



ECY6005

REGAINING PARADISE:
SUSTAINABILITY IN
THE EARLY YEARS

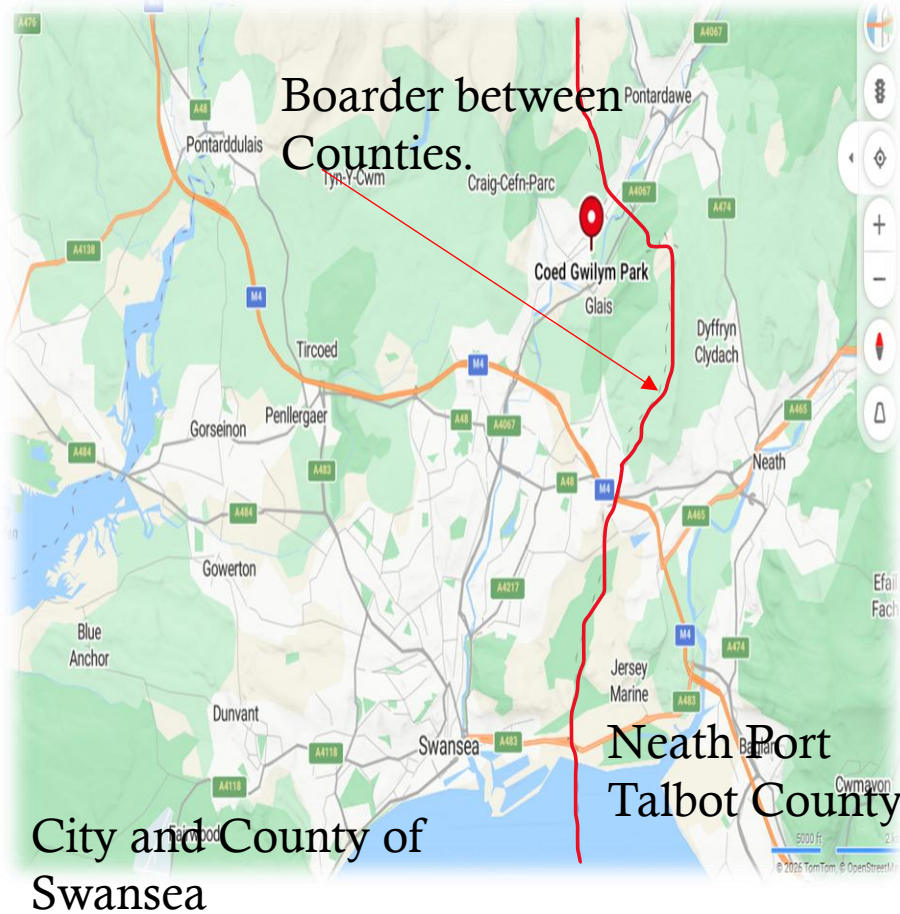
(STUDENT KELLY EVANS:2405851)

JOHN MUIR AWARD

DISCOVER

Coed Gwilym Park (featuring the Swansea Canal)

Views of Glais Mountain



Coed Gwilym Park is situated in the Clydach Valley on the border of City and County of Swansea, with the river Tawe running alongside it. The park includes many facilities to support families, sports enthusiasts and footpaths which are surrounded by natural beauty. Although Coed Gwilym park is part of the City and County of Swansea, it is managed by local volunteers and counselors, who are invested in maintaining, conserving and developing the land. The park has a newly developed inclusive play area and are currently building an additional one. It hosts a large sports field, tennis and football court, alongside a bowls green, BMX woodland track and offers opportunities for canoes and Kayak hire on the Swansea Canal, which runs adjacent to the park. The park also has a café and heritage Centre which is run by volunteers and is a huge part of the local community, hosting family and sporting events, alongside commemorating the local history and industry.

