

Biodiversity Survey and Conservation Management of Y Pinog and Alexandra Gardens, St Dogmaels



Carried out on behalf of St Dogmaels Community Council

by Steve Halton, Ecologist

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Introduction

In March 2024 Steve Halton (SH) was commissioned by St Dogmaels Community Council (SDCC) to a) carry out a botanical survey and assessment of two areas of land (Y Pinog and Alexandra Gardens) – both owned and managed by SDCC, and b) produce a report covering the species identified (mainly botanical) and to make recommendations for the future conservation management of the two areas. The last agreed outcome was for SH to lead a community walk/consultation to look at the two areas under consideration and to discuss the management options both areas as listed in this report – this has yet to be undertaken and will be carried out in spring 2025.

Y Pinog is owned and managed by SDCC and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and as a Village Green. The land is adjacent to the Afon Teifi which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). There are a variety of mosaics of interesting habitats including woodland, wet/marshy grasslands, dry grasslands, hedgerows and areas of saltmarsh vegetation. Y Pinog is approx. 1.4 acres (0.5ha) in size.

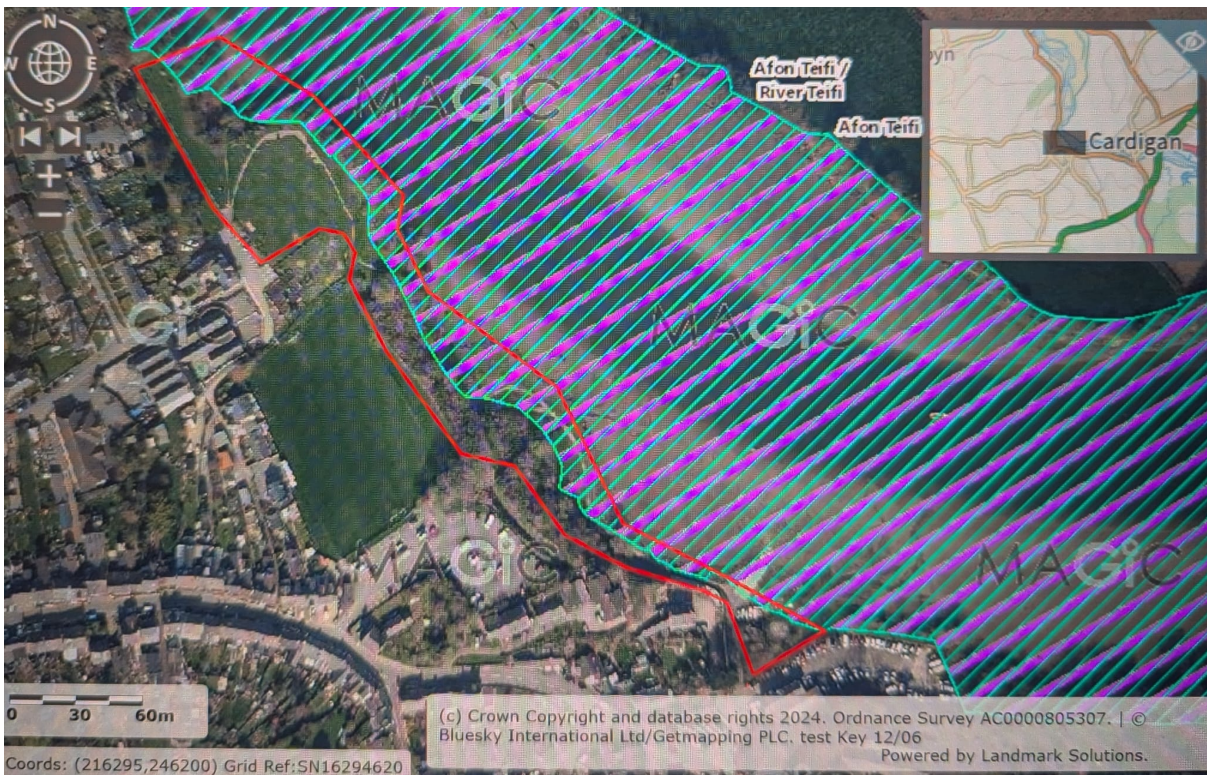


Y Pinog (approx. boundary)

