



CABINET – 16TH NOVEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: CAERPHILLY BIODIVERSITY REPORT 2022

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Council's Biodiversity Report for 2022 and subsequent submission to Welsh Government.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough Council has a legal duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and in so doing, promote the resilience of ecosystems under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Under section 6(7) of the Act all public authorities were required, before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year after 2019, to publish a report on what they have done to comply with the s6 duty. This report presents Caerphilly Council's 2022 biodiversity duty update at Appendix 1 which demonstrates how we fulfil that duty and acts as a driver for ensuring that all service areas consider biodiversity and actively enhance biodiversity when carrying out their day-to-day activities.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet consider the content of this report and recommendations made by the meeting of the Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on the 25th October 2022 as detailed in section 11 and approve the Council's Biodiversity Report for 2022 at Appendix 1 and subsequent submission to Welsh Government.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that Caerphilly County Borough Council meets its legal obligations under Section 6(7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 contains a Biodiversity Duty (S.6) which states, that public bodies, including Local Authorities:
“ must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.” The intention of this duty is to ensure that biodiversity becomes an integral part of the decision making process in public authorities. The duty came into force in May 2016.
- 5.2 All public authorities, when carrying out their functions in relation to Wales, must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity wherever possible within the proper exercise of their function. In doing so, public authorities must also seek to promote the resilience of ecosystems.
- 5.3 Reporting on the Biodiversity Duty was required by Welsh Government in 2019 and every three years thereafter. The next report is due in December 2022 and the Caerphilly Biodiversity Report 2022 is appended at Appendix 1.
- 5.4 In compliance with the duty the Caerphilly Biodiversity Report 2022 details the actions and projects delivered in the County Borough of Caerphilly to halt the decline of biodiversity. Some examples include:
- Adoption of a Green Infrastructure Strategy and projects including ‘Nature isn’t Neat’ and Urban Biodiversity, Invasive Non-Native Species Management, and the preparation of the Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan,
 - River Corridor and Riparian Habitat Enhancement along the Ebbw, Rhymney and Sirhowy rivers.
 - A Local Nature Partnership is being successfully coordinated and managed, with over 70 external partners, including Charities, Farming Union Wales, Wildlife Trusts, Bird, Badger and Bat Groups and local residents.
 - Strategic tree planting undertaken at Ynys Hywel Farm that links to Sirhowy Valley Country Park delivering a significant wildlife corridor between the Graig Goch Local Nature Reserve (LNR), NRW woodland and the River Sirhowy. A dedicated volunteer field was planted with some 4,500 trees by a range of volunteers, and in separate operations a further 27,600 trees were contract planted on an adjacent site.
 - In December 2021 the Council approved a new approach to grass-cutting whereby highway verges and by-pass routes mowing is kept to a minimum and a list of areas were nominated by local members within their respective wards, which could be allowed to flourish during the summer period.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Caerphilly Biodiversity Report 2022 at Appendix 1 demonstrates how the Council fulfils its duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and acts as a driver for ensuring that all service areas consider biodiversity and actively enhance biodiversity when carrying out their day-to-day activities.
- 6.2 Members of the Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee considered the proposed Caerphilly Biodiversity Report at a meeting on the 25th of October and received assurances on how the effectiveness of the policy would be monitored.

7. ASSUMPTIONS

7.1 No assumptions have been made in this report.

8. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 As this is a report on the actions taken to help maintain and enhance biodiversity prior to publication an Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The extent of the actions that can be undertaken by service areas has been identified in the previous questionnaires as a barrier to the extent of implementation. The majority of actions require small changes to ways of working that can have large gains for biodiversity, without any financial implications. Larger projects would need to seek funding from external environmental funding sources.

10. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no personnel implications directly associated with this report.

11. CONSULTATIONS

11.1 The views of the listed consultees have been incorporated into this report.

11.2 Members of the Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee considered the report and proposed Caerphilly Biodiversity Report at a meeting on the 25th of October 2022.

One Member asked how the Authority would monitor the success of the Biodiversity Policy. The Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services outlined how the Biodiversity Duty report to the Welsh Government, which was attached as Appendix 1 of the report, was a 3-year update which set out all activities across the County and demonstrated how the Council was meeting its obligations under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Countryside Manager expanded on how a whole range of monitoring ranging from species to habitat were included in documentation such as the State of Nature reports.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016

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Consultees:

Cllr Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure & Green Spaces
Cllr Tudor Davies, Chair of Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Adrian Hussey, Vice Chair of Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny

Committee

Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Phil Griffiths, Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Mike Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager
Jonathan Davies, Parks and Countryside Operations
Paul Cooke Senior Policy Officer
All Heads of Service

Background Papers:

[Link to Scrutiny Committee Report 28th March 2017 – Caerphilly Biodiversity Duty Plan](#)

[Link to Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Report 25th October 2022 - Caerphilly Biodiversity Report 2022](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Caerphilly Biodiversity Report 2022