

Biodiversity report Menai Bridge Town Council 2025

By Femke van Gent, Terry Thomas and Wendy Faulkner

1 Introduction

In this report we provide a context within which biodiversity exists in our community. We describe the elements of the wildlife and habitat which can be found in the town of Menai Bridge. Finally we describe the measures which council employees pursue in order to protect both marine and terrestrial ecologies which underpin the biodiversity itself.

The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 requires public bodies to both protect and enhance the biodiversity which exists within their various jurisdictions. This is becoming especially important as we progress through period of climate change. Section two of our report provides the geographic, topographic and climatic context within which biodiversity in our community exists.

2. Location and History

Menai Bridge is a small town based on the Isle of Anglesey along the Menai Strait. It has a population of 3076 inhabitants (2024) who live within an area of 3.5 square kilometres. The annual populations is relatively stable with little growth. The age distribution within the community is fairly evenly distributed. Its salient to remember at the outset that this community is young. It owes its existence to the Menai Suspension Bridge in 1826 and since that time though considerable expansion took place post world war II in the form of social housing. The past 30 years has seen relatively little growth. It is fair to say that there are no pressures on biodiversity arising from housing.

A narrow stretch of sea that creates the border to the neighbouring council, Gwynedd. There is access to the mainland by the iconic Menai Bridge built by Thomas Telford in 1826. The Town Council's owns different woodlands, bowling green and one of the cemeteries.

3. Habitats

In this report we will look at these different habitats occurring in Menai Bridge:

- a. coastline habitat
- b. woodland
- c. green urban spaces
- d. cemeteries

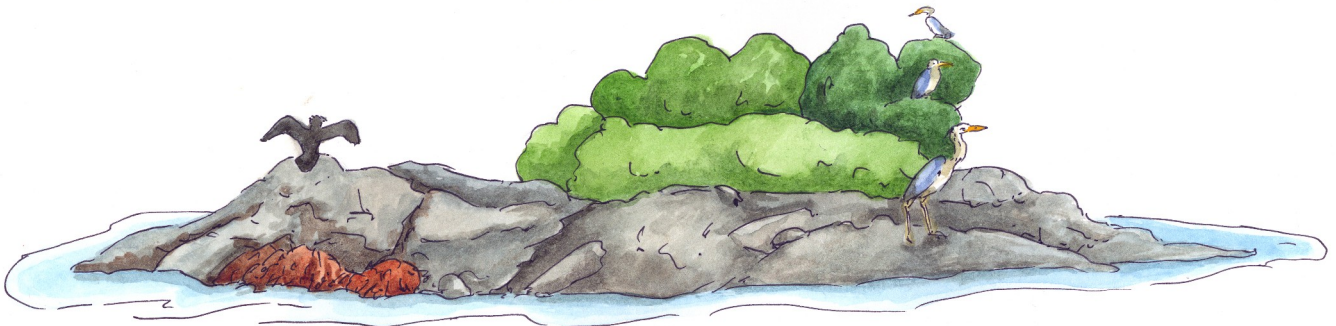
a. Coastline habitat

The east side of Menai Bridge Town Council is edging on the Menai Strait. This is a tidal zone with a difference of around 7 meter between high and low tide.

The Menai Strait has a wide variety of habitat types and is home to over 1,400 recorded species of plants and animals. The marine habitat forms part of the Menai Strait and Conwy Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is a designation which enables the protection of special habitat types and species (excluding birds) which are considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level.

The combination of strong currents in the Strait along with other environmental factors has led to the development of several rare features and unusual animal associations.

The variety of rock types and their complex formations present throughout the SAC provide many different types of substrate for colonisation by different species of marine plants and animals.



b. Coed Cyrnol (including woods around stone circle and along the football field)

Coed Cyrnol is significant ecological asset in our community and in 2025 Menai Bridge Town Council has commissioned a 5 year Management Plan for the woodland. Recognising its ecological importance of enhancing biodiversity status within the community. The findings of the various surveys which underpin it and its recommendations are available on request. No previous records of



management plans for the woodland are available. Therefore, this document serves as the foundation for woodland management in Coed Cyrnol, which will be monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and amended every five years as management objectives are achieved. Coed Cyrnol falls within the coastal AONB. This is an area of mixed woodland and foreshore near the famous Menai suspension bridge. The tallest tree is a Scots pine measuring ~26m and 18 tree species were identified for the recent management plan. The woodland area and the Belgium Promenade along the shore, is a popular walk for local people. You often see red squirrels in the woods. There are great views of the Menai Strait and you are likely to see lots of birds.