Alexandra Gardens is owned and managed by SDCC and part (the river cliffs and oak wood) is designated as a SSSI. Much of the rest of the area is managed as amenity grassland but with areas of woodland, hedgerows and grassland mosaics around the edges. The area is approximately 1.9 acres (0.7ha).



Alexandra Gardens (approx. boundary)



Y Pinog and Alexandra Gardens (in red) showing SAC (purple hatch) and SSSI (green hatch).

Contacts

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Survey methods

Field surveys were carried out monthly (sometimes more frequently) from March to September 2024 via site visits to record vascular plants, birds, invertebrates and any other notable observations. National Vegetation Classification (NVC) were used as the UK-standard of recording habitat types present and standard nomenclature for identifying and naming species were used.

A transect-style route was used for both sites, walked at different times of the day to record as many species present as possible. Each visit took approximately 2 hours to complete.

Species recorded are listed in Appendices 1 and 2.



Yellow Flag Iris (Photo: M. Kendall)

Y Pinog

Habitats and species

Y Pinog comprises a diverse range of habitats in an estuarine/river setting. The site is linear and is low-lying, adjacent to the Afon Teifi and sloping gently upwards inland. The site is a SSSI and the adjacent Afon Teifi and surrounding areas are a part of the Afon Teifi SAC.

The NVC plant communities present consist of:

- W10 Oak – bracken – bramble woodland
- W21 Hawthorn – ivy scrub
- W22 Blackthorn – bramble scrub
- MG1 False oat-grass grassland
- MG11 Red fescue – creeping bent – silverweed grassland
- S4 Common reed swamp
- S25 Common reed – hemp agrimony tall herb fen

Such a variety of diverse habitats in a relatively small area is greatly beneficial to a range of species using the site and Y Pinog is currently managed by SDCC via a local contractor who carries out mainly path, and some specialist grassland cutting, to help improve the biodiversity, on a regular, specified regime from April to September (weather-dependent). The Pinog was identified as of biodiversity importance in a 3-year conservation pilot scheme by SDCC and is now managed with that objective very much in mind whilst allowing public access and consequent enjoyment of the site for quiet uses such as being outdoors in green spaces and the health benefits that brings.

As a result of the habitats present, the species diversity is rich and one of the aims of the conservation management is to maintain, and improve, mosaics and the area of the grasslands, meadows and the integral micro-habitats such as woodland and scrub edge, especially where it intergrades with grasslands and wetland habitats.

Of particular note are the diverse wildflower grasslands and scrub areas where vascular plants, butterflies, bees, beetles and other invertebrates occur – it is recommended that these areas should be prioritized for management, keeping them open and maintaining edge habitats such as areas of grassland and scrub grading into taller shrubs and woodland further back. Creating pockets of warm, sunny glades and clearings in scrub and trees are of real benefit to invertebrates, plants and birds.

Future management should prioritise maintaining the existing areas of wild flower grasslands whilst looking to enlarge these areas, wherever possible, through allowing mowing to relax/cease in places and, if necessary, through scarifying areas of soil and collecting and scattering local wildflower seeds on the bare ground created. Creating new areas of wildflower grasslands should also be considered in appropriate areas (ie; amongst existing, poorer quality grasslands or areas of light scrub etc.).

The construction of a small pond, as an additional valuable habitat for invertebrates and other species could also be given consideration.



Y Pinog grassland triangle with Red Campion, Greater Plantain, Meadow Buttercup and Wild Carrot (Photo: M Kendall).



