

B-LINES CASE STUDY

Stryd Y Brython, Ruthin, Denbighshire, Wales

Enhancing verges & public green spaces for pollinators by changing management



The site

Stryd Y Brython is a 0.1 hectare area of green space in a residential area of Ruthin, managed by Denbighshire County Council as part of a network of sites.

What happened

Funding to manage a network of small roadside sites in cities, towns and villages across Denbighshire was secured from the Local Nature Partnership's (LNP) Cymru ENRaW Project, through the Welsh Government's "Local Places for Nature" scheme. Stryd Y Brython is one of 129 sites covering around 28 hectare now being managed for wildlife.

Site survey

All of the project sites had their cutting regimes relaxed, giving plants the chance to flower. They were then surveyed monthly by Denbighshire County Council's biodiversity team throughout the growing season (March/April - August) for a full year before making a decision on whether or not the site might benefit from wildflower enhancement. This decision was based on the number and type of wildflower and grass species recorded as cutting was relaxed.



Plas Lorna, Rhuddlan © Joel Walley

Consultation and community engagement

Feedback from local people was passed to the biodiversity team by local councillors. A Council communications team produced monthly press releases and regular social media posts to keep local residents informed of the grassland work taking place. Any planned changes in management, such as grassy areas left longer to encourage wildflowers, were explained to local people along with the biodiversity benefits.

The biodiversity team ran wildflower walks, wildflower identification training, plug planting and seed collection days, propagation training, and work sessions at the tree nursery for anyone keen to know more or get involved.

What was done?

The Stryd Y Brython site became more flower-rich simply with reduced cutting, so no plug plants or seed were needed. Other sites with low wildflower diversity have been improved using locally harvested seed grown on to plug plants at the Council's local provenance tree nursery. This includes Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) seed on some sites - a hemi-parasite of some grasses and other plants, reducing their growth and giving more opportunities for wildflowers to thrive.



Wildflowers and Red-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*) at Stryd Y Brython © Liam Blazey

BEFORE



2020 (year one) looking down the slope © Liam Blazey

Before changes in management

All sites were previously managed under a standard amenity grassland management regime. Cutting was on a two week rotation, with the arisings left in place.

Flower abundance was recorded as '**low**' in year 1, with the following list of species recorded on site:

- Dandelion agg.
- Yarrow
- Ribwort Plantain
- Daisy
- Cuckoo Flower
- Meadow Buttercup
- Germander Speedwell
- Slender Speedwell
- Common Knapweed
- Greater Plantain
- Common Mouse-ear
- Common Chickweed
- Cat's-ear

AFTER



2021 (year two) looking up the slope © Liam Blazey

After changes in management

All sites are now managed following a traditional hay meadow regime. This involves cut and collect in late February/early March, with arisings removed from site to lower nutrient levels and favour wildflower growth. Plants are then left to flower over the growing season before a second cut and collect in August/September. The council has now committed to delivering this management in perpetuity.

In summer 2023 the site was recorded as having a '**moderate**' abundance of wildflowers. The following list of species was recorded but more are considered likely to be recorded with greater survey effort:

- Cat's-ear
- Common Spotted Orchid
- Germander Speedwell
- Yarrow
- Common Knapweed
- Creeping Buttercup
- Meadow Buttercup
- Green Field-speedwell
- Ribwort Plantain
- Daffodil (non-native)
- Dandelion agg.
- Oxeye Daisy
- White Clover
- Red Clover
- Black Medick
- Hairy Sedge
- Common Chickweed
- Common Mouse-ear
- Cleavers
- Red Dead-nettle
- Wild Carrot
- Ivy-leaved Speedwell
- Common Ragwort
- Vetch sp.
- Daisy
- Slender Speedwell
- Lesser Celandine

x2

ALMOST DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF WILDFLOWER SPECIES WERE RECORDED AFTER TWO YEARS OF RELAXED CUTTING.





“ A fifth of all priority species for conservation in the UK are associated with grassland habitats. ”

Colletes bee on Daisy © Liam Olds

Ongoing management

Stryd Y Brython was cut using a TracMaster BCS 630W Bank Commander with scythe, rake, and mini baler in its first year, but is now cut using an Iseki SF450 cut and collect mower. Cuttings are removed and disposed of with the Council's green waste. A 1 metre border immediately along the roadside is cut every two weeks to aid visibility for drivers and to show residents that the area is being managed. Sites are also litter picked and checked for dog fouling.

Each year, as project sites are cut in the spring and later summer with arisings removed, the soil fertility will gradually decrease, resulting in grasses being less dominant and wildflowers finding more space to flourish. Species-poor sites that start to show a reduction in soil nutrient levels will be enhanced with plug plants and/or seed. The lower nutrient levels will help to ensure that plug plants and/or seedlings are not suppressed by vigorous grass growth the following season.

All sites are monitored annually, recording plant species present and noting other interesting wildlife sightings. Any orchids, or other plants or animals of interest recorded are shared on social media with the local community, encouraging pride in these diverse, public green spaces.

All project sites have been added to the B-Lines map as they contribute to increasing the connectivity of flower-rich habitat across the UK, allowing pollinators and other wildlife to move through towns and the countryside.

Benefits from management change

Biodiversity

Wildflower-rich grasslands are one of our most important and biodiverse habitats in the UK. Species-rich grasslands can support a huge range of wildlife including wildflowers, fungi, invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals

and birds. A fifth of all priority species for conservation in the UK are associated with grassland habitats. Creating and managing native wildflower-rich grasslands on B-Lines is contributing to a UK-wide network of connected habitats, allowing species to move across landscapes.

Wellbeing

Changing management to allow wildflowers to grow tall, flower and set seed, provides more food for insects and birds and increases wildlife for local residents to enjoy. These wildlife-rich green spaces are easily accessible to local residents, including those with limited mobility or opportunity to travel to more rural areas. Access to green space is linked with cognitive benefits and improved mental and physical wellbeing. Evidence has shown that looking at a wildflower meadow for just six seconds can lower your blood pressure and make you feel happier - find out more [here](#). Walking in nature, including grasslands, no matter how big or small can improve mental health by reducing stress, anxiety and depression as well as reducing risk of physical illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases.

Ecosystem services

Green spaces with long grass and flowers have an increased capacity to capture rainwater in flood events, reducing run-off and flooding on hard surfaces like roads and footpaths. In drought conditions, these green spaces also retain more water than short mown grassland, helping to support healthy urban trees and keep the 'green' in green spaces. This project is also investigating if urban green spaces help to offset the heatsink effect of concrete within built up areas.

Lessons learnt

- 1 **Working closely with the Council Communication Team helped to share the project's message and ambitions.**
- 2 **Keeping local councillors and communities informed and getting them on board has helped to overcome local obstacles and opposition to changes in their local green space.**
- 3 **It is important to ensure that all wildflower work uses seed and plants of local provenance to the county.**

