



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

CABINET

21st October 2020

Report of the Director of Environment and Regeneration Nicola Pearce

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 – Consideration of the Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2017 Implementation Report and the publication procedures to be implemented.

Purpose of the Report

To consider and agree the Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2017 Implementation Report and the publication procedures to be implemented.

Executive Summary

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced a duty (under Part 1, Section 6 (7), referred to as the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems duty or in short ‘the S6 Duty’) on public authorities (including the Council) to maintain and enhance biodiversity, thereby promoting the resilience of ecosystems in the exercise of its functions.

The S6 Duty requires formal demonstration of compliance. The Council was initially required to prepare and publish a plan setting out how it intended to comply with the Duty. Accordingly, in December 2017 the Council published its first iteration of the Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP). Following publication, the Act also requires the Council to report at regular intervals on its implementation – i.e. covering what it has done to comply with the Duty and to set out recommendations on whether the published BDP should be amended and/or updated.

This report therefore seeks Member approval of the first BDP Implementation Report and the publication procedures to be implemented.

Members should note that once approved, the recommendations of the BDP Implementation Report will be incorporated into a revised BDP which will supersede the 2017 Plan. This will subsequently be reported to Members at the end of the calendar year.

Background

In 2016 the Environment (Wales) Act introduced a duty (the S6 Duty) on public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity. The Council is therefore required by the Act to prepare and publish a plan setting out how it intends to comply with the Duty. To comply with the S6 Duty the Council should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into their early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans, programmes and projects, as well as their day to day activities.

In December 2017, the Council published its first Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP)¹ outlining the natural resources that exist within Neath Port Talbot, why they are so special and what activities were already underway to protect them. It also set out how the BDP works and the mechanisms for delivery, along with detailed actions to be achieved and milestones for reporting.

Following publication of the BDP, the Act requires the Council to publish an implementation report at regular intervals on what has been done to comply with the S6 Duty in order to ascertain what has been achieved, what needs to be improved and to make any revisions and improvements to the published BDP. The Implementation Report is required to be published online, with a link sent to the Welsh Government (WG).

NPT Biodiversity Duty Plan 2017 Implementation Report

The 'BDP 2017 Implementation Report' is presented in full in **Appendix 1**. The report monitors the actions from initial publication up to financial year end 2020 – i.e. December 2017 to 31st March 2020.

The Act requires the Council to publish a report on what they have done to comply with the S6 duty before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year thereafter. WG guidance on producing implementation reports was only published in November 2019 which prevented the

¹ NPT Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2017 - <https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/9417/nptcbc-biodiversity-duty-plan.pdf?v=20190125155137>

Council from publishing its report by December 2019, further delay occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moving forward, in order for the Council to monitor the actions within the BDP in line with grant funding streams and to allow for political reporting it is proposed that the monitoring timeline aligns with financial years. Accordingly, the Council will monitor the actions of the next BDP from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023 and submit the Implementation Report to WG by October 2023.

The S6 Duty aims to ensure that the consideration of biodiversity becomes an integral part of the decisions and actions that public authorities take. In late 2019, WG published guidelines² on how to report on BDPs. In accordance with these guidelines, the BDP Implementation Report sets out progress on individual actions, along with recommendations of how to move each of the actions forward.

The key outcomes, notable barriers and new future actions outlined in the Implementation Report are summarised below.

Key Outcomes

- An action to deliver against the Biodiversity Duty has been built into the **Corporate Plan**.
- The Council's **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)** considers the Biodiversity Duty and requirements to inform and ensure effective decision making and compliance. A summary of the IIA is required within the Committee Report template.
- There is **improved collaborative working with wider departments**, which has been supported by the employment of a Graduate Ecologist to provide survey and in-house consultancy services, resulting in **early engagement in projects and cost savings**.
- The Council **adopted its Biodiversity and Geodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)** in 2018.
- The Countryside and Wildlife Team (C&WT) has undertaken a **variety of surveys** such as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (**SINC**) surveys; the **Colliery Spoil Biodiversity Initiative** and the **Blue Ground Beetle Project**.