Common Scurvy-grass alongside Afon Teifi (Photo: M Kendall)

Alexandra Gardens

Habitats and species

Alexandra Gardens comprises mainly areas of regularly cut amenity grassland and used for human activities such as playing, informal sports and picnics etc. in an inspiring and healthy setting. Around the edges of the mown grassland are more biodiversity-rich areas of oak woodland, scrub, grassland and other riverine-related habitats – this area is designated as a part of the Afon Teifi SSSI. The Blessing Stone and landing stage are also a part of this area and are also owned by SDCC; both are of historic importance and are a part of the SAC.

The NVC plant communities present consist of:

- W10 Oak – bracken – bramble woodland
- W21 Hawthorn – ivy scrub
- W22 Blackthorn – bramble scrub
- MG1 False oat-grass grassland

Due to its regularly mown grassland this area is slightly less rich in biodiversity but there are good mosaics of biodiversity-richer edge habitats such as woodland, scrub, hedgerow and longer grasslands and the valuable ecotones where these habitats intergrade and mix; opportunities should be taken to increase the variety and size of these areas wherever possible. Increasing and enlarging areas of wildflower grasslands and scrub would be really beneficial to plants, invertebrates and birds in the area.



View across Alexandra Gardens (Photo: S Halton)

Recommended Management: summary and thoughts

The biodiversity and species surveys (carried out in 2021 – 2022 and 2024) have shown that both Y Pinog and Alexandra Gardens (especially the first site) are rich in biodiversity for such small areas with a range of habitats and species present typical of the area. Both sites form part of a valuable corridor of wildlife habitats alongside the Afon Teifi and around the edge of St Dogmaels village linking the nearby coast and its associated habitats and landscape with areas further inland such as Cilgerran Marshes and the network of hedgerows and small woods between the two.

The current management regime is considered very appropriate at both sites (particularly at Y Pinog) and appears to be achieving valuable improvements in biodiversity and it is recommended that no real changes should be made to the management. There are one or two areas where small improvements could be carried out and these are listed below but, in general, what is being achieved is to be congratulated and approved.

Some overall suggestions, comments and recommendations are listed here:

Y Pinog

- Overall, the current management methods are working well so should continue in like manner in the future.
- Look to expand the current wildflower grassland areas, preferably by increasing the size of existing areas and/or creating a chain of (possibly smaller) pockets of flower-rich grasslands throughout the site. This may involve altering mowing/cutting arrangements as different areas become grasslands (as opposed to scrub). This may entail hand-clearing of small areas to create and maintain these areas.
- Consider creating small, sheltered, sunny clearings in woodland/trees/scrub so encouraging flowers and invertebrates to spread.
- Areas of fen/marsh/reed should be monitored to ensure they do not dry out or become too shaded by overhanging trees/scrub. This may need small machinery every few years to keep these areas open.
- A small pond could be considered which would increase biodiversity, although it would need discussion around management and safety issues but could bring additional benefits to the area and its wildlife.
- Pathways around the site are being well-managed so continue to maintain current mowing arrangements.
- Consider a volunteer 'Friends' group with the local community helping to look after the site, carry out occasional management work etc.
- Occasional walks around the area (maybe annually) to look at wildlife, any work being carried out and use as a consultation exercise with the community – SH is leading a walk for the community in Spring 2025 as a case in point.
- Ensure all species records collected are submitted to the appropriate recording schemes.

Alexandra Gardens

Although of a slightly lesser importance for biodiversity the area is still a link in the chain of landscape components as discussed above and although much of the site is mown amenity grassland the surrounding SSSI woodland and areas of hedgerow, scrub and grassland habitats are valuable for the biodiversity and distribution of species and habitats.

Again, the current management contracts are working well and the regular cutting of short grassland allows for a more community involvement with the space and for the possibility of family activities such as ball games and picnics whilst allowing for exploration of the 'wilder' areas around the perimeter of further along the river to Y Pinog so both sites do have a valuable connection to each other and wider afield. The importance of green spaces to both mental and physical health should not be understated.

