

Caerphilly County Borough Council Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Biodiversity Duty

2022 Report to Welsh Government



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Executive Summary

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. This report 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.

Caerphilly County Borough Council delivers a wide range of services fundamental to living and working in the area, which includes but is not exclusively limited to Housing, Planning, Education, Social Services, Waste / Recycling Collection and countryside/Green space provision.

Since 2016, the Welsh Government has introduced a number of new legislative requirements for public bodies, which change the way we plan and deliver services, putting sustainable development principles at the heart of all public bodies.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (the Act) introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the section 6 or s6 duty) for public authorities in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales. The s6 duty requires that public authorities 'must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems'. 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.

This report details the actions and projects delivered in the County Borough of Caerphilly to halt the decline of biodiversity, reduce the effects of climate change and promote sustainable development whilst also helping to deliver the Councils commitments under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This report follows guidance prepared by Welsh Government, the objectives of the Nature Recovery Plan for Wales and the 5 new ways of working (Sustainable Development Principle) to ensure all elements of well-being are considered together and to facilitate collaborative working. Actions and projects will evolve over time to continue to be fit for purpose and to adapt to developing needs, changes in legislation and changing priorities.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared as part of the Council's legal obligation as set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. All public bodies must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.

A healthy natural environment helps society and the economy flourish. Our natural resources and ecosystems can help us in many ways: to reduce flooding, improve air quality and supply materials for construction. They also provide a home for a variety of wildlife and give us landscapes we value in Caerphilly County Borough Council, encouraging people to live in, and visit the county. However, our natural resources are under constant pressure. Land for development, increased demands for energy and for food and increasing demands on services, with declining budgets are just a few of the reasons that our environment is suffering. A poorly managed natural environment means long-term risks to our well-being. To enable us halt or reverse the decline in biodiversity and to hand over an environment to future generations to allow them to meet their own needs, we must develop resilience and sustainability as core values in the way we work. A resilient environment can sustain our needs and provide us with the benefits we enjoy without compromising that future ability.

2. ACTIONS AND REPORTING

This report details what actions have been taken to date and outlines a way forward for the next 3 years to build on what has already been achieved. The detailed actions and projects for the next 3 years will be subject to a separate report.

3. NEXT 3-YEAR CYCLE

The Biodiversity Duty Plan will be reviewed and updated after this reporting cycle and new targets and outputs set. The plan will be reviewed and revised every 3 years to tie in with the required reporting timeline.

4. RESULTS OF 2019 - 2022

Service Area	Action / Project	Result / Outputs	Constraints to Delivery
Strategic Planning	Produce the 2nd Replacement County Borough Local Development Plan	The 2nd Replacement County Borough Local Development Plan is the subject of an iterative Integrated Sustainability Appraisal that considers the social, economic cultural and environmental implications of the plan throughout its preparation. Therefore, the protection and enhancement of the environment is at the heart of the emerging plan, which seeks to balance the need for development with the protection of the environment.	None
Strategic Planning	Review and monitor the LDP to ensure that the plan and its strategy are being delivered as anticipated.	There is in place a monitoring framework (a series of indicators for which data is collected to inform this assessment) includes indicators related to development and its impacts upon the environment and biodiversity. This is reported each year in the Council's LDP Annual Monitoring Report which is submitted to Welsh Government in October each year.	None
Development Management	Embed biodiversity into the planning applications, Building control, Building Conservation and Tree preservation order applications and to seek opportunities for biodiversity enhancements	This is being fully achieved, with many examples of biodiversity conservation and enhancement throughout a variety of applications over the past 2 years.	Target determination times set by Welsh Government puts limitations on the nature and extent of biodiversity enhancements.