Gwynedd Bat Group – A transect survey was conducted at dusk in May 2024, along with 2 static detectors that were fixed to trees and left in place to record for 10 days and found the following species of bats: Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle, Noctule, Myotis species and Brown long-eared.

Fungal Foray – A public fungus hunt was organised by Nigel Brown in November 2024. Members of the public hunted for different species in the woodland which were identified to provide a species list. In total 18 species were recorded which was less than expected, likely the result of an unusually early fruiting season to which the survey caught the tail end. The presence of mature beech, oak and Scots pine means Coed Cyrnol has the potential to host a large array of fungal species therefore this is the start of the species list.

Actions already taken by the Town Council:

- Squirrel & Bird boxes
- Wild flowers
- Bird feeders
- Natural habitat for wildlife
- Litterpicking undertaken daily to reduce pollution
- Regular tree survey's are carried out in all the woodlands
- Informative signs at Coed Cyrnol car park

c. Green urban spaces

A large part of Menai Bridge Town Council is covered with urban areas in the form of modern estate and old houses. The Marine Department of the university is also part of the town. There are a lot of gardens and green spaces within and between the urban areas like verges, bowling green, playground, roundabout by garage and private gardens.

There have been many sightings of slow worms in the area, in private gardens.

It would be interesting to know more about the hedgehogs in Menai Bridge.

We have to work with the landowners.

The Council staff maintain a good display of floral boxes and baskets making the urban environment capable of supporting a wide range of pollinating insects .

After a request from one of the residence the council have looked into creating allotments in Menai Bridge but unfortunately there is no suitable land available.

Actions already taken by the Town Council:

Bowling Green Park

- Bird boxes
- Compost bin
- Water butt to collect rain water
- Flower beds
- Pollinator plants
- No mow May
- Swift boxes
- Litterpicking undertaken daily to reduce pollution

Coed Marquis Woodland

- Wild flowers
- Natural habitat for wildlife
- Litterpicking undertaken daily to reduce pollution

King George V recreation ground

- The ground banks along Coed Marquis Woodland

Uxbridge Square

- Bedding plants to introduce new pollinators bought locally from Hawthorn Yard, Menai Bridge

Cerrig yr Orsedd / Standing Stones site

- North Wales Wildlife Trust – working in the area where rare flowers have been identified
- Interpretation Board erected

Belgian Promenade / Carreg yr Halen

- Wild flowers
- Planting on Belgian Promenade

Swiftboxes

North Wales Wild Life Trust is the initiator of the Swift project in this area and this information comes from Ben Stammers.

As part of the Urban spaces we like to address the Swift boxes that have been placed around Menai Bridge. The first 4 swift boxes in MB went up on Craig Mair in 2015.

None occupied for a few years, then one pair swifts in 2018, followed by another, after which we expanded the no. of boxes at CM, and also installed them at Ysgol David Hughes, the Scout Hut, and various private houses in e.g. Well St By 2025, we had 18 boxes used by swifts on Craig Mair (which makes it the most successful swiftbox site known of in Wales), with one occupied on Westbury Mount, one on the Fish Lab, and at least 3, possibly 4 occupied boxes at Ysgol David Hughes. Also c.6 pairs swifts nesting in holes under eaves on Cadnant Terrace, and 1 or 2 at Fron Heulog. In the process of installing more boxes at Fron Heulog. Menai Bridge definitely a bit of a swift stronghold - despite 76% decline across Wales since 1995...

Since 2023, in partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Bangor University, we've been developing a new method for monitoring the feeding rate of swift chicks by the use of audio recording. A lot of this work has been focused on Craig Mair (School of Ocean Sciences) and Ysgol David Hughes, where we've also used nest cameras to check the method. We presented some of the findings from our work at the UK swift Conference in November 2025 and are due to give a presentation at the International Swift Conference in May 2026. This work is focused on exploring the link between availability of food and swift breeding success.