The oak woodlands along the northern edge, alongside the river, are a component of the Afon Teifi SSSI and SAC and are managed by NRW. The trees are rich in biodiversity and form an important buffer and corridor of native woodlands in the area.

There are also areas of grassland, scrub and hedgerow around the edges of the mown area providing valuable habitats, cover and food for birds, small mammals and various invertebrates. Mixed mosaics of these areas are vital and should be retained and preferably allowed to spread/connect wherever possible.

There are a few areas where improvements to the habitats to benefit biodiversity could be carried out and these are listed below:

- Overall, the current management methods are working well so should continue like manner in the future.
- If possible, look to expand the current wildflower grassland areas, scrub and hedgerows preferably by increasing the size of existing areas and/or creating a chain of (possibly smaller) pockets of flower-rich grasslands throughout the site. This may involve altering mowing/cutting arrangements as different areas become grasslands (as opposed to scrub). This may entail hand-clearing of small areas to create and maintain these areas.
- Reconnect hedgerows, where possible, using native, local provenance species.
- Maintain current areas of grassland/scrub mosaics and keep clear of any over shading trees so keeping warm and sunny, flower-rich areas, including hedgerows.
- Pathways around the site are being well-managed so maintain current mowing arrangements and allowing access to historical features such as the Blessing Stone and the landing stage.
- As above, consider a volunteer 'Friends' group with the local community helping to look after the site, carry out occasional management work etc.
- As above, occasional walks around the area (annually) to look at wildlife, any work being carried out and use as a consultation exercise with the community – SH is leading a walk for the community in Spring 2025 as a case in point.
- Ensure all species records collected are submitted to the appropriate recording schemes.

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Cllr Mick Kendall for his vision and drive in looking after these areas and for his work on species recording and for arranging and overseeing the management of both Y Pinog and Alexandra Gardens.

Thanks also to Sue Davies (Clerk) St Dogmaels Community Council for her support.



Shelduck ducklings (Photo: M Kendall)

Appendix 1

Vascular plants

Annual Meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Apple	<i>Malus domestica</i> agg.
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Black Bryony	<i>Discorea communis</i>
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Broad-leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Broad-leaved Willowherb	<i>Epilobium montanum</i>
Bush Vetch	<i>Vicia sepium</i>
Cat's ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i> agg.
Chicory	<i>Cichorium intybus</i>
Cleavers/Goosegrass	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Clustered Dock	<i>Rumex conglomeratus</i>
Cocksfoot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Coltsfoot	<i>Tussilago farfara</i>
Comfrey	<i>Symphytum officinale</i>
Common Reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Common Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Common Orache	<i>Atriplex patula</i>
Common Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>
Common Scurvy-grass	<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>
Common Vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>
Cow Parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
Creeping Bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>
Creeping Thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Curled Dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>
Cut-leaved Cranesbill	<i>Geranium dissectum</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.
Dog Violet	<i>Viola riviniana</i>
Dogs Mercury	<i>Mecurialis perennis</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Dove's Foot Cranesbill	<i>Geranium molle</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Enchanters Nightshade	<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>
False Oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
Fat Hen	<i>Chenopodium album</i>
Field Bindweed	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>
Field Horsetail	<i>Equisetum arvense</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Great Willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>
Greater Knapweed	<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>

