historic bandstand, memorial gates, flower beds, Tennis courts and bowling green as well as a walled area containing a disused pétanque court.

Ammanford Town Council manages The Recreation Ground on behalf of Carmarthenshire County Council (maintenance remains the responsibility of Carmarthenshire Council). The recreational ground includes full size rugby and football pitches, mini pitches, a club house, a disused MUGA and a skate park.

Ammanford Town Council has a service level agreement with Carmarthenshire County Council to conduct grass cutting, horticultural work and footpaths maintenance in areas of Ammanford and surrounding areas.

Locally there have been several successful Biodiversity projects funded through Local Places for Nature:

#Natur Tycroes growing together

#Natur Cwmaman enhanced grasslands – Mowing collective between Cwmaman TC, and Llanedi and Llanon CCs.

#Natur Parc Y Betws

#Natur Hendy nature trail

Other projects locally:-

Garnswllt recreation ground – Mawr CC.

## Site 1 – Ammanford Park

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/RH3rzxm4MG1EWQ4T7>



Figure 1 - Satellite image of Ammanford Park showing the different areas discussed. (Google maps 2024)

There are multiple access points to the park and on the day, I visited it was busy with dog walkers and families enjoying the varied facilities. The Cricket club (A) play a central role in the use of the park, but the pitch is used for other events out of season. The green areas are regularly mown with cut and drop, and the numerous flower beds are maintained with a small selection of annuals and shrubs. There are scattered trees on the site, mainly on the perimeter with some large healthy Lime trees in the play area and some other native broad-leaved species elsewhere. There is a large number of non-native conifers across the park which may need some management or removal. There is also a public toilet block situated near the bowling green. The park has good accessibility with hard paths and step free access from the surrounding streets.

There were five main areas that were the focus of the visit.

**Area B** – This area is surrounded by a dwarf wall on the park side, and a mix of hedging and shrubs form a boundary between the northern side and the neighbouring homes on Iscennen road. The area is split into a green lawned space with some shrubs and a Pétanque court (180m<sup>2</sup>) which is currently not in use by any organised groups. Whilst on site some dog owners were using the site to carry out



obedience training. Discussion about this site have included a sensory garden and a contained dog area. On the northern boundary there is some Bamboo spreading into the park.



*Figure 2 - Images showing the lawned area and dwarf wall and the Pétanque court.*



*Figure 3 - Images showing Lime tree and cracked pathway.*

There is a well-established privet hedge forming a boundary here between area A and a storage and works compound. There were some gaps on the privet hedging running alongside the neighbouring



housing which contained bamboo, Holly, and at least one mature Lime tree with restricted root growth.

**Area C** – This is a compound used by the Cricket club and Carmarthenshire CC to store equipment and as a works base for the maintenance crews. There is a derelict building on the western end that is planned for demolition. The Town Council has carried out some stakeholder consultation and spoken to the recently formed ‘Friends of’ group and the need for new toilets and refreshment facilities closer to the play area has been identified. This location has plumbing, and electricity and a new building here could provide facilities for park users. The site could be split into two purposes with fencing being used to contain the ‘compound storage area’ and a new building could adjoin the play area by removing the conifer hedging. This new construction could be of sympathetic wooden design with sustainable toilet facilities and a covered area for families and activities. Possible funding sources for a project that could include this construction are include on Page 16.



*Figure 4 - Existing building that could be replaced with a wooden building to provide undercover and indoor facilities for park users.*

**Area D** – The play area contains various play equipment, a splash park with picnic benches and a zip line. On the day of the site visit this area was very busy and being enjoyed by children of all ages and their carers. The site is split by an octagonal planter which obscures the view of children playing in different parts of the park. The low wall is cracked and was also being used as seating. The area contains a selection of non-native shrubs and trees, and the soil is dry and eroded and roots are visible. Stakeholders have expressed a wish for greater visibility across the park and functional seating here. There have also been comments that the toilets are too far from this area and are inconvenient to use when supervising more than one child. There is very little shade at the play area as the Lime trees are on the north-western boundary.