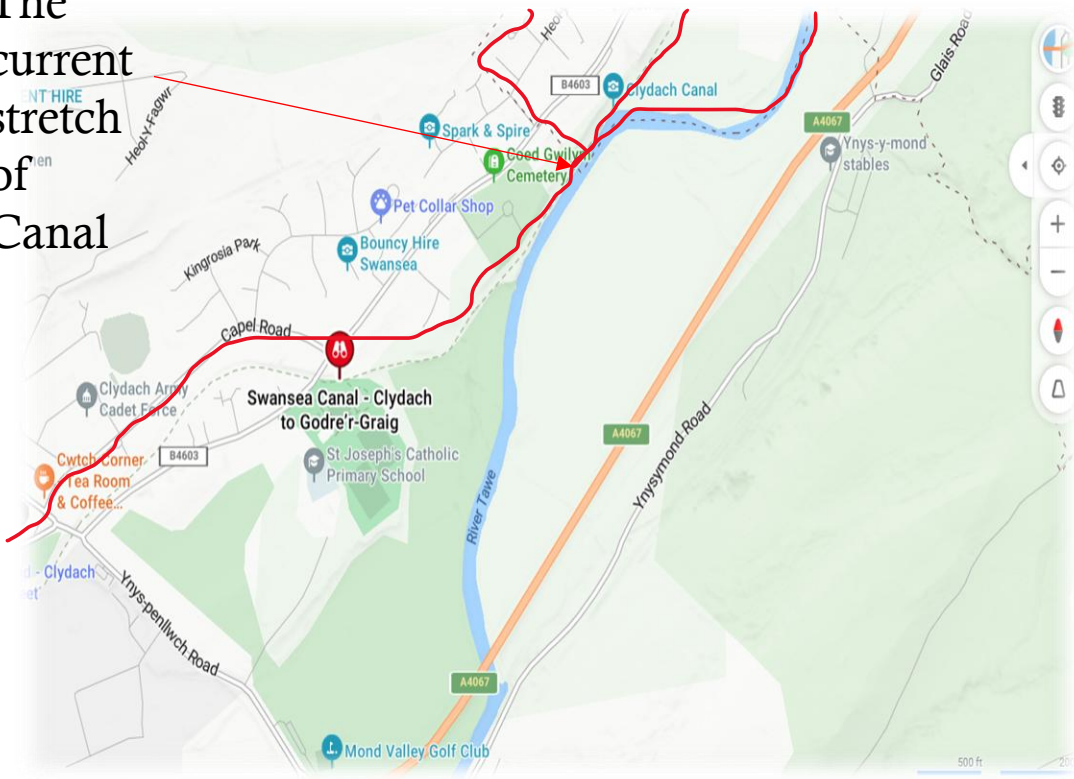
The River Tawe



History of the Swansea Canal

The Swansea Canal ran for over 16 miles and was once used to carry coal in barges down the canal via horses to Swansea. Swansea's copper industry, once known as the Copperopolis , was one of the top copper smelting industries of the world (Swansea Council 2026 and Canal & River Trust, 2026). This initially stopped in 1931, although only operated after this date for maintenance use, however Clydach continued to use horse-drawn boats until 1958 (Canal & River trust, 2026). Unfortunately, some parts of the canal was later infilled. However, projects by the Swansea Canal Society, hope to restore some of these sections soon. Today the canal is surrounded by nature, providing a variety of trees, plants and wildlife which have created habitats here..

The current stretch of Canal



Statue of a horse made from horseshoes to commemorate the history of the canal.

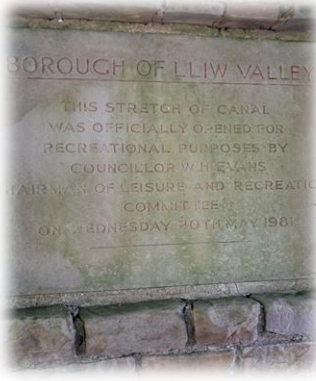


The Swansea Canal at Good Gwilym Park was constructed by the Swansea Navigation Company between 1794-98. The canal was 16 miles long and commenced at Swansea and terminated at Hen Neuadd Abercraf.



The canal was constructed to transport coal from the upper Swansea Valley to Swansea for export, or for use in the metallurgical industries in the lower Swansea Valley. The barges on the canal could carry up to 22 tons of cargo were drawn by a single horse and in 1888 almost 400,000 tons of coal was transported down the canal to Swansea. The canal was profitable until 1902 when losses were reported, this was due to the competition from its rival the Swansea Vale Railway. The last commercial cargo carried on the Swansea Canal was in 1931 when coal was conveyed from Clydach to Swansea. British Waterways are now responsible for the maintenance of the waterway and its structures and at present only 5 miles of the canal remains in water.

The parks local history is available to see on numerous signs and structures.