Greater Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Greater Stitchwort	<i>Stellaria holostea</i>
Groundsel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>
Hairy Tare	<i>Vicia hirsuta</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Hedge Bindweed	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>
Hedge Woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>
Hemlock Water Dropwort	<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>
Hemp Agrimony	<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>
Herb Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Kidney Vetch	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>
Ladies Smock/Cuckoo Flower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>
Lesser Celandine	<i>Ficaria verna</i>
Lesser Stitchwort	<i>Stellaria graminea</i>
Marsh Thistle	<i>Cirsium palustre</i>
Meadow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>
Meadow Cranesbill	<i>Geranium pratense</i>
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>
Norway Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>
Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Pennywort	<i>Centalla asiatica</i>
Pineapple-weed	<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>
Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
Red Campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Red Clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
Red Dead-nettle	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Red Valerian	<i>Valeriana rubra</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Rough Chervil	<i>Chaerophyllum temulum</i>
Rough Sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus asper</i>
Rosebay Willowherb	<i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>
Sea Aster	<i>Tripolium pannonicum</i>
Sessile Oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Scentless Mayweed	<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Silverweed	<i>Argentina anserina</i>
Smooth Meadow-grass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Smooth Sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsiumm vulgare</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Teasel	<i>Dispascus fullonum</i>
Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>
Tufted Vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Wild Arum	<i>Arum maculatum</i>
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>
Wild Clematis	<i>Clematis vitalba</i>

Wood Avens
Wych Elm
Yarrow
Yellow Flag
Yorkshire Fog

Geum urbanum
Ulmus glabra
Achillea millefolium
Iris pseudacorus
Holcus lanatus

Appendix 2

Birds

Cormorant
Little Egret
Grey Heron
Mute Swan
Greylag Goose
Canada Goose
Shelduck
Mallard
Red Kite
Sparrowhawk
Common Buzzard
Kestrel
Pheasant
Water Rail
Moorhen
Oystercatcher
Redshank
Lapwing
Common Curlew
Snipe
Black-headed Gull
Herring Gull
Woodpigeon
Collared Dove
Tawny Owl
Swift
House Martin
Swallow
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Sand Martin
Meadow Pipit
Pied Wagtail
Grey Wagtail
Wren
Dunnock
Robin
Blackbird
Song Thrush
Mistle Thrush
Sedge Warbler
Whitethroat
Garden Warbler
Lesser Whitethroat
Blackcap

Willow Warbler
Chiffchaff
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Coal Tit
Long-tailed Tit
Nuthatch
Starling
Jay
Magpie
Jackdaw
Carrion Crow
Rook
House Sparrow
Chaffinch
Goldfinch
Bullfinch
Linnet

Mammals (mainly signs)

Bank vole
Common Shrew
Mole
Otter
Woodmouse
Soprano Pipistrelle
Common Pipistrelle
Daubenton's Bat

Invertebrates

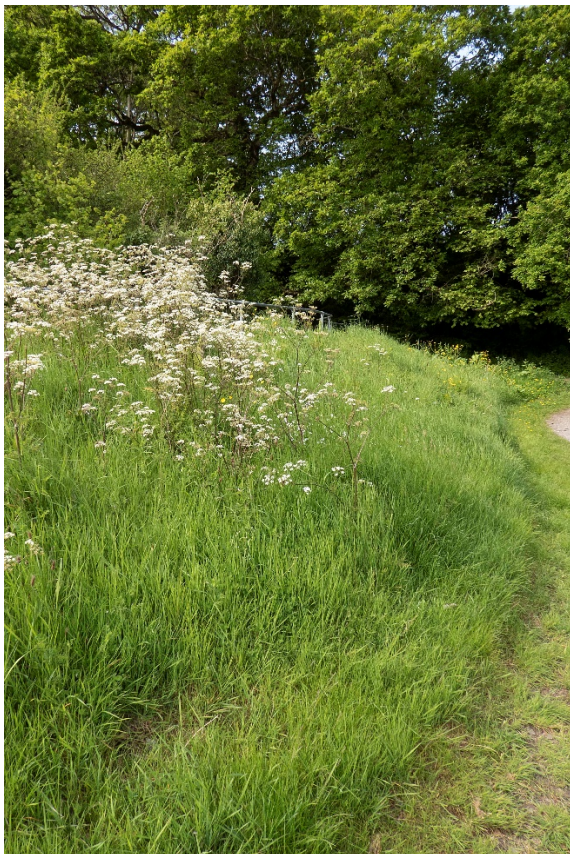
Comma	
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>
Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>
Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>
Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atlanta</i>
Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>
Violet Oil Beetle	<i>Meloe violaceus</i>
Common Cockchafer	<i>Melolontha melolontha</i>
Dark-edged Bee-fly	<i>Bombylius major</i>