*Figure 5 - The central octagonal planter in the middle of the play area.*



*Figure 6 - One of the large Lime trees in the children's play area.*

The Council has experienced some issues at the northern boundary here with overhanging branches from the three well established and spectacular Lime trees. Gaps in the hedging could be fenced and replanted with a double width of native species such as crab apple, Holly, hawthorn and alder buckthorn etc...



**Area E** – This area contains a heritage bandstand, paths and flower beds. On the eastern gate there is an old arboretum structure that needs to be removed due to rot. The raised beds offer an opportunity for community gardening to replace the limited variety of annuals currently in place.

There are conifers that could be replaced with broad leaf native species in phases provide more shade and a cooling effect across the park. In some place the conifers have grown too large and are crowding out the broad leaf trees. There is evidence of wide spectrum herbicide spraying along the path edges and around the base of the trees. There are also signs of strimmer damage to the bark which could lead to disease and loss of some of the large native trees.



*Figure 7 - Images showing possible Herbicide spraying along paths and around base of trees, as well as possible strimmer damage to the bark.*

**Area F** - Alongside the tennis courts is raised planting bed which is currently underutilised. The soil here appears quite thin and free draining. There were some Heather plants that were struggling and further down towards the bowling green some patches of mixed shrubs.



*Figure 8 - Image of the raised bedding alongside the new tennis courts.*



## General improvements for biodiversity

Relaxed mowing at **Area E** changing to less frequent mowing of every 4-6 weeks with cut & collect machinery. This small change will improve the green aesthetic and prevent yellowing during drought periods as have been experienced over the last 3 years. The increase growth of species such as clover, thyme and trefoil species will provide a luscious soft surface for picnics and playing whilst maintaining a 'tidy' look to this formal park. Using the cut & collect method will reduce soil nutrients and the dominance of course grasses which can look untidy. It will reduce surface thatching of grass cuttings which can cause bare patches (poaching). Consideration will need to be given to disposal of the cuttings which would either be through Green waste streams or identifying areas where the cuttings can be deposited. Cuttings can be used for local composting at allotments or for making habitat as part of an activity with local groups.

Some planters could be adopted by local groups for community growing.

Reduction in the use of **annual bedding plants** in all areas. Refer to the approved planting lists for pollinators and consult with local plant nurseries for the best choice of native and bee friendly species to give value both aesthetically and to pollinators and biodiversity in general. Plants should be perennial and suited to the local climate to be more sustainable. These species will be more resilient to the local climate and wet and dry spells. They will also provide a variety of foraging opportunities for a greater number of invertebrate species including our declining native bumblebees and butterflies.

It's For Them / Iddyn nhw **signage** could be used across the park to communicate with visitors and stakeholders the reasons behind mowing and planting changes.



Figure 9 - Satellite image (Bing Maps 2024) showing the zones of Ammanford park discussed in this report.

**Tree management** – A tree survey should Inform a tree management plan. This could include removing some non-native species that are crowding out mature broad-leaf trees or conifers that are at the end of their life. Any trees removed could be replaced with a variety of native species such as Oak, Wild cherry, Rowan, Field maple, Black Poplar etc...

Smaller trees and shrubs could be replaced with native shrubs such as Alder buckthorn, Bird cherry, Broom, Burnet rose, Dog rose and Dogwood.

## Suggested improvements for biodiversity at Area B

A new sensory/welfare garden created using the existing gravel area with 4 L-shaped raised beds and a central seating planter. Planters could be filled with native plants which meet all five senses or edible shrubs, herbs, and vegetables. The four entrances could be covered over with a living arch of native honeysuckle and clematis or edible plants such as legumes (See [Appendix A](#)). The central planter could be filled with aromatic herbs such as rosemary, sage basil, mint, and lavenders. This creates a sensory seating area for reflection and peace. (see [Appendix B](#) for an example)

Wildflower meadow created in these areas through natural recovery of the mown vegetation. Mowing would need to take place in early spring and late summer/early autumn with a cut & collect machine. The arisings (cutting) could be deposited in the hedged margins to create further

A mown green path could connect the accessible entrance to the welfare garden allowing users to walk through the meadow. This could be constructed using regular mowing (every 2 weeks) one small mower width.