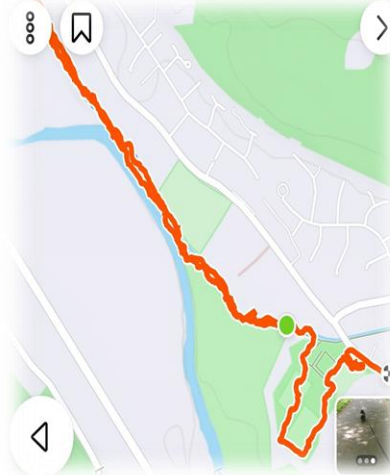
THE MEMORIES AND BEAUTY IT HAS TO OFFER.

I chose this area, as it was a place I used to take my niece and nephew to when they were younger. The park having something for everyone, would offer endless opportunities to keep them entertained, from playing sports, to exploring the play area, to then walking along the canal, we would spend hours here. Through the different seasons, there be different things see and do. Autumn we would collect leaves, acorns and conkers to create craft at home. Winter looking at the ice on the canal, making snowmen. To spring spotting buds beginning to bloom or ducklings in the hedges, to summer exploring the colours and insects. However, as the children got older these outing got less. Years later when my other niece was born, being able to relive and explore this area with her again, brought back all the memories and enjoyment, however with heightened interest. Now being older and appreciating the natural world more, I fully embrace sharing it with her, we spend less time in the man-made areas and more time exploring nature and wildlife. We talk about the many changes that have happened from when her brother and sister used to play here and the history to which I recently investigated. Alongside taking her, I have personally grown a love for this area, taking every opportunity to take a stroll along the canal, which always presents me with something new, whilst allowing me to take time out of my busy life and focus on the here and now.



Scan and discover the area with me.

Strava account of my walk.
(3.67 km)



Some of the things we used to collect, to use as craft and loose parts.



We seen a painted stone, then recreated some of our own to place within the area.



The 2 waymarked routes in Coed Gwilym park are:

yellow route 350 metres
(approx 10 min walk)

blue route 800 metres
(approx 25 min walk)

There are approx 1609m in a mile.
There are 1000m in a kilometre.

THE NEW ME!

As I walk this path alone,
I remember how it used to go.
Little feet running free,
Asking questions, curious as can be.
What's this? What's that? Where to? How's that?
A book of knowledge I had to read,
To answer the questioned aimed at me.
At that point I did not care, about what bird I heard ahead,
Or what species of fish we'd seen,
Or why a type of duck was there.
I'd name things for the children of course,
But with not much depth or much thought.
However, as they grew and spent less time with me,
I'd long for the questions to be asked to me.
I began to walk the path alone,
And hear the birds as I go.
This time I'd stop, to take note.
I'd spot the fish and ducks ahead,
This time I'd researched and knew why they were there.

