

Biodiversity plan 2022



Gilfach Goch is a rural village with farms, forestry, streams and the Ogwr Fach river, as well as an abundance of green spaces. Wildlife and fauna thrive here. There is an abundance of biodiversity within the area which we seek to protect and develop.

The present

Gilfach Goch Community Council manages the land at the Holly Street Allotment.

Gilfach Goch Community Association has two large areas at the allotment and the community council works closely with it on its projects. Work done so far include the construction of two raised beds and a second polytunnel. Various planting is underway inside and outside the polytunnels. There are wildflower meadows, fruit tree planting and growing of willow to make willow hedges and domes. Compost bins have been erected, and wildlife-friendly plants and shrubs are encouraged.

Plans

The community council has been successful with an application to Keep Wales Tidy for a community orchard, which includes 12 trees and 320 bulbs. The area earmarked for this is the old disused railway line that runs along the bottom of Holly and Llewellyn Street.

The project will provide the following:

- 12 fruit trees including stakes, guards etc
- 320 native bulbs
- Two bug boxes and two hedgehog boxes
- Two recycled plastic benches.

The location and spacing of the trees will be such that biodiversity of insects, birds, other trees and fauna will be encouraged and not harmed.

Another community orchard is to be installed at the Holly Street allotments under the stewardship of the Gilfach Goch Community Association, which is separate to the community council. They will

be looking at a full programme of growing in the coming months to utilise the two polytunnels and raised beds and have wood in place to construct three or four raised beds.

The Japanese knotweed at the allotment is being treated to prevent its spread.

Wildlife

One resident in the village has owl boxes. We are seeing an increase in the bird population, especially kites and buzzards although we are discouraged from feeding these birds. A community councillor is a member of the British Hedgehog Preservation Society, and when walking checks that cattle grids have hedgehog escape ramps in place.

There are otters in the Ogwr Fach river. Foxes, rabbits, hares and other small mammals have made a home in Gilfach Goch.

The waterways are home to frogs, newts and countless insects, as well as plants such as Canadian pondweed. A heron is regularly seen.

The future

The community council is working towards further actions within the next three years which are aimed at a wider range of activities to protect, enhance and create the habitats required to ensure biodiversity within the village:

- The community council will be applying for nature packs via Keep Wales Tidy.
- A working group has been set up to advance plans for emissions-free hydropower in the village. It will necessarily respect and encourage biodiversity and wildlife and help take our small village towards net zero and electrification.
- A wildlife pond will be considered at Holly Street allotments.
- The village will be encouraged to set up a wildlife and biodiversity group.

The planned works at the allotment for 2023 are to clear an area and make good for six plots. The work will take place before the end of February 2023 to protect the birds and dormice during their breeding season.

A part-time groundsperson will be employed, primarily at the allotment. They will be tasked with encouraging biodiversity. For example:

- Create brush piles for insect and wildlife habitat.
- Create log piles for insect and wildlife habitat.
- Put up bat boxes high in the trees.
- Put up bird boxes in trees.
- Attach small bird boxes around the site.

Gilfach Goch Community Council works closely with Miskin Tree Services. They regularly work alongside qualified ecologists and have a keen interest in protecting the environment. They:

- Only use biodegradable chain oils and splash trays.
- Check all trees splits, twists, cavities for bats before working on them.

- Check for nests.
- Check the ground for wildlife – aquatic, dormice, bumblebees etc. around the drop zone before work.

Opportunities

Many Gilfach Goch residents are keen naturalists. During the pandemic, walking the footpaths around the area was a popular pastime. Many people expressed an interest in walking all the mapped footpaths. There was talk of footpaths being undesignated if not actively used but we understand that proposal has been withdrawn by the Welsh Government. However, walking interest remains.

An organised walking group or – more likely – individual walkers could be asked to report on biodiversity issues which the community or county borough council could address.

Biodiversity projects could be encouraged and developed in the village schools and with community organisations such as the Scouts group. For example, bird boxes and nature corners. One school in the village has undertaken forest-based learning activities.