Construct a new stone dust path into the sensory/welfare garden to make it fully accessible from the main park. A wooden gate could be installed here (optional) to create a separate and dedicated space.

Create a new access in the wall with a timber gate to form an entrance into the new sensory/welfare garden from the main park.

The non-native bamboo here could be replaced with a double width native hedging. The bamboo removed could be dried and reused to create bug hotels and habitat elsewhere working with local children.

A secure dog exercise area surrounded by a wooden picket style fence with a secure double width gate with auto shut, onto the existing path. A chicane style could be considered to avoid escaping dogs, but with consideration of accessibility needs. This would allow access to a mower and prevent gate being left open. Mowing could be done every 4 weeks and signage should be installed at single entrance to state the rules of use. A bench could be installed as shown to allow dog owners to enjoy the adjacent wildflower area whilst dogs are off lead securely.



Image is for illustration purposes only (Not to scale)

Double width native hedging trees planted on the inside of the dwarf wall to form a screen and provide habitat and connection across the site.



## Suggested improvements for biodiversity at Areas C & D

The existing concrete planter offers a few opportunities:

Replacing this with a new structure such as an open-sided round house of sustainable timber construction with seating inside would allow 360° views of the play area to supervise children's play. This space would also provide and under cover seating area for park users in inclement weather whilst also providing shade in the summer.



Figure 10 – The Roundhouse at Meadow Street community garden (Pontypridd Town Council)

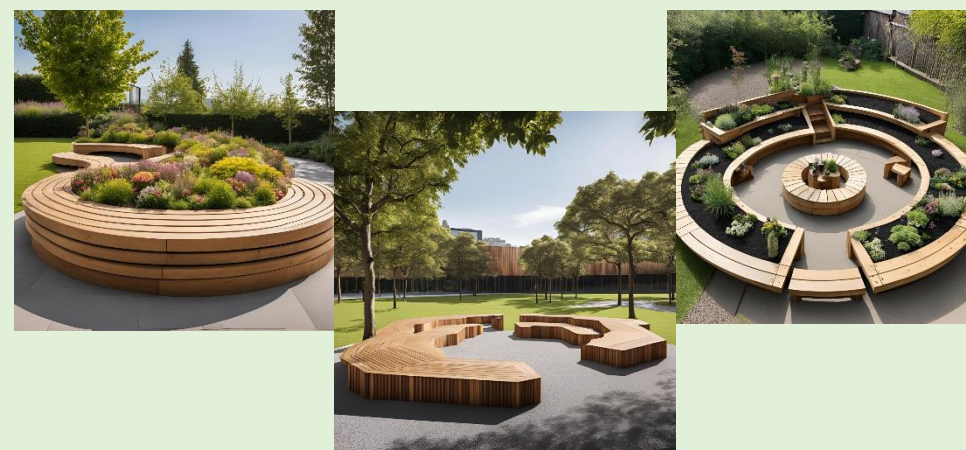
Another option would be to remove the existing non-native trees and shrubs and use the existing structure to build an octagonal timber seating bench around the outside. Gaps could be left to allow wheelchair users to use the spaces equitably. The inside space could then be repurposed by planting with native pollinator friendly native plants and shrubs incorporating bee and bug hotels and bird feeders. The images here are designed to give a general idea of how this space could look.



Image is for illustration purposes only (Not to scale)

Double width native hedging trees planted on the inside of the boundary to fill in existing gaps and provide privacy between residents and play area. Replace existing conifer hedge with double width native hedging to compliment any building development which will require removal of existing hedge.

Possible new building to provide refreshments, accessible toilets, water refill station, and a covered seating area. Accessible paths connect to existing pathways made with sustainable urban drainage materials.