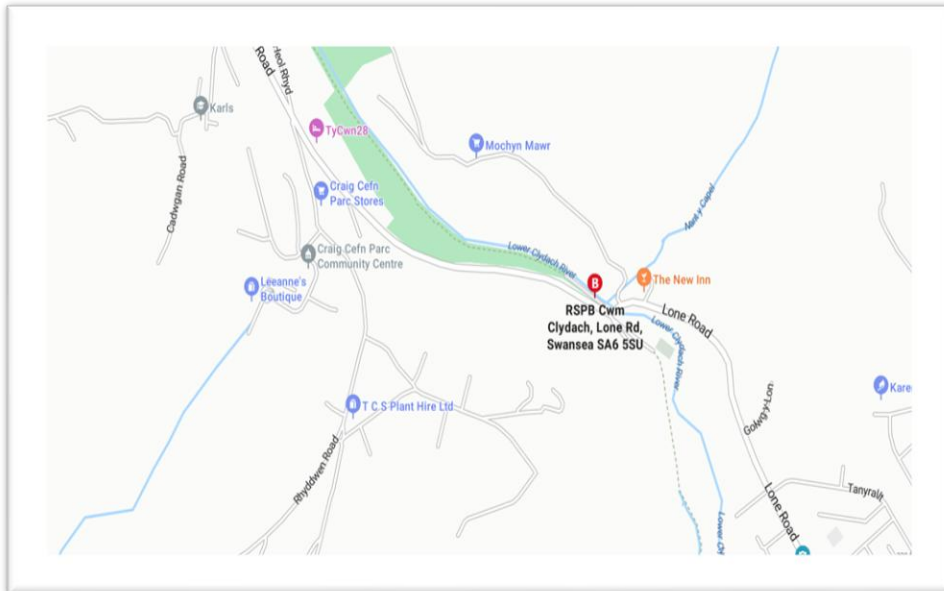


Here for breeding or stopping for a rest,
I had the answer but no one to tell.
This sudden interest grew within,
I began to invest and a new me would begin.
During the seasons, I walk the path,
Taking in the colours of the leaves as I passed.
I'd enjoy the bird calls or the squirrels racing ahead,
Stare into the water to spot the creatures on the canal bed.
I look for more places to view and explore,
Now my interest was to be more outdoors.
It brought me calm; it brought me peace.
It brought me more knowledge to give to my future niece.
Now I walk the path with little feet again,
This time I have the answers in my head.
Through this investment I know she will,
Grow up and learn about the world we live in.

SIMILAR WALKS WITHIN THE AREA

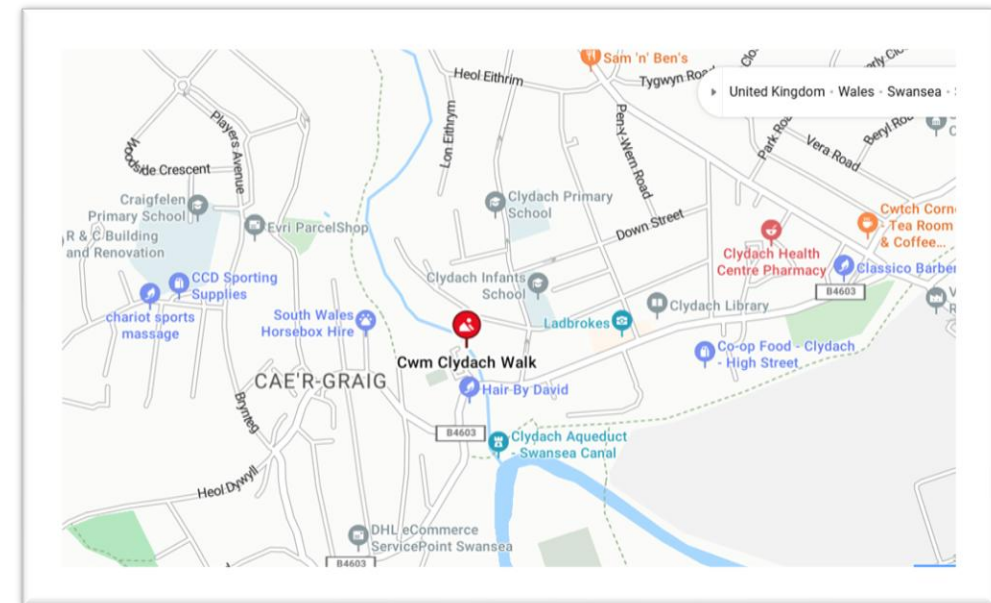
RSPB Cwm Clydach

A nature reserve set on the boarder of Clydach, comprises of two woodland trails, the shortest being 1.3 miles and the other being 2.9 miles both create a circular route with the Clydach River flowing through. This area is run by the Royal Society for the Protection of birds (here after RSPB).



Cwm Clydach

Cwm Clydach is a 9-mile circular walk, along the Clydach river, through woodland and views of Brecon Beacons, which also includes some archaeological sites (Swansea Bay, no-date).



What I saw..

Bluetit returning home to feed their young.



Squirrels jumping from tree to tree.

The shapes the shadows created through the trees.



EXPLORE

Whilst taking the walk around the park and along the canal, it was evident to see the vast number of areas to explore. The park is surrounded by a variety of trees, plants and an abundance of wildlife. Here are just a few things I spotted along my walk, using my senses, I took my time to study the textures, colours, shadows, movements, smells and sounds around me. Scan below and explore with me.



Different textures on the tree trunks, some smooth, some rough.

The different floor surfaces as I walked.

What I felt..



What I smelt...



The lavender plants

Due to the recent high temperatures, the canal had a certain odor to it.



What I heard..



The waterfall



Squirrels fighting.

Birds singing: Blackbirds, woodlark and Robins.