Marmalade Hoverfly
Pellucid Hoverfly
Seven-spot Ladybird
Two-spot Ladybird
Common Red Soldier Beetle
Oak Bush Cricket
Common Field Grasshopper
Meadow Grasshopper
Hawthorn Shieldbug
Ivy Bee
Common Carder Bee
Buff-tailed Bumblebee
Early Bumblebee
Garden Bumblebee
Red-tailed Bumblebee

Episyrrhus balteatus
Volucella pellucens
Coccinella septempunctata
Adalia bipunctata
Rhagonycha fulva
Meconema thalassinum
Chorthippus brunneus
Chorthippus parallelus
Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale
Colletes hederæ
Bombus pascuorum
Bombus terrestris
Bombus pratorum
Bombus hortorum
Bombus lapidarius

Large Red Damselfly
Common Blue Damselfly
Southern Hawker
Golden-ringed Dragonfly
Broad-bodied Chaser

Pyrrhosoma nymphula
Enallagma cyathigerum
Aeshna cyanea
Cordulegaster boltonii
Libellula depressa



Y Pinog: Cow parsley on bank and mown path (Photo: M Kendall)

Appendix 3

Five-year Management tables

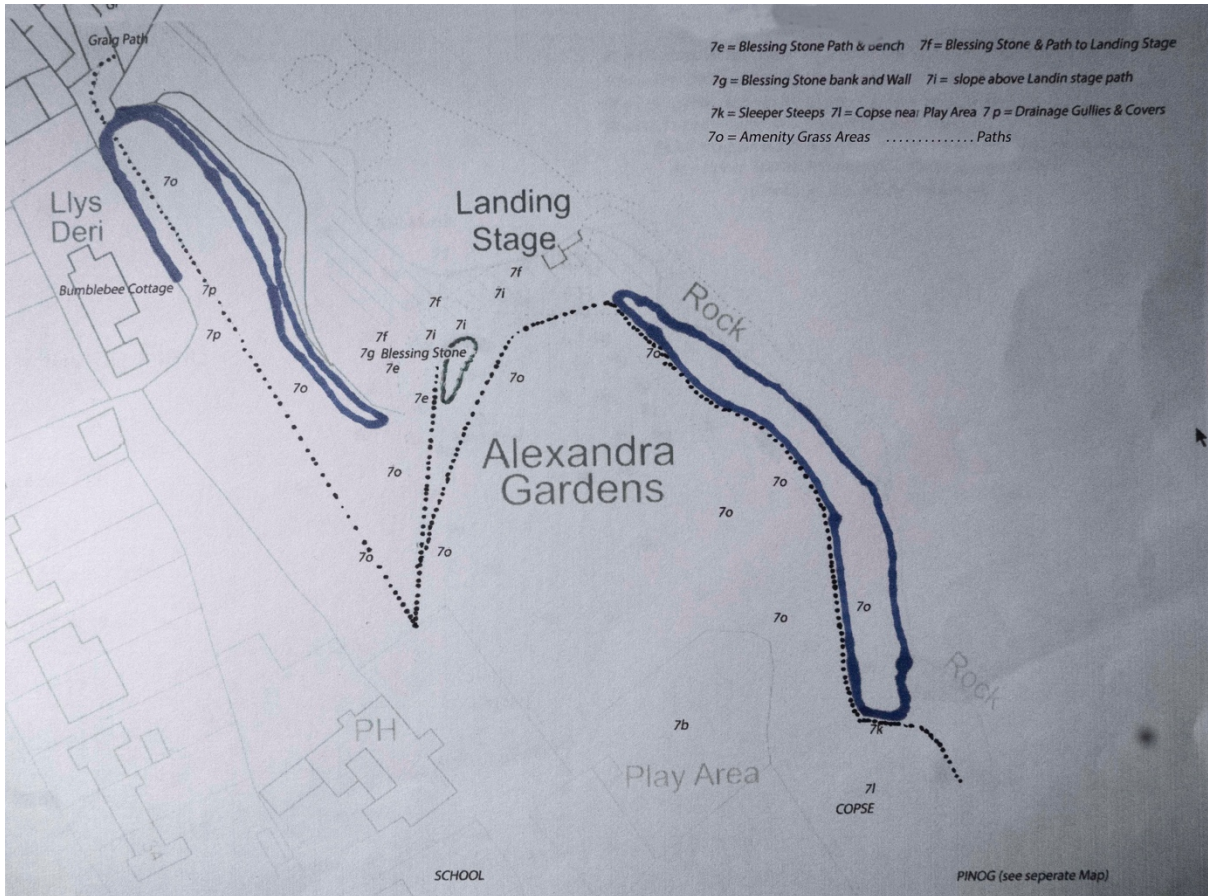
Y Pinog

Description of area (see Appendix 4)	Management	Timing	Five-year programme				
			2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
9b Lime kiln slope	Managed by SDCC.	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
9c Fisherman's path	Managed by SDCC.	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
9d Culvert outfall Grass Triangle	Managed by SDCC.	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
9f Pinog path slope	Managed by SDCC.	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
9g Pinog path	Managed by SDCC.	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
9gii Pinog ditches	Managed by SDCC.	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
9h Pinog Saltmarsh	Not currently managed.	Monitor but aim to keep as saltmarsh.					
9i Wildflower bank	Managed by SDCC. Investigate enlarging area where possible.	Not cut until Aug/Sept. Rake and remove arisings.					
9j Streamside wild triangle	Managed by SDCC.	Not cut until Aug/Sept. Rake and remove arisings.					
9k Pinog Lime Kiln wild area	Managed by SDCC. Reduce mowing of agreed areas. Scarify areas and scatter wildflower seed	As contract, maintain access and safety.					