## Suggested improvements for biodiversity at Area F

The unused flower beds in this area offer an excellent opportunity for wildflower and native shrub displays. The soil appears to be quite low nutrient and free draining, and other more horticultural plants are struggling to grow. There is no shade, and it is in full sun. This may be more beneficial to native species who thrive on low nutrient soil. I would recommend checking the soil pH and speaking to a local specialist nursery on which species would be most suitable. I would recommend plug planting with local provenance plants appropriate to the soil type, mixed in with shrubs such as Alder buckthorn, Broom, Burnett rose and Dogwood. Some native Heather species may also do well here as well as other neutral habitat species like Toadflax, Agrimony, Betony, and Ox eye daisy. Species chosen will need to be drought resistant to reduce the amount of watering needed.



Figure 11 - Images showing Area E as they appeared on date of visit.

Planting here could provide opportunity for local groups to get involved and bug habitats could be incorporated into the planting scheme. If possible, locally sourced stone could be sourced to create a feature amongst the planting whilst creating valuable habitat for invertebrates. This would also help reduce surface water loss.

An example of long flower borders created using locally sourced wildflowers and shrubs – Penclawdd foreshore car park is shown below in Figure 12, created by Celtic Wildflowers for Swansea Council.



Figure 12 - Penclawdd foreshore planting project 2020 (Image courtesy of Celtic wildflowers.co.uk). Inset image shows how it appeared before the planting took place (image-Google maps 2024)