SOME OF THE DIFFERENT SPECIES OF TREES WITHIN THE AREA:



Horse chestnut



English Walnut



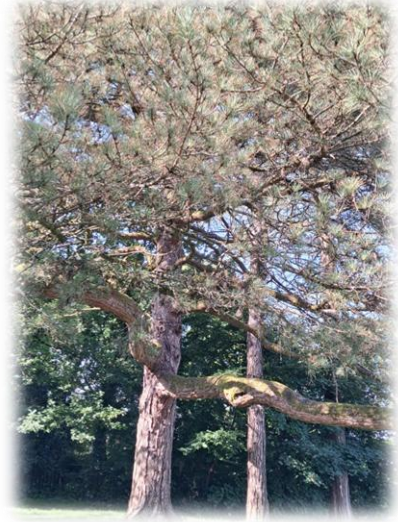
Sycamore



Giant Sequoia



Oak tree



Corsican Pine

The importance of trees within our world:

Absorbs
Carbon dioxide
and toxins
within the air.

Releases
Oxygen to
support the air
we breathe.

Trees help
reduce flooding
as their roots
absorb water.

Provide
habitats and
food for
wildlife.

Provides
natural shelter
from rain and
heat.

They provide a
visual indication
of seasonal
changes.



Foxglove



Lily



Hydrangea
macrophylla



White spathes



Macedonian
Scabious



Yellow
loosestrife



Great manna
grass

PLANTS

Here I explored some of the plants within the park, some had been planted by the volunteers and others grew naturally along the canal bank or within the woodland. Each plant plays a vital role in attracting wildlife, providing habitats for nesting, food, supports pollination and enables nature to thrive. Some plants can be used to make medicines, beauty treatments or food; however, some are also endangered or harmful for both humans and some animals, one example of this is the foxglove, which has toxins harmful to humans and animals.



Mado



Angelica
Japonica



One of the many Grey Squirrels, which are often seen within this area.



Mallards are just one species of duck that visit this area.



On this walk I spotted blue and red Dragon Flies.



file name: Fish



Water gliders, gliding across the top of the canal.



A song thrush is just one species of birds within the area.

Scan to see fish feeding on a plant which had fallen into the canal.



Although ants are common, I find myself immersed watching them as they work together.



Whilst walking along the canal, a blue butterfly flew and landed close by.



WILDLIFE AND INSECTS

Each of these species have created a home or visit this area to source food, rest or shelter. Each play a vital roll within our eco systems, through pollination, life cycles and food chains, supporting the regeneration of the environment.



file name: European Eel

An eel laying on the canal bed. Scan code to watch how it moves across the canal bed.

A host of caterpillars munching on the leaves of a small Oak tree. Scan below, listen closely, you can hear them biting through he leaves.

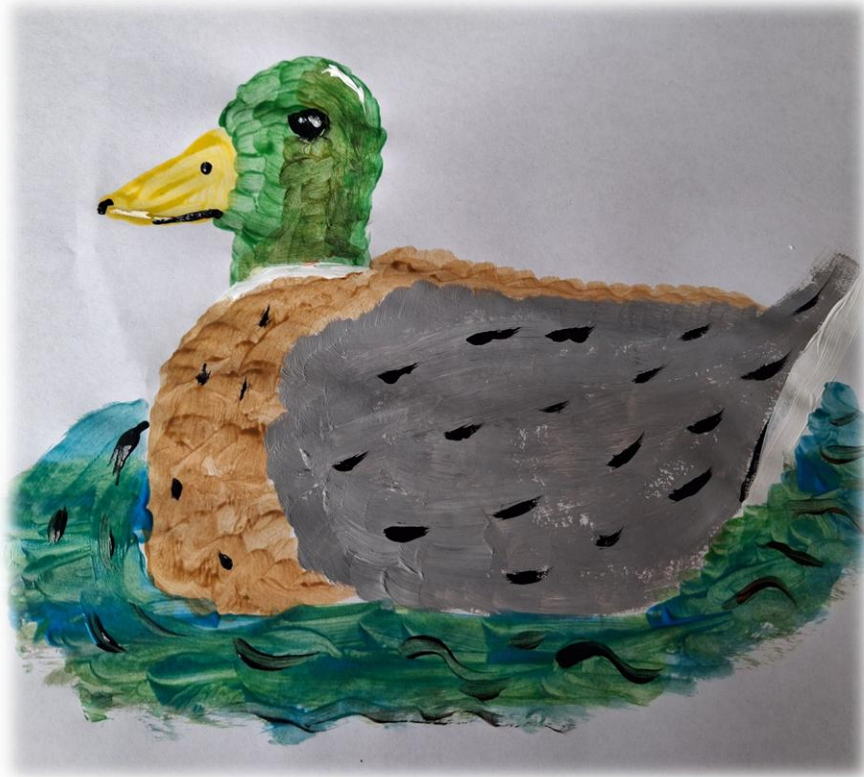


file name: caterpillars eating.mp3



Bumble bees surrounded the lavender plant near the flower bed. I discovered during a lecture that bees are drawn to purple flowers.