² WG (2019) Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 – Guidance for Section 6 – The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems: Reporting Guidance <https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/File/701/en-GB>

- **Projects** – the C&WT is successfully leading on a number of biodiversity focused grant funded projects, which has led to many positive outcomes for health and wellbeing and other wider benefits, including multi-agency projects at a regional and landscape scale including:
 - **Lost Peatlands Project;**
 - **Working with Nature Project;**
 - **Connecting Green Infrastructure – South West Wales;**
 - Management of **Dyffryn Wildlife Site** and **Craig Gwladus Country Park;** and
 - **Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Cymru Project.**

Notable Barriers – whilst there have been numerous positive achievements over the reporting period there still remains a number of barriers to implementation of the Duty, including:

- The C&WT is heavily supported by income generation schemes and external grant funding, and consequently **many posts are temporary;**
- **Loss of regular and long term external funding** has led to uncertainty for staff and reduced capacity to deliver action for biodiversity; and
- Whilst significant progress has been made **integrating biodiversity into decision making**, there still remains challenges, particularly as a result of budget pressures, meeting grant funding deadlines or wider corporate or national requirements.

New (Future) Actions – in addition to minor amendments to existing actions to bring them in line with updated work practices, changes in funding or national action, two new actions have been recommended for inclusion within the new Plan, namely:

- **1.8 New Council Strategies** – C&WT to aid in the development of strategies or plans that contribute towards biodiversity conservation and respond to consultations and reviews of existing plans; and
- **3.5 Green Infrastructure Assessment (GIA)** – the Council will undertake a GIA in line with the requirements of Planning Policy Wales (PPW).

Conclusion – the 2017 Plan has allowed the Council to further embed biodiversity into decision making outside of the traditional service areas and whilst some actions have taken longer to fulfil than expected, progress

has been made on all actions and will continue through the implementation of the new Plan (scheduled for publication by the end of 2020).

Publication Procedures and Next Steps

Once approved, the BDP 2017 Implementation Report will be published on the Council's website and the link submitted to the WG. Additionally, in accordance with the Council's Welsh Language Standards Policy, the document will also be made available in Welsh.

Hard copies of the Plan will be made available for purchase at a reasonable charge. In common with previous practice, it is suggested that the price be based on the cost of printing together with postage and packing at the prevailing cost. Electronic copies will be made available at no cost.

Work will then commence on producing a **revised Biodiversity Duty Plan** by the end of the year, incorporating amendments and recommendations from the Implementation Report. Covering the period 2020-2023, the new BDP will focus on evaluating the Council's existing work practices and assimilate the new statutory duty into wider Council functions. This will result in a more joined-up approach between services, fulfilling both the Environment (Wales) Act requirements and the sustainability ethos embedded in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Financial Impacts

Given that there was no additional funding made available for the implementation of this Duty, delivery against the Plan was achieved within existing budgets, with a focus on making changes to work practices that could be achieved without placing a financial burden on the Council.

Project delivery and improvement works requiring additional resources were delivered through the use of external grants or partnership working. New, and amendments to existing actions have taken a similar approach, to ensure that delivery of the Plan can be achieved with existing resources.

Integrated Impact Assessment

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage assessment (presented in **Appendix 2**) has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below.

- **Equalities** – biodiversity affects all generations and all areas of society. Implementation of the actions will be inclusive and will involve the Countryside and Wildlife Team working with all staff / sections throughout the Council, the wider public and a wide range of partner organisations including those from the public, private and community / voluntary sectors.
- **Welsh Language** – all of the actions contained within the 2017 BDP adhere to the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 and any amendments to actions or new proposed actions recommended by the Implementation Report will also adhere to these Regulations. All communication via the Authority's social media platforms and websites; radio broadcasts and reports etc. are translated into Welsh and the technical names of species and habitats are also translated which increases people's opportunity to use and expand upon their Welsh Language vocabulary.
- **Biodiversity** – this is the remit of the 2017 BDP and Implementation Report. Actions contained within the BDP are monitored, with recommendations, through the Implementation Report, ensuring that the Council meets its statutory duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity as set out within the Environment (Wales) 2016 Act. One of the actions incorporated within the 2017 BDP was to include the impact on biodiversity into the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). Additionally, numerous projects and initiatives organised by the C&WT and partners contribute towards meeting the Authority's statutory duty to promote the resilience of ecosystems, supporting protection of the wider environment.
- **Well-being of Future Generation (5 Ways of Working)** – the BDP 2017 Implementation Report embraces all five ways of working. The Implementation Report provides progress achieved on the 2017 BDP actions and recommendations for future improvement in order to meet the Council's Biodiversity Duty. The BDP and accompanying Implementation Report positively integrates with the Council's well-being objectives; involves people and partners in its development and implementation; and seeks to prevent problems getting worse.

