

BACKING NEWPORT: City has stunning parks and gardens

SANDWICHED between the rolling hills and mountains of the south Wales valleys and the shimmering beauty of the Severn Estuary, Newport fortunately finds itself surrounded by wonderful landscapes and scenery.

As the city grows and develops into a burgeoning hub for business and retail, Newport's green spaces – its parks and gardens – become ever-more important.

From the [M4](#), the luscious patches of green are visible and showcase a different side to Newport such as Tredegar House and Tredegar Park at junction 28 and Glebelands Park at 25A.

In some of the city's more central parks, stunning architecture and quality landscaping helps to provide a view of the past in modern Newport, while also offering a welcome respite at lunchbreaks and weekends.

Elsewhere, leisure and sporting facilities across different activities help cater to athletes of all abilities, promoting an active lifestyle to residents across Newport.

The city's three largest parks – Beechwood, Belle Vue and Tredegar – are arguably its most famous, as are Tredegar House and the Newport Wetlands Centre.

As an entity, Newport's parks have won the Wales in Bloom city class competition on five separate occasions, although it has not entered the event since 2010.

In that period, Newport parks have won other awards promoting their high calibre.

Going back into the city's history, Tredegar House, which is managed by the National Trust, is another one of Newport's premier parks.

Close to Tredegar Park, which contains a menagerie of facilities from mini golf, skate park and pitches for football and rugby, the house is one of the country's best examples of a Charles II mansion.

With purported links to Sir Henry Morgan, the privateer and inspiration for Captain Morgan rum, the site hosted the 2004 National Eisteddfod, the most recent event held in Newport.

With 90 acres of beautiful gardens as well as the ornate buildings at Tredegar House, the site has become the epicentre of one of Newport's biggest weekend social and athletic events.

Since 2011, Tredegar House has hosted the Newport parkrun, which in its five years has become one of the biggest free running events in Wales every Saturday morning.

Mixing the splendour of the surroundings and the opportunity for activity, a junior parkrun, aimed at children and young people aged four to 14, started in 2014 on Sundays.

"As well as Tredegar House, we also have award winning parks which are a haven of peace for young and old alike to enjoy," said Cllr Deb Harvey, the cabinet member for culture, leisure and sport.

As one of the city's oldest parks, and the location of the first National Eisteddfod of Wales to take place in Newport, Belle Vue Park is the only park within the city borders to be a designated green flag park from Keep Wales Tidy.

In 1896, the Gorsedd stones were laid ahead of the 1897 Eisteddfod after the park was given to the public of the city as a gift two years earlier by Lord Tredegar.

Since then, the 26-acre park has welcomed additions such as its iconic pavilion, which received Grade-II listing from Cadw following a restoration project in 2003, and bandstand as well as bowling greens.

More recently, the park, which contains a multitude of rare flowers such as Himalayan Magnolias, Ginko Biloba and Liquidambar, retained its Green Flag status.

“Belle Vue Park is a popular venue in the city for residents to enjoy on a daily basis with safe play areas for youngsters and well-kept grounds with colourful flower displays which make this park one of the best in the city,” said Cllr Ray Truman, the deputy leader of [Newport City Council](#) and cabinet member for environment, sustainability and transport.

Slightly bigger in size, Newport’s other Victorian park – Beechwood – is also steeped in history.

Contained within the 30-acre park is Beechwood House, a Grade-II listed building which was the former residence of the tobacco industrialist and former mayor of Newport George Fothergill.

The house was also used in both World Wars – as a convalescence home in the first and as a base for American troops in the second.

In the modern day, Beechwood Park is set to undergo a revamp to help maintain its high standards for leisure facilities.

The formerly derelict tennis courts will be redeveloped and brought into a playable state to allow people to experience the benefits of Beechwood Park.

Rhys Jones, tennis development officer for Newport Live said he learnt to play the game at Beechwood Park courts, and is delighted the court will be brought back into action.

“The revamped court will be a valuable resource for Beechwood Park and for many local tennis players who our team coach. It will be great to see it once it is back in action,” he said.

Cllr Harvey added that the courts should be ready to matches in the spring.

"The tennis court in its present state is just unplayable, so I am delighted we are able to start a project to provide a replacement," she said.

"We know every parent likes to see their children being fit and active and tennis is a sport loved by many people, young and old."

For the past decade, both of Newport's Victorian parks are preserved by the Friends of Newport's Ornamental Parks (FONOP) and Newport City Council to help maintain the sites for the future generations.

Kerry Battick, the chair of FONOP said: "The Friends of Newport's Ornamental Parks are backing Newport. Both Belle Vue and Beechwood park, have been serving the city for over 100 years and in that time have become an integral part of Newport and its history.

"The group work hard to promote the parks and help make improvements through applying for funding and money raised from membership of the group.

Article continues after...

Making the parks of Newport sustainable for the future is very important to us. Not just because of the historical importance of both parks to the city but because of the wellbeing and health benefits being outside can bring.

"Belle Vue was gifted to the town by Godfrey Morgan, the Viscount Tredegar and designed by Thomas Hayton Mawson, a landscape gardener who went on to develop an international reputation, designing the Peace Palace gardens at The Hague.

"Belle Vue also has an impressive collection of trees, the Dawn Redwood a rare deciduous conifer, a Judas Tree, the tree Judas hung himself from and a White Mulberry which is the tree that Chinese silkworms feed on, there are many more.

"Beechwood ,the home of George Fothergill, a tobacco importer and

former mayor was bought for the specific use of the people of Newport after he died.

"These parks have an important place in not just Newport's history, but the history of outdoor spaces. The Friends of Newport's Ornamental Parks, believe the cultural value and uniqueness of the parks needs protecting now and in the future. As Newport gets better so will the parks."

Since 2000, the Newport Wetlands Reserve has continued the theme of maintaining green spaces and wildlife that comes with it.

To compensate for the loss of mudflats further along the Severn Channel, the National Nature Reserve contains a number of rare birds and other animals – from mammals to reptiles.

With a cavalcade of high calibre parks and gardens in Newport, a green world of eco-discovery or an exciting chance to sample sporting activities of a different kind lie on the city's doorstep.

Take a stroll or take an afternoon to go explore the award-winning green spaces of Newport – who knows what you may unearth.