To paint the Mallard, I tried to use the brush strokes to resemble the feathers, mixing primary colours to create the tones I needed and highlighting the reflection on the water and from the sun.

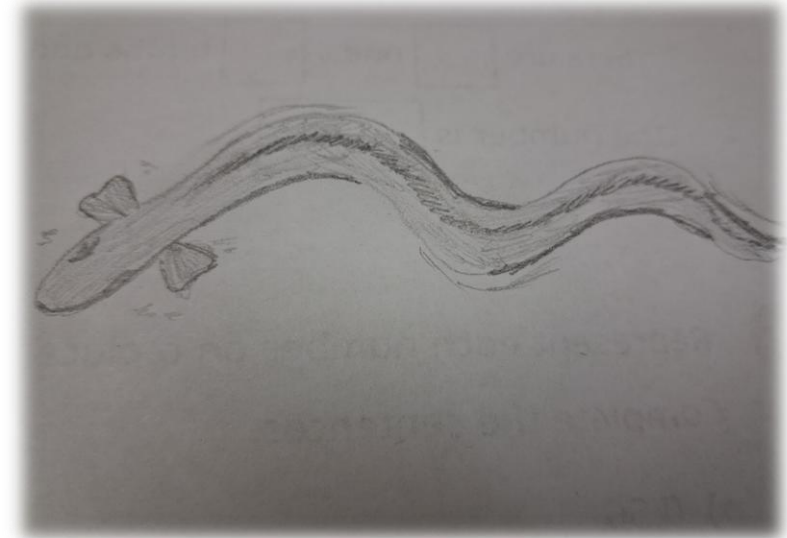


For the dragon fly, I used coloured pencils, blending the lighter and darker colours together, while emphasizing the striking blue on the top.

Using pencil and shading on the ell helped me to try and recreate the slither movement.

DRAWINGS

While exploring the area, I was able to see creatures up close. Through these drawings I wanted to use different media to try to resemble, some of the different textures, colours, shading and dimensions of the wildlife I had seen.



CONSERVE

For this scrapbook I took inspiration from the John Muir, project. John Muir was a conservationist born in Scotland, however moved to America with his family as a young child. John Muir passion looking for wild natural places to which he discovered, explored and protected. He believed in protecting these areas to conserve the wildlife and natural environments, as well as humans' wellbeing. John Muir released from an early age that everything in life is connected. Later this type of approach was made into the John Muir trust, inspiring people to discover an area of land, explore it and conserve it (John Muir Trust, no-date).



How the volunteers are currently trying to conserve the area.

Currently the volunteers and community try hard to conserve and maintain the area. They host days where volunteers can come along and work on gardening projects, canal clean up or maintenance, alongside litter picking. They have also set up social media sites to encourage and inform of events or opportunities for people who wish to join to help.

The park has recently planted many apple trees and bird houses around the park and along the canal, to enhance plant growth and wildlife.

However, the park is also in the process of updating a new play area, in a woodland section. The new play area, is set where the old one used to be, which is not taking any further ground space. The previous park was built around the natural growth of the trees, whilst it looks like they plan to conserve this and build around the trees, some trees have unfortunately been removed.



(Images from the John Muir trust, no-date).

What I have done to help conserve the area and within my own garden.



This is some of the litter I collected on my litter pick. I then took home to sort into recycling. I also hope to volunteer down there when I have some spare time.



The litter I spotted on my walk.



Planting my own vegetables.



Some cucumbers and tomatoes plants.



Planting more flowers, especially purple ones to attract more bees and insects.





At work I discussed what I had been working on with both colleagues and children. Whilst trees were already being planted, the children then created a bug hotel at the top of our school field, while colleagues asked the grass cutters to leave a patch to grow naturally.

Share

I shared my scrapbook with my family, who enjoyed looking at all the different things I had explored and discovered on my walk. They were eager to try and implement some of the ideas to conserve within their own gardens, making plans to plant more flowers, as well as leaving areas to grow naturally, while my niece wants to build a bug hotel to attract insects.