Countryside and Landscape Services	Provision of Ecological advice and support to all service areas.	This has been done very well and since 2020, with the additional resources of another ecologist, more projects across different departments are benefiting from ecology advice.	Budget and capacity issues for existing staff.
Countryside and Landscape Services	A Green Infrastructure Strategy	Significant progress has been made in the delivery and implementation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy adopted in December 2020. This is Supplementary Planning Guidance to support the LDP policies and to protect and enhance the environment balanced with the process for delivering necessary development. The GI Strategy has been put to good use in the preparation and delivery of Collaborative Strategic Grant applications, namely Welsh Government’s Enabling Natural Resources and Well-Being Grant scheme, and the delivery of both the Resilient Greater Gwent scheme and the Gwent Green Grid Partnership. These schemes combined have allowed Caerphilly CBC to collaboratively deliver at a regional scale: Green Infrastructure Enhancement Projects including contributing to the Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy, Access Projects including Regional Access Strategy, Biodiversity Enhancement Projects such as ‘Nature isn’t Neat’ and Urban Biodiversity, Invasive Non-Native Species Management, the preparation of the Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan, Strategic Tree Planting and River Corridor and Riparian Habitat Enhancement along the Ebbw, Rhymney and Sirhowy rivers. CCBC’s involvement in projects such as these demonstrates the value to enhancing GI at local level whilst also contributing to regional multiple benefits.	None
Countryside and Landscape Services	Collaborative working to achieve wider projects. Develop and implement	Many initiatives have been set up and are currently being implemented, with many cross-boundary benefits and success : such as The Resilient Greater Gwent and Gwent Green Grid Partnership Green Infrastructure Enhancement Projects including contributing to the Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy, Access Projects including Regional Access Strategy, Biodiversity Enhancement Projects such as ‘Nature isn’t Neat’	Staffing resources

	collaborative projects to deliver biodiversity benefits at a regional scale.	and Urban Biodiversity, Invasive Non-Native Species Management, the preparation of the Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Management of country parks and other countryside owned/managed land	We manage country parks and other land in Countryside’s portfolio to benefit biodiversity, including country parks, Aberbargoed National Nature Reserve, Local Nature Reserves and conservation land provided through Section 106 agreements. Further projects planned for the next 3 years to build on these successes.	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Biodiversity enhancement to buildings	Works undertaken to date include the erection of swift boxes on the visitor centre, house martin cups on the campsite shower block, enhancements to a former railway tunnel for bats, conversion of a former disused toilet block into a bat house at Parc Cwm Darran, with further enhancements identified for the next 3 years on other sites	Time and financial implications
Countryside and Landscape Services	Increase level of engagement with other service areas to assist them in embedding biodiversity into their day to day functions.	Implemented the State of Natural Resources Report, NRW Area Statements, Greater Gwent State of Nature Report, Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan, Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Pollinator Friendly Gwent – Nature isn’t Neat Project and Section 7 Habitats and Species into daily decisions and projects.	none
Countryside and Landscape Services	Coordination and monitoring of the council’s	We have implemented and coordinated numerous community biodiversity projects involving with local residents, such as the previous Plant a Patch for Pollinators Project and the Hedgehog Highway Project.	Funding

	Biodiversity Duty.		
Countryside and Landscape Services	Identify and provide support to a Biodiversity Champion.	Work underway to identify and nominate a Biodiversity Champion	none
Countryside and Landscape Services	Provide enhancement opportunities for wildlife along rivers	We have created habitat and erected dipper and wagtail boxes within woodland and otter holts along three different rivers. (R. Ebbw, R. Rhymney and R. Sirhowy)	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Habitat creation, management and enhancement of heathland within the country parks.	We have identified areas for habitat creation in our country parks, particularly heathland and plan to implement management works over the next 3 years.	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Coordination and support the Caerphilly Local Nature Partnership.	A Local Nature Partnership has been set up and is being successfully coordinated and managed, with over 70 external partners, including NGCOs, Charities, Farming Union Wales, Wildlife Trusts, Bird, Badger and Bat Groups and local residents	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Raising awareness of biodiversity through events, provision of training, access to the countryside and environmental education	This has been delivered by countryside rangers and engagement with the public. There are no current actions, however Caerphilly is currently in the process of recruiting a new Education Officer to deliver further projects under this category.	Staffing

