



COITY HIGHER COMMUNITY COUNCIL

TREE POLICY

A POLICY FOR THE TREATMENT OF TREES AND HEDGEROWS WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S AREA

(Adopted October 2019)

Introduction:

It is widely known that most large species of mammals endemic to the United Kingdom became extinct in their natural habitat centuries ago. However, since the latter part of the last century and into this century it has become obvious that many of our smaller species of mammal, amphibian and reptile are under critical risk of extinction also. There may be many reasons for this. However, it is believed that habitat loss is the most significant. Less is known about many entomological species but since they are an important part of the food chain for many mammal species and birds site protections must also be considered for them.

The UK has perhaps the widest variety of habitats of anywhere in the world and many species have adapted to particular types of habitat. However, since most habitats do not occur within Coity Higher Community Council's area it would not be reasonable to consider them for this policy. Apart from noting that parts of Coity Anglia and Coity Wallia Commons fall within the council boundaries.

This policy will therefore restrict itself to trees and bushes. That is to say plant growth of a woody nature, two metres or more in height from ground to crown and with an expected natural life of fifteen years or more. Standing deadwood is an important habitat - stated lifespan excludes this.

Why Do We Need A Policy?

As previously mentioned, many species of mammal and birds, insects, mosses, lichens, bryophytes rely on tree growth for their existence. Also, trees are very important to atmospheric control, and general well-being of human inhabitants. Trees remove airborne pollutants, slow down water movements and lock up carbon which is known to contribute to global warming. Climate resilience - shade, soil stabilisation. Assets - improve property values and contribute to the desirability of a locality.

Both Pendre and Litchard are densely urbanised and whilst there are trees and bushes within the wards their value to surviving mammals would not be high. However, that is not to say they have no value. Many small birds use urban hedges for nesting and the planting of berry producing trees and bushes contribute a lot to overwintering survival of many species.

Until the millennium Coity was mostly rural with many field hedgerows which are the most important habitat for many of our mammals. Providing predator safety, shelter from weather, food, nest sites, corridors for gene diversification and escape from predators, disease and food shortages. Recent housing development has destroyed many of these hedgerows many of which were very old.

Where would the Community Council need to consider its tree policy in decision making?

There are three main areas of concern for the Community Council in order of priority.

1.

The first is land which is owned by the community council, which means the community council has added responsibilities. At present only two parcels of land are in the ownership of the council although it is possible this may increase in the future.

The Coity Playing field has no tree or bush growth. However, the community council allotment gardens are bordered on two sides by a mixed hedgerow. It is interspersed with mature standard trees. There are tree preservation orders in place at the site. Allotment tenants are not allowed by terms of their agreement with the community council to interfere with this hedgerow.

2.

The second priority is where the community council is a statutory consultee on all planning matters within its area. Planning applications are often received from existing dwellings or businesses where a tree has become overgrown. Typically, the application will be either to carry out crown management, ie to reduce its height or spread, or to remove the tree.

The community council should consider such applications very carefully, firstly checking to see if they are subject to a tree preservation order or are in a conservation area.

Crown management of a tree whether diseased or healthy can be good for the tree, removing growth, which is diseased, impeding air flow or even taking light from other nearby trees. Pollarding done correctly can extend the life of the tree and should only be carried out under the direction of a qualified person and in line with BS3998:2010. Removal of a tree is far more significant.

Housing developers are known to plant trees which are entirely unsuitable for urban gardens. If the community council accepts that removal is the only option, it should advise that a replacement tree of lesser stature is planted in its place. Plant more than one to account for losses. Preferably a tree which will produce berries for mammals such as a rowan. Planting of trees to create climate resilience in the canopy cover is also important as well as native/food source species.

The other planning application that the community council must consider is new housing. Typically, recently this has been large estate type development. If this is a green field development the community council must consider insisting upon existing trees and trees and hedgerows being retained and built into the site planning. If a hedgerow connects with open countryside, then the community council must insist upon its retention in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, Hedgerow Regs 1997 and “BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.

3.

The third area of concern which the community council may consider are areas of land with no acknowledged owner. It is most likely that very little is known about the potential environmental value of these pieces of land. With no surveys available of mammal populations or diversity, or entomological surveys. The community council must consider the need and the cost of surveys before intervening on this type of site.

Notwithstanding any of the forgoing which seeks to protect trees and hedgerows in the community council's wards, there will be times when there will be material arising from management of trees and bushes. Unless suffering from disease green material may either be composted or chipped and either spread on site or transferred via a carrier with registered waste transfer license from Natural Resources Wales. If not diseased larger material such as mature boughs, branches and trunks should be cut into manageable lengths of about 2 metres and piled on a part of the site where they may naturally decay. Such piles may provide protection to small mammals, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates as well as encouraging growth of fungi and mosses. If material is diseased then appropriate guidance must be sought before its disposal.

This policy should be reviewed annually.