Valleys Communities Impacts

No implications.

Workforce Impacts

No implications.

Legal Impacts

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts

The Council will be in breach of its statutory duties to prepare, publish and report on the Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) should there be a failure to implement the proposed recommendations.

Consultation

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

The BDP Implementation Report is the outcome of implementing the actions in the 2017 BDP. No substantial changes have been made since the original internal consultation, therefore, no further consultation has been undertaken.

Recommendations

That having considered the report, it is resolved to make the following recommendations for approval:

1. That the Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2017 Implementation Report as set out within Appendix 1 be agreed.
2. That the publication procedures as set out in the report are implemented.
3. That the report and recommendations be commended to Council for approval.

Reasons for Proposed Decisions

The recommendations are needed to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – NPT Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) (2017) Implementation Report

Appendix 2 – First Stage Assessment: Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

List of Legislation and Guidance Documents

Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales (2015)

Welsh Government (WG) (2019) Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 – Guidance for Section 6 – The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems: Reporting Guidance

Officer Contact

Lana Beynon – Planning Policy Manager

Tel: 01639 686314 / E-mail: l.beynon@npt.gov.uk

Catrin Evans – Countryside and Wildlife Team Leader

Tel: 01639 686056 / E-mail: c.a.evans@npt.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

NPT Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2017 Implementation Report



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Neath Port Talbot Council Biodiversity Duty Plan (2017) Implementation Report

October 2020



www.npt.gov.uk

1 Introduction

1.1	Legislative requirements.....	2
1.2	Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Biodiversity Duty Plan (2017) Implementation Report.....	2
1.3	Programme for Reporting.....	3

2 Background

2.1	Context – Neath Port Talbot Council.....	4
-----	--	---

3 Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

3.1	Key Biodiversity Actions.....	6
3.2	Positive Outcomes for Health and Wellbeing.....	10
3.3	Key Enablers.....	11
3.4	Notable Barriers.....	12

4 Action Report

4.1	Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Objectives	13
-----	---	----

5 Conclusions

5.1	New Actions.....	34
5.2	Overview.....	34

1. Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Legislative requirements

- 1.1.1 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 (including the Council), which must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.
- 1.1.2 To comply with the S6 duty the Council should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into their early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans, programmes and projects, as well as their day to day activities.

1.2 Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Biodiversity Duty Plan (2017) Implementation Report

- 1.2.1 The Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Duty Plan (the Plan) was adopted in December 2017 and sets out how the Council intends to comply with the duty. It outlines what natural resources NPT has, why they are special and some of the activities already underway to protect them. It explains the legislative background; the mechanisms for delivery; detailed actions to be achieved and milestones for reporting.

Figure 1 – Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Duty Plan (2017)



Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Environment (Wales) Act 2016—Biodiversity Duty Plan
December 2017

1. Introduction

1.3 Programme for Reporting

- 1.3.1 Under section 6 (7) of the Act, the Council must, before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year thereafter, publish a report on what they have done to comply with the S6 duty.
- 1.3.2 In order for the Council to monitor the actions within the Plan in line with grant funding streams and to allow for political reporting it is proposed that the monitoring timeline aligns with financial years.
- 1.3.3 This implementation report is dated October 2020 as this is the date at which it gained Cabinet approval, however, the report monitors the actions from initial publication up to financial year end 2020 – i.e. December 2017 to 31st March 2020. Due to the late release of the Welsh Government (WG) guidance (November 2019) it has not been possible to publish the Council's Implementation Report by the end of 2019.
- 1.3.4 Accordingly, the Council will monitor the actions of the next BDP (2020), from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023, and submit the Implementation Report to WG by October 2023 and place it on the Council's website.
- 1.3.5 The S6 duty guidance states that the Council can amend the Plan at any time. If such circumstances arise, this report will appear as an appendix to the new plan and will identify the reasons for the changes. Any changes made during that time will be documented within the 3 year implementation report and submitted to WG.



Viper's-bugloss outside The Quays Council Office, Baglan Energy Park. The site qualifies as a SINC and is managed to retain its interesting flora

2 Background

2.1 Context – Neath Port Talbot Council

- 2.1.1 The County Borough of Neath Port Talbot (NPT) is located on the coast between the counties of Swansea and Bridgend. NPT also shares boundaries with Carmarthenshire, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and the Brecon Beacons National Park. The population is over 140,000 and the administrative area covers 44,217 hectares.
- 2.1.2 NPT has a wide variety of habitats and species, from marshy grassland in the valleys supporting marsh fritillary butterfly to ancient woodlands providing home to the rare honey buzzard and blue ground beetle; and lowland wetlands and canals attracting fen raft spiders. Whilst the coastal dunes and saltmarsh border Swansea Bay, NPT's upland peatbogs extend right across the plateau into RCT with brownfield land such as coal tips supporting rare plants and invertebrates.



Aberpergwm restored bog site

- 2.1.3 As a Local Authority, Neath Port Talbot Council has the ability and opportunity to influence the amount and extent of biodiversity within the County Borough through management of its land / assets, strategies, policies and project delivery. The Authority implements and enforces national policy and legislation, works in partnership with a wide variety of stakeholders and engages with the public to achieve wider benefits.

2. Background

- 2.1.4 Delivery of the S6 Duty and implementation of the Plan is the responsibility of the Council as a whole. Following adoption of The Plan in December 2017, the Council embedded the coordination and monitoring into a staff post, putting the Biodiversity Implementation Officer of the Countryside and Wildlife Team as lead officer for the Plan.



NPT is a stronghold for the UK's smallest butterfly - the small blue

3. Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

3 Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

This section sets out the positive outcomes that have been achieved to-date from the progress made on the Actions set out within the Report (Section 4). It also highlights key enablers and barriers that have or are continuing to prevent action.

3.1 Key Biodiversity Actions

Governance / Corporate Processes

- 3.1.1 **Corporate Plans and Processes:** An action to deliver against the Biodiversity Duty has been built into the Corporate Plan. Green Infrastructure, of which biodiversity is a key element, has been identified as a cross-cutting theme across all objectives within the Public Service Board's Well-being Plan.
- 3.1.2 **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA).** The Council's IIA considers the duties and requirements of the key legislation in order to inform and ensure effective decision making and compliance, addressing equalities, welsh language, well-being and biodiversity. A summary of the IIA is contained within a section of all Cabinet Reports taken through the Council's political process with the full IIA attached (as appropriate) as an appendix to the Report. This procedure has raised the Team's profile of its statutory responsibilities, throughout the Authority.
- 3.1.3 **Countryside and Wildlife Team (C&WT) early engagement and biodiversity advice:** There is a well-established relationship between the C&W Team and planning services, with the team actively engaged in both the Development Management Process and Local Development Plan. There is improved collaborative working with wider departments, which has been supported by the employment of a Graduate Ecologist to provide survey and in-house consultancy services, resulting in early engagement in projects and cost savings.

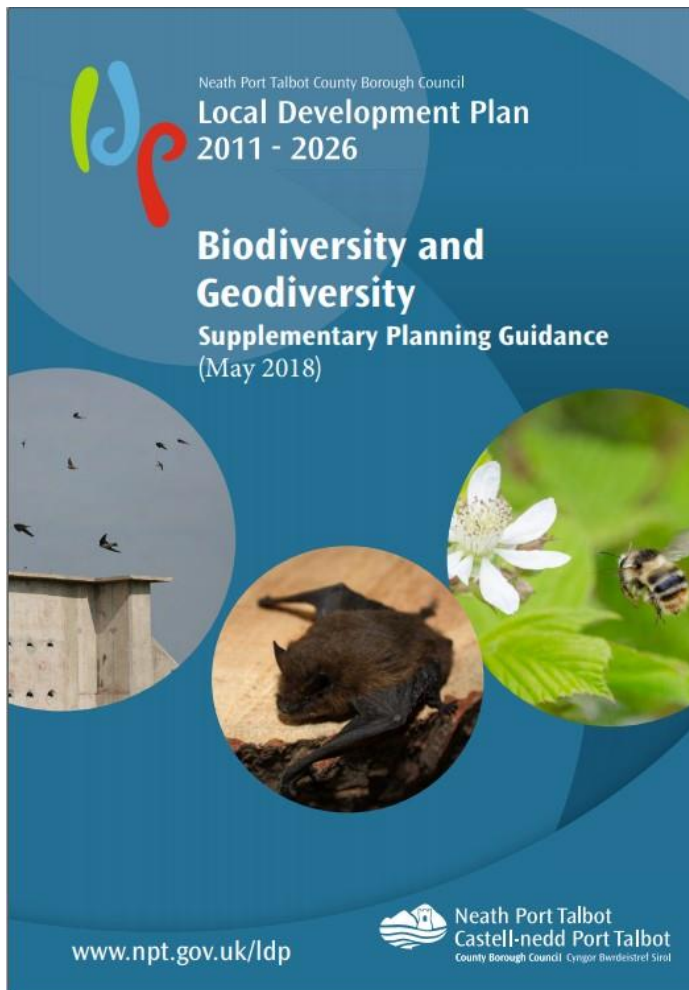


Early engagement on projects saves time and money

3. Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

- 3.1.4 **Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)** – the Authority adopted the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPG in 2018. The SPG sets out the basic framework for dealing with Biodiversity in the planning process in Neath Port Talbot. It provides guidance on how to conserve and enhance important habitats and species as part of development.

Figure 2 – Neath Port Talbot’s Biodiversity & Geodiversity SPG (2018)



https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/9003/spg_biodiversity_geodiversity_may18.pdf

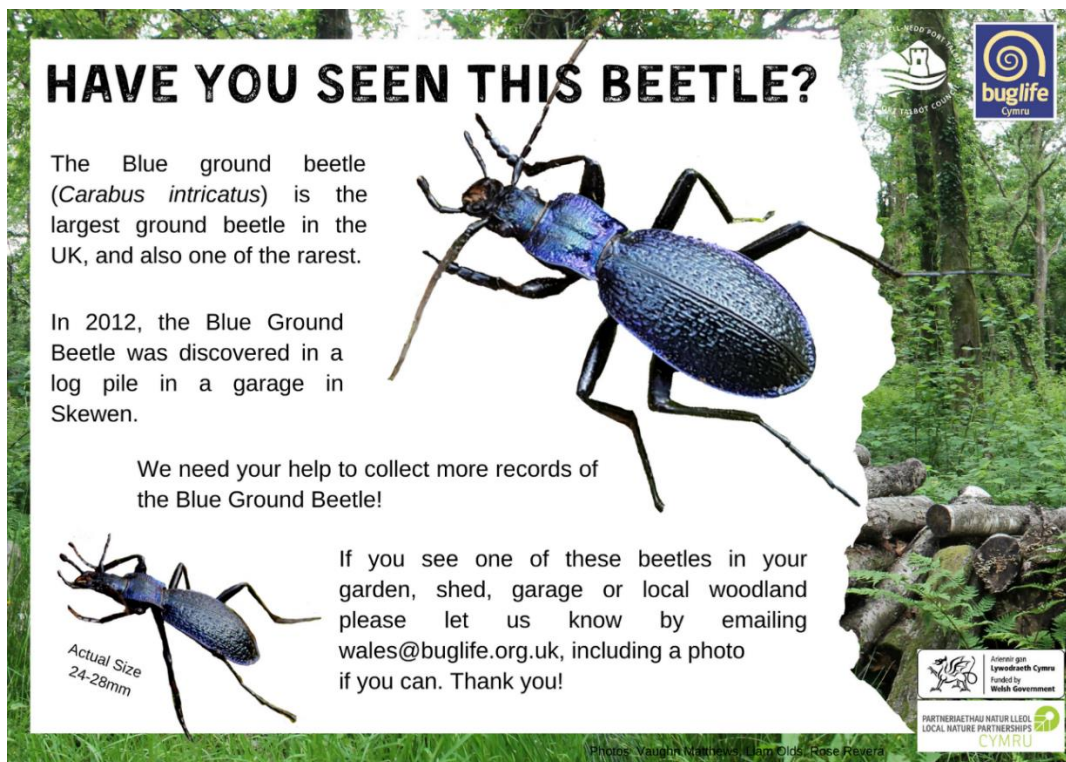
Surveying and Data

- 3.1.5 **Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) surveys** – The C&WT undertake a standard 10% of SINC surveys annually which provides up to date information to feed into the Authority’s decision making processes.
- 3.1.6 **Data collection** – the Authority has in-house expertise and software which can collect, collate, interrogate and display a variety of data. Using specialist software the Authority is able to generate and share biological records. The use of QGIS mapping software enables the Authority to analyse a variety of data in map form, displaying data in a way that people can easily relate to. Recently this was used to map priority areas for Green Infrastructure interventions and to liaise with the

3. Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

public on how these should be delivered.

- 3.1.7 The **Colliery Spoil Biodiversity Initiative** surveyed several coal spoil sites throughout NPT and RCT; positively identifying 901 invertebrate species. Of these, 195 (~22%) are deemed to be of conservation priority (i.e. species considered Nationally/ Locally Scarce or Rare in Britain and/ or listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as species of principal importance in Wales). The work highlighted the importance of the habitat (coal spoil) in reproducing the conditions found in coastal habitats, allowing species displaced from the coast to disperse into other areas.
- 3.1.8 The charity **Buglife** ran a **Blue ground beetle project in 2019**. The Skewen area is the only place this beetle is found in Wales. Supported by the Council and the Local Nature Partnership, the Project engaged local people in the search for the beetle and in practical habitat management projects. Surveys by volunteers and professionals revealed the local conditions the beetle requires and generated many records. Identification postcards have been produced to encourage and report any further sightings.



Blue ground beetle survey card

Projects

- 3.1.9 The Council is successfully leading on a number of biodiversity focused grant funded projects, including multi-agency projects at a regional and landscape scale. These include:
- **The Lost Peatlands Project**, funded by the Heritage Fund. With over £400K already secured for the development there is the potential for a further £1.8M as part of the delivery phase. The project works in partnership with several organisations including NRW, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), Swansea

3. Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

University, Coed Lleol (Small Woods Association) and Active Building Centre. It will restore peatland to help combat climate change and enhance biodiversity. Community engagement events will reconnect people with the wildlife, landscape and heritage of the area.

- **The Working with Nature Project**, which has supported volunteers and local communities in bringing sites into active management for biodiversity, including Local Nature Reserves, Parks and SINCs (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation). Funded through LEADER and WG Single Revenue Grant.
- **Connecting Green Infrastructure – South West Wales** (Welsh Government Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (EnRAW). This regional project took forward a new and collaborative approach to designing and implementing green infrastructure (GI) and nature recovery across Neath Port Talbot (NPT), Swansea and Carmarthenshire, for the benefit of local communities and their natural environment. £425K was secured for 2019/20, with a further application for £2.6M progressed to full application through the RDP ENRaW funding stream.
- Additional funding has also been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural Resources Wales for distinct sites; **Dyffryn Railway Wildlife Site and Craig Gwladus Country Park**, with a particular focus at Craig Gwladus Country Park on developing a long term funding and income generation strategy for ongoing management of the site.
- The Council is a collaborative partner in the **Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Cymru Project**, with Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) as project lead, and again funded through the ENRaW funding stream. The funding has enabled the employment of a dedicated LNP Officer, providing a supporting role for NPT's Nature Partnership in development of the LNP Plan and delivery of biodiversity action.



NPT Local Nature Partnership site visit

3. Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

3.2 Positive Outcomes for Health and Wellbeing