Countryside and Landscape Services	Management of water bodies to benefit biodiversity.	Caerphilly Countryside team have managed several water bodies for the benefit of biodiversity over the past 3 years and propose to continue and expand this project.	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Delivery of biodiversity projects via RDP, NRW, WG funded initiatives	We have delivered training in biosecurity measures and management of invasive species throughout the county borough.	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Tree planting	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 throughout a week in March 2022. Working in partnership with GAVO, Groundwork Wales, Keep Wales Tidy and NRW. The strategic tree planting scheme has provided benefits to mental and physical health and wellbeing during the implementation with future benefits occurring in the medium and long term by providing a space for volunteers, residents and visitors to visit in the future and relax and enjoy the future woodland.	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Changing management of cycleway verges to create wildflower habitat	We have undertaken a trial project which changed the management of cycleway verges along the Upper Sirhowy Valley Cycleway in 2020-21, and this continued in 2022-23. This included increasing the width of the verge through flail cutting of persistent vegetation and scrub, to allow sowing of native seed mix in the future to establish healthy wildflower habitat along the edges of the cycle way. We plan over the next 3 years to expand this project to all cycleways that run through the County Borough.	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Use of the Green Infrastructure Strategy	The Green Space Strategy team together with the Planning Policy officers, as part of the 2RLDP process at Maesycwmmer have identified a potential allocation of a strategic site. The use of the Green Infrastructure Strategy	

	document to realise biodiversity benefits	has allowed officers to analyse the Green Infrastructure Map produced by the developers that promoted the Strategic Candidate site and identify existing assets where enhancements would provide the most benefits in the short, medium and long term. This is the first project of its kind and has been successful	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Collaboration between the council, residents to utilize biodiversity to better Mental health of residents.	A promotional campaign during Mental Health Awareness week launched in 2021 to reconnect residents, businesses, and schools to nature by growing a small patch of meadows to benefit butterflies and bees pollinators. The packs included native wildflower seeds, a sowing and aftercare guidance sheet, pollinator identification sheets and a local record centre recording sheet. 429 packs were issued and was such a success that it will be repeated in future years. This project ties in with the Action for Pollinators (Wales) guidance.	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Creation of access for hedgehogs – engaging with residents	A hedgehog highway campaign was launched in the Summer of 2022 to create access for hedgehogs into residential gardens, school grounds and allotments. 150 packs were distributed and the scheme was over-subscribed. The success of this project has resulted in plans to repeat this project in following years, funding permitting.	
Countryside and Landscape Services	Creation of hedgerows in school grounds	The Countryside Ranger Service worked with local schools (St Cenydd School, Heol Ddu, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni – Caerphilly Site, Lewis School Pengam), planting around 3,500 hedgerow plants to create 430m of new hedgerows, planted largely by pupils.	
Regeneration and Urban Renewal	Urban renewal and town centre enhancement projects (including demolitions) seek to be compliant	Through consultation with council ecologists, a recent completed project includes the ERDF funded project achieved CEEQUAL excellent rating, by protected species and reinstating biodiverse habitats in the final landscape design. Continue to liaise with in-house ecologists on new projects	Procurement requirements; requirements of external funding organisations, and affordability

	with existing wildlife legislation		
Regeneration and Urban Renewal	Identify existing biodiversity assets	Over the next 3 years, it is proposed to undertake a biodiversity audit of buildings and landholdings to identify the existing biodiversity assets. Assess suitability of building portfolio to accommodate breeding boxes for protected and endangered species.	Budget and staff availability to undertake biodiversity audits.
Regeneration and Urban Renewal	Reduce carbon footprint of building portfolio through increased energy efficiency and generation of green energy production	We propose to undertake an audit of buildings to increase energy efficiency over the next 3 years, including assessing the suitability of watercourses and other under-utilised land for sustainable energy generation and for biodiversity enhancement. We also plan to specify products on new projects that have lower carbon footprints.	Enhanced maintenance costs and monitoring of sites, and the need to cost this at the design stage. Availability of funds for investment in energy reduction and/or energy generation schemes.
Regeneration and Urban Renewal	Manage natural and green areas for wildlife	We have managed and maintained natural and green areas around 13 industrial estates and business parks, and incorporating features that benefit wildlife.	
Engineering Services	(Transport Strategy and Road Safety, Highway Development	The One Active Travel Integrated Network Map sets out long term plans for improving the active travel network to encourage walking and cycling with wider environmental benefits.	Individual schemes reliant on grant funding.