	(collected from site).						
9l Pinog marsh	Managed by SDCC.	Monitor but aim to keep free of scrub/heavy shade.					
9r Pumping Station mound	Managed by SDCC. Removal of some bramble to encourage wildflower diversity. Could experiment with scarifying areas and introducing wildflower seed (collected from site).	As contract, maintain access and safety. Could try lessening cuts twice per year – late Mar and Aug.					
9s Pumping Station Copse	Managed by SDCC.	Non-intervention except where necessary for safety reasons.					
Other Wildflower grasslands/scrub (to be agreed).	To be managed by SDCC. Areas to be agreed. Reduce mowing of areas. Scarify areas and scatter wildflower seed (collected from site).	Mow only in Aug/Sept and remove arisings.					

Alexandra Gardens

Description of area (see Appendix 4)	Management	Timing	Five-year programme				
			2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
7a Amenity grassland	Cut by PCC	As contract					
7e Path edges to bench and Blessing Stone	Cut by SDCC	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
7f Clear paths to Blessing Stone and Jetty	Cut by SDCC	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
7g Bank around Blessing Stone	Cut by SDCC	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
7h Blessing Stone area	Cut by SDCC	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
7i Slope above path to Jetty	Cut by SDCC	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
7j Area below play area	Cut by SDCC	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
7k Sleeper steps	Cut by SDCC	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
7l Copse by play area	Cut by SDCC	As contract, maintain access and safety.					
Wildflower grasslands/scrub areas (blue line on Appendix 4 map)	To be managed by SDCC. Reduce mowing of agreed areas. Scarify areas and scatter wildflower seed (collected from site).	Mow only in Aug/Sept and remove arisings.					



Alexandra Gardens management and cutting map (M Kendall)
 Suggested wildflower grassland/scrub edge areas (blue line)