## Site 2 – Ammanford Recreational ground

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/RGz5ScWyXe1uNCQA6>

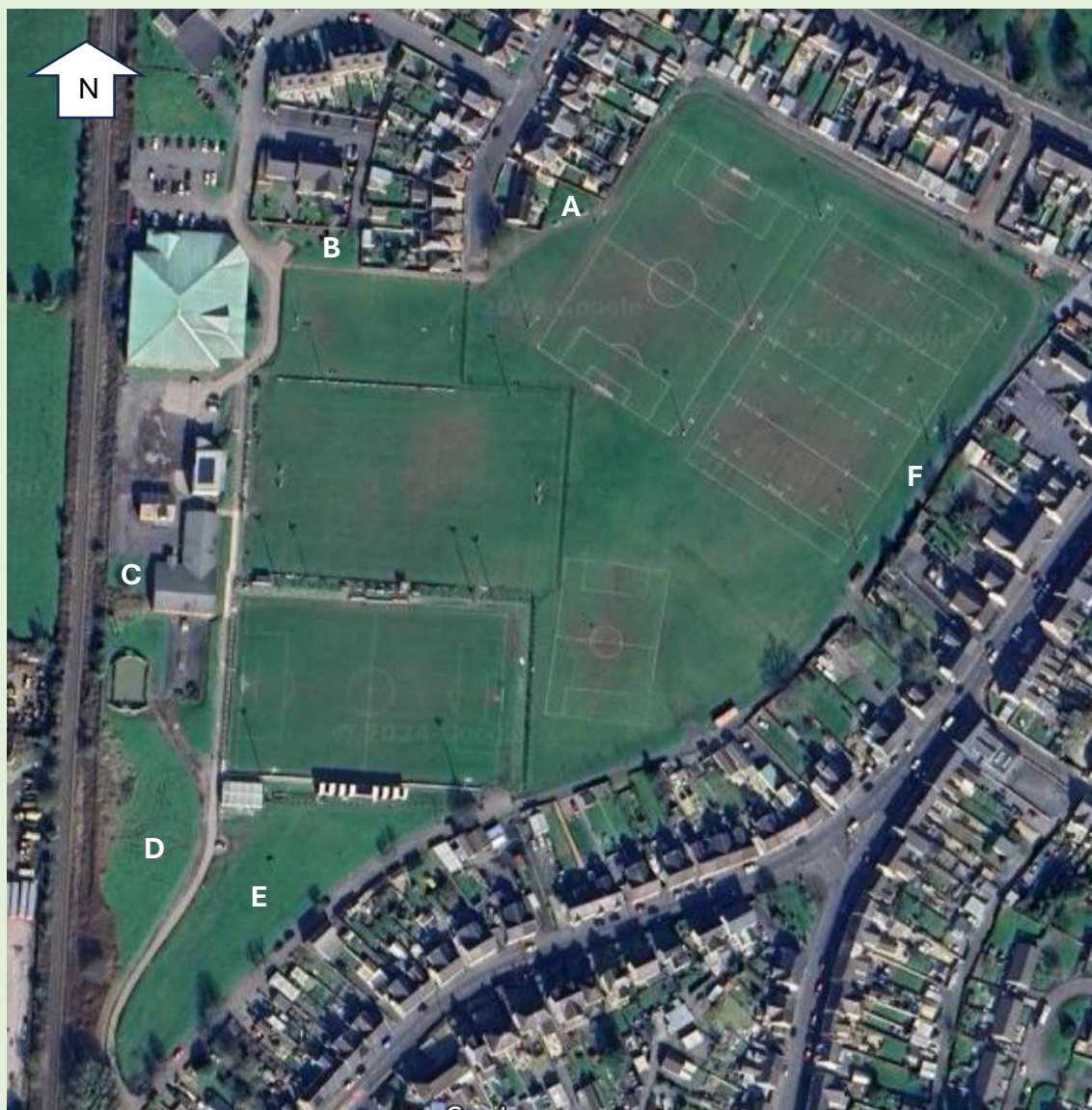


Figure 13 - Satellite image showing the extent of Ammanford recreational ground currently managed by the Council. (Google maps 2024)

**Area A** - A small triangular area with two benches on concrete plinths, currently cut on the same schedule as the sports pitches. It has fenced boundary and remnants of fitness trail equipment. This area could be improved with reduced mowing for the whole area, cutting twice per year, once in March and again end of August/September (Meadow cut) The edge of the path and around the bench could continue to be cut as normal. This will promote natural recovery of native wildflower growth and reduce dominance of course grasses over time. The regularly cut edges will show management of the spaces and with the addition of 'It's For Them' signage will help communicate with stakeholders the benefits to the soil, wildlife, and air pollution. It will also create a pleasant and aesthetic seating area and increase privacy for the neighbouring properties. It is good practice to



Figure 14 - Area A showing the mown grass and benches.



allow the vegetation to grow the first year and assess the diversity and then decide on whether any native, locally procured seeds should be added. The Amenity Grassland Assessment (AGA) Toolkit currently being developed could be used to measure this biodiversity value and suggest appropriate future management plans. If the Council would like to increase the floral diversity more immediately it may be possible to add some seeds from local meadow projects or from an approved supplier. (Please discuss this with me before proceeding). Figure 16 shows the floral diversity of unmown grass with mown green paths and edges in Betws Park, enhanced with local provenance seeds. Any areas with new relaxed mowing regimes should display signage using the Welsh Government's free signage resources in the It is For Them Stakeholder Toolkit, as shown in Figure 15 on a site in Porthmadog, Gwynedd.



Figure 16 - Meadow area in the Betws Park as a result of a 2022 Local Places for Nature project by Betws CC.



Figure 15 - An example of one of the It's For Them/ Iddyn Nhw signage designs personalised by Porthmadog TC in a recreational area.

The unused fitness trail equipment here and around the park could be utilised by planting native climbers at the base such as *Lonicera periclymenum* (Honeysuckle) and *Clematis vitalba* (Traveller's joy). These enhancements would add vital biodiversity forage and refugia to wildflower including birds and pollinators in a site that is otherwise heavily managed and low in biodiversity due to its use as a regulated sports venue.



Figure 17 - Unused fitness trail equipment on eastern edge of recreational ground.



**Area B** – This area has mixed lawn and shrubs and one tree (possible a non-native Acer). Similar to Area A there is a piece of unused fitness trail equipment, and the lawn is mown in line with the pitches.

To improve biodiversity and aesthetic value of this area the lawn could be mown on the edge of the path only leaving the majority of green space to grow throughout the summer, and signage used as suggested for Area A. The equipment could either be repositioned or used in the shrub area to create an incredible refugia and forage for small mammals like hedgehogs, and invertebrates such as solitary bees. The neighbouring Nursery children could be involved in creating log pile habitat here and enjoy the new pollinator friendly area created. These types of areas can provide a venue for activities such as a BioBlitzes, LERC recording events and surveying, for a variety of groups and ages.



*Figure 18 - Image showing the mown grass area with unused fitness equipment and shrubs and tree in the rear of the space.*

**Area C** – There is a lawned area at the rear of the Leisure centre, and a grassy bank between the path and the car park that are both regularly mown in line with the pitches. There is also a scrubby area at the rear with dense brambles and some lawn in the front. There is an unofficial route alongside between the car park and the skatepark.

This area (Figure 19) could be left either unmown March to September to create a wildflower area and save on resources, time, and money. Signage could be installed here to show that it is being managed for wildlife (Iddyn Nhwl/It's For Them).



*Figure 19 - Mown areas alongside the Leisure centre.*

The same management could be applied to the area in Figure 20 with the option of mowing the edge along the upper pathway. The greater diversity of wildflowers could improve soil stability and hold



much more water than heavily mown vegetation on slopes, and also help with carbon sequestration and air quality overall.



*Figure 20 - Sloping bank in car park.*

The larger area shown in Figure 22 contains dense brambles and other scrubby growth with some good diversity of species present. This could provide potential habitat and food sources for small mammals, bats, and birds. As this area is not in a heavily utilised area, I would advise minimal management to include twice per year mowing and cutting back to maintain the scrub area. The reduced time spent on mowing could be redirected to litter picking and other maintenance.



*Figure 21 - Area of grass and shrubs behind club building.*



*Figure 22 - Some of the large wildflower species growing in this area, Willowherb and Cow parsley.*



**Area D** – This area contains a MUGA which is in a state of disrepair and a skate park that requires updating. The Council would like to consider renovating this area and could apply for grant funding. Some suggestions are included on page 16.

In the interim the grass areas and shrubby margins offer an opportunity for reduce mowing but as this area is often used for events the Council could consider adopting a ‘Nectar cut’ where the mowing is reduced to once every 6 weeks but avoiding May and June as this is when nectar and pollen resources is at its highest. This creates a softer surface with some colour and forage resources for pollinators without removing the recreational function of the area. Where areas are left for longer intervals, it is advised to cut paths through the areas regularly to create nature walkways (as shown in Figure 16 previously) and the edges can also be maintained.

This method could also be used in Area F alongside the eastern side of the path.

In summary for this site, whilst the sports pitches need to be maintained with regular mowing the other sites identified in this report do not require such a high level of mowing. Short mowing intervals such as this can deplete the vegetation and soil health, increase the dominance of course grasses and reduce the benefits of green space for cooling, carbon sequestration and water retention. The diagram in Figure 23 below illustrates the large complex root structures of native wildflowers and their potential to improve soil structure, sequester Carbon and retain water, reducing surface water run-off. In contrast most rye grasses have roots that are thin and shallow rooted.

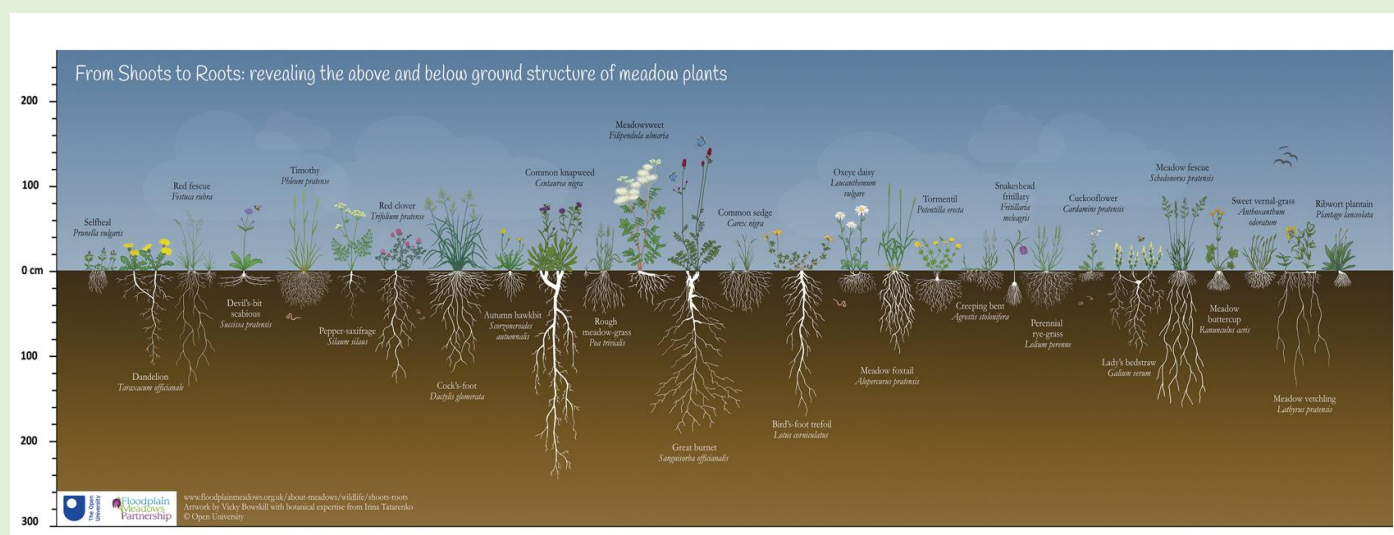


Figure 23 - Bowskill V. and Tatarenko I. (2021). From Shoots to Roots: revealing the above and below ground structure of meadow plants. Floodplain Meadows Partnership.



## Funding opportunities

### Mowing changes

All sites would benefit from improved mowing practices and use of suitable machinery. Funding could be obtained to buy this equipment for use by the Council and it could also be considered to share this with other neighbouring C&TCs in a cooperative partnership. Carmarthenshire County Council have the appropriate machinery and Ammanford TC could discuss this with them on re-negotiation of the service level agreement. If tendering for new mowing contracts, a work brief to include cut and collect methods could be included and suitable contractors identified. Another option is a partnership agreement with Cwmaman Town council who own suitable cut and collect machinery that could be used for this purpose.

### Funding Programmes

The sites visited could all benefit from actions taken to improve diversity, connectivity, condition, and ecosystem resilience. These improvements would help Ammanford Town Council fulfil their requirements under Section 6 of the Environment Act (2016) as well as create valuable 'Local Places for Nature', important wildlife corridors and protecting and promoting the natural heritage of the area.

The sites are all 'on the doorstep,' close to public services such as shops, schools, churches, and community centres. The sites would meet the urban deprivation criteria for funding through the Local Places for Nature scheme. The area covered in this report is in the Ammanford 2 LSOA and is classed as urban deprived according to the [WIMD data](#). Further urban deprivation data can be found here: [WIMD - Explore \(gov.wales\)](#).

The capital funding programme provided through the National Lottery Heritage fund is now closed to applications however the applications for Keep Wales Tidy packages are still open. There are a few possible locations that may be suitable for this funding. The Council could consider applying for a Community orchard package for the Park (Area E) or at Area D/E at the Recreational ground. This would require evidence of volunteer engagement and a commitment from groups to help install and maintain the package. The Council would need to commit to maintenance of any package for a minimum of 5 years. Keep Wales Tidy Garden packages: Find out more here: [Local Places for Nature - Keep Wales Tidy](#). If the council would like to apply for a Community Orchard package, I would be able to advise on the application process. I would encourage that this is an option that an application is made very soon as the programme is coming to an end and the number of remaining packages is now running low.

For Site 1 – Ammanford Park there may be an opportunity for funding through the [National Lottery Heritage fund Open Grants programme](#). The fund is available for projects between £20,000 to £250,000. Any project plan would need to align with their 4 investment principles:

- Saving heritage
- Protecting the environment
- Inclusion, access, and participation
- Organisational sustainability

You must take all four principles into account in your application. The strength of focus, and emphasis on each principle, is for you to decide and demonstrate. A project at Ammanford park following the suggested improvements on pages 7-10 could meet these four investment principles



with an emphasis on protecting the environment. This funding programme is open for applications and has a rolling deadline. This funding also offers the opportunity to fund the role of a Project coordinator for the duration of the project. Funding applications will require a large amount of preparation and planning and submitting a Project Enquiry in the first instance is advised. I can offer further help and advice on this.

A larger project for the new building would need further investigation and I advise obtaining specialist advice.

Smaller elements of the projects could be funded by the Carmarthenshire Local Places for Nature scheme. Please contact me to discuss this further.

## **Section 6 Duty**

Section 6 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires that 'All public bodies must seek to maintain, enhance and restore biodiversity'. This includes all Community & Town Councils. Ammanford Town Council would be a Group 2 body and as such needs to plan and report on how it is meeting or has met all six Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) objectives. There is a statutory requirement to publish a report on actions taken over a 3-year period and the next report is due by the end of 2025. One Voice Wales can provide templates and guidance on creating a Biodiversity Action Plan and completing the Section 6 Report 2025.

To help the sector develop their plans and meet this duty, One Voice Wales has recently launched three new training modules:

- Module 25 - Biodiversity Basics part 1
- Module 26 – Biodiversity Basics Part 2
- Module 27 – Nature project Management

And three new Biodiversity Guides:

- Nature recovery action Guide for C&TCs
- Community Growing for C&TCs
- Biodiversity and Planning applications for C&TCs

The Guides can be requested here: <https://forms.office.com/e/WuB9K8J3jT>

Training should be booked in the usual way through the Council Clerk.

Specific advice and guidance on completing Section 6 reporting is available from the Local Places for Nature Officer.

## **Useful links**

Lots of useful information can be found in the post conference resource pack which can be downloaded here: <https://we.tl/t-7XTgl4n288> This includes recommend planting list for pollinators and Bee friendly schemes.

It's for them Stakeholder toolkit: <https://we.tl/t-0Lh5fA9Mms>

Case studies of successful Local Places for Nature projects: <https://we.tl/t-ulimPoq85A>



Ecological surveys are recommended in particular for Site 1 and it would be useful to upload records of any sightings or organised events like a BioBlitz to your local record centre is: [Welcome to West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre - West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre \(wwwbic.org.uk\)](http://www.bic.org.uk)

There is also the [LERC app](#) which can be used by any visitors to record any plants or animals that they see. The Council could encourage residents to 'Go Lercing' and record anything they see using ID apps and a photo. All submissions are checked for accuracy, so they do not need to be experts in plant and animal ID.

Special consideration should be given to local biodiversity priorities. For more information on your local area please see [Wildlife on your ward](#). For example, The Painted lady butterfly is common in your area and prefer to feed on Mallow species and Viper's Bugloss, so these could be included in your planting schemes.

Your local Carmarthenshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Coordinator is Isabel Macho;  
Email: [lmacho@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:lmacho@carmarthenshire.gov.uk)

**For more information, help, and advice please contact me:**  
**Rachel Carter - Local Places for Nature Officer: [rcarter@onevoicewales.wales](mailto:rcarter@onevoicewales.wales)**





## Appendix A

The entrance to the sensory garden at Meadow Street community garden in Treforest. A Local Places for Nature project started in 2022 by Pontypridd Town Council.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/cebSFCobBE9VuY9C9>



## Appendix B

The central planter/seating area of the Llandrindod Wells Sensory garden located in Temple gardens, Llandrindod Wells, Powys. A local Places for Nature project completed in 2021 by Llandrindod Wells Town Council.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/5b1En8hTukyHJYoC9>