	<p>Control, Integrated Transport and Traffic Management, Highway Operations) Develop CCBC's transport policy with a key objective to encourage more sustainable travel</p>		
Engineering Services	Ecology considerations on Engineering projects	Ongoing: Ecology assessments undertaken during scheme development to minimize impact.	
Engineering Services	Liaison with external bodies and in house ecologists on major infrastructure schemes.	Ecologists to have input at an early stage to minimize impacts of major schemes.	
Engineering Services	Use of sustainable materials in road schemes	Council to consider increased use of recycled materials in road construction.	Financial constraints.
Engineering Services	Use of greener fuel	Council to consider alternative fuels greener vehicles for the internal fleet, and contractors; and promote this to external transport providers (planned)	Cost and fleet management

			policy/options.
Engineering Services	Reduce energy use in street lighting	CCBC is in the process of replacing traditional street lighting bulbs with low energy equivalents.	Financial constraints.
Engineering Services	Improve water quality from road-run off	CCBC to consider the use of natural filtration systems to treat gully waste.	Financial and physical constraints.
Engineering Projects Group	Improve biodiversity / ecological aspects of engineering projects	CCBC has introduced a QA system of sound ecological practices through the design phase, has commenced education //training of staff and the ecologists are working with the engineers to produce less environmentally-damaging plans	Workload and financial constraints.
Engineering Projects Group	The Monmouthshire-Brecon Canal biodiversity conservation	CCBC continue to manage the Mon and Brecon Canal, a linear aquatic resource in with colleagues in other service areas to conserve and enhance biodiversity	
Waste management	Use of green energy from waste	CCBC is working to utilise green energy from waste through several schemes in the county, such as capture of methane from landfill and recover energy from food wastes to reduce emissions to the atmosphere and contributing positively to reducing climate change. (ongoing)	Financial implications
Parks and Bereavement Services	Reduce pollution from waste	CCBC is actively working to reduce pollution from waste by reducing, reusing and recycling materials, reduction of cutting regimes to encourage native wildflowers and pollinators and removal of cuttings to increase flowering species.	
Parks and Bereavement Services	New approaches to grass cutting.	In December 2021 the Council approved a new approach to grass-cutting whereby in relation to our 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.	
Parks and Bereavement Services	Creation of wildflower corridors	Continued sensitive management of existing hedgerow and trees, and management of land to create wildflower corridors, such as road verges	
Parks and Bereavement Services	Reduce carbon usage	CCBC aims to increase its use of wood products from sustainable sources and move towards use of peat free compost.	
Parks and Bereavement Services	Manage CCBC's tree stock	The Council has formally adopted a Tree Strategy setting out how the Council manages trees through its function as landowner, highway authority, and local planning authority.	
Fleet and Vehicle Maintenance	Reduction of fuel use by council vehicles	This has been tackled by the use of fuel efficient vehicles to reduce the amount of carbon emissions to the environment, with proposals to commit to net zero emissions for fleet by 2030, Further roll out of EV Infrastructure and use of our own green energy production to fuel vehicles.	Availability of ULEVs. Infrastructure constraints including grid capacity. Cost of ULEVs. Cost of electricity.
Corporate Policy Team	Audit on charging options for council vehicles	Challenge Fund project to look at charging options for vehicles that are taken home at night and off-road parking is not available.	.
Building Cleaning Services	Reduction in carbon emissions	We are reducing travelling by ensuring staff share vehicles for transport to sites where ever this is possible and recycling everything that can be recycled.	
Sports and Leisure	Increase awareness of biodiversity and the link with health	CCBC is educating school pupils and adults on connecting with and appreciating the natural world including nature walks, species identification and building bird boxes	
Housing WHQS & Infrastructure,	Working towards greener housing	CCBC is including recycling targets within contract documentation, and construction; and by reduce paper use. Councils to consider further	Changes to specifications that

<p>Housing Maintenance, Private and public housing sectors</p>	<p>and house building</p>	<p>alternate energy sources (wind, solar, hydro etc.)</p>	<p>may impact on existing procurement arrangements. Financial and staff resources. Willingness of partners to become actively involved. Tenancy management and maintenance obligations.</p>
<p>Housing WHQS & Infrastructure, Housing Maintenance, Private and public housing sectors</p>	<p>Study on feasibility of electric vehicles</p>	<p>A study has been undertaken to secure electric vehicle charging infrastructure on new developments through the Planning System and working with the Council's Policy team to introduce EV charging infrastructure throughout the Gwent Area – reduce climate change impact, cutting pollution – reducing impact on ecosystems and biodiversity. (proposed)</p>	
<p>Education</p>	<p>Improve carbon usage and biodiversity value of new schools</p>	<p>Band B proposals for 21st century schools under the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (2019-2024). All new school buildings, major refurbishment and extension projects will be required to meet net zero carbon targets from January 1st 2022. Buildings will be required to be net zero carbon in operation, which means producing zero or negative carbon emissions as part of their operational energy. The first generation of schools under the new rules will also be required to demonstrate a 20% reduction on the amount of embodied carbon, which is the carbon emitted through construction materials and the construction process, with further reductions required in the future, in</p>	<p>Funding implications</p>

		<p>line with the Welsh Government's broader net zero carbon plans. New proposed buildings will also include ambitious plans for biodiversity, active travel and electric vehicle charging facilities.</p> <p>In addition to this we propose to encourage forest schools and eco-school projects</p>	
Education	Reduce carbon emissions caused by travel to school	This is being achieved through safe routes provision and school travel plans.	
Children and Adult Services	Reduce carbon footprint	This has been achieved by implementing agile working which has significantly reduced our carbon footprint, and through car sharing. We will be considering in future years, solar panels on all establishments and anticipated future capital projects will consider biodiversity, carbon footprint and transport factors in their design.	
Children and Adult Services	Increase biodiversity at a local level	3 garden projects have been established across the borough all have bat boxes, nesting boxes and wild flower areas to attract bees	
Public Protection	Control and reduction of fly-tipping	We have continued to take a robust approach to fly tipping enforcement and have added to our capabilities by purchasing cameras which we deploy at fly tipping hotspots. A report released on 14 December 2021 by Welsh Government and Fly-tipping Action Wales revealed that Cardiff (301), Newport (59), Carmarthenshire (41) and Caerphilly (40) are the top performing areas for issuing fixed penalty notices to tackle fly-tipping in Wales on 2020/21. We undertake monthly stop and check operations in partnership with NRW, Police and Merthyr CBC continuing. We have undertaken a number of promotional campaigns including duty of care advice released on CCBC social media platforms and also use social media to help gain information on fly tipping incidents.	
Public Protection		Future projects and actions for the next 3 years would see the introduction of electric vehicles, with the inclusion of measures to	Finance, technical, culture,

		minimize the impact on the environment, consider impact of chemicals on biodiversity and consider alternatives in pest control.	knowledge and understanding,
Catering	Reduce carbon footprint	We have commenced working towards the introduction of electric vehicles to reduce climate change impacts, pollution and noise, by recycling food waste and introducing new waste collection systems to reduce pollution from waste transport and landfill and by working in partnership with procurement to reduce impact on biodiversity and the environment. Future projects will look at kitchens reducing the use of plastics and paper consumables.	Financial implications
Property Building Consultancy	Ensure protection of wildlife	The council is routinely checking the impact of work to council properties and council buildings on nesting birds/bats and other wildlife prior to commissioning work.	Programme and cost challenges will remain.
Property Building Consultancy	Reduction of carbon footprint	We are designing Schools to BREEAM excellent standard which includes ecology and biodiversity elements, including green roofs planting to maintain species diversity and use of renewable energies.	Programme and cost challenges will remain.
Finance	Reduction of paper usage and carbon footprint	The council is providing financial information leaflets for council tax and business rates are online, and text messages to Caerphilly residents instead of letters. We plan to expand this to ICT systems for further opportunities to promote electronic forms with less paper usage.	Reduction in printing and paper costs
ICT	Reduction of carbon footprint	We have reduced our carbon footprint by tendering and procurement of software consider reducing energy use, and reducing travelling need between sites (provision of teleconference facilities, remote support of users etc.	Availability of and competing demands on finances and staff resources.
Corporate Customer Services		We are active in providing advice to customers about issues relating to biodiversity Sign posting customers to on-line information about biodiversity where available, including the creation of a Facebook page for residents Wildlife@Home and regular biodiversity Twitter posts.	