North Wales Wildlife Trust is always encouraging local people to record their swift sightings – especially nesting behaviour – we set up a special page on Cofnod, the local record centre for people to do this: [A Swift Recovery - Cofnod](#).

When we asked Ben Stammers about his hopes for the future he answers: 'I'm keen to put more up in MB now we seem to have an expanding population there using boxes. Opportunities when scaffolding is already up are best.' His dream is to install boxes on the underneath of the Menai Bridge itself. He did half-jokingly mention it to someone who works for Highways he was talking to and they didn't actually dismiss the idea...

d. Cemeteries

Cemeteries are great places for all sorts of species of lichen, wild flowers and nvertebrates. There are two different cemeteries in Menai Bridge:

- Church Island cemetery (St Mary's Church)
- Menai Bridge cemetery (Town Council)

The first one is owned by St Mary's Church and looked after by Friends of Church Island on their behalf. The second one is looked after by the council and the grass cutting is done by an external service provider.

The Friends of Church Island have launched a wildlife survey at the beginning of 2025, and are still working on it. They are mainly looked at flowers, but they are also doing a tree survey, which is about half-finished. They have been planting trees with a view to replacing the ash trees that are dying. They have planted oak, hornbeam, chestnut, walnut, Scots pine, yew as well as hawthorn, blackthorn, holly etc to supplement the hedges. They also have a specialist group looking at bryophytes (mosses and liverworts), as well as a group doing some surveys of the intertidal zone. Still to come, they intent to do a bird survey and they are on the look-out for an entomologist. They are aiming to find 1000 species on the small area of Church Island, including the section between the high and low tide.



Historic surveys have indicated that Ynys Tysilio is very biodiverse. Local biologist professor Nigel Brown continues to act as an honorary consultant for Friends of Church Island.

They have established a grass-cutting policy a few years ago now. They do three cuts (in June, September and November/December). The grass is cut, raked and collected for removal from the island. This is helping to promote the numbers and variety of wild flowers.

The Town Council Cemetery is a public facility for the burial of the dead and is managed by The Town Council with a view to maximising the biodiversity of the site in a manner which is consistent with an acceptable level of public access.

Actions Town council is already taking on the Menai Cemetery:

- Composting bins
- Squirrel / Bird boxes
- Plants to encourage pollinators
- Area for wildflowers

4 Invasive non native species

We address invasive species in the Town Council. There have been sightings of invasive species like Japanese knot weed and Himalayan balsam in Menai Bridge. These will be dealt with straight away to avoid spreading and threatening the habitat of native species.

More actions taken by Menai Bridge Town Council for the environment

- Menai Bridge Town Council arrange litter picking sessions in the town
- Replacement benches are made from recycled materials
- Dog policy signs – to raise awareness for owners to keep their dogs on a lead so as not to destroy wild flowers and scare wildlife away
- Encourage residents and visitors to pick up after their dogs to protect habitats
- Local contractors are used to reduce carbon footprint
- Battery operated machinery and tools used

Office / Council Chamber

- Limited heating and hot water in the Council Chamber needed
- Water butt to collect rain water
- Staff recycle paper and plastic. Staff take food home to recycle
- Town Council staff walk to work when practicular



5. Discussion

The biodiversity around Menai Bridge is high due to the mix of marine, woodland, and urban habitats. However, some habitats are under pressure from human activity and invasive species. Compared to other parts of Anglesey, Menai Bridge remains an important area for both wildlife and education, with opportunities for local conservation and public engagement.

Biodiversity education, biodiversity activities and biodiversity priority

Through education we can explain the benefits for biodiversity of implementation like wild flower areas or No Mow May to the general public. This will create more support and understanding for such measurements. It would be good if there was an initiative for a green group in town who could help with the upkeep and education of these areas.

In Town Council decisions its good to always think:
what are the consequences for the biodiversity related to this decision?

Small changes can make a difference and we can create that difference, together.



Credits:

Illustrations by Femke van Gent (Town Councillor and inhabitant of Menai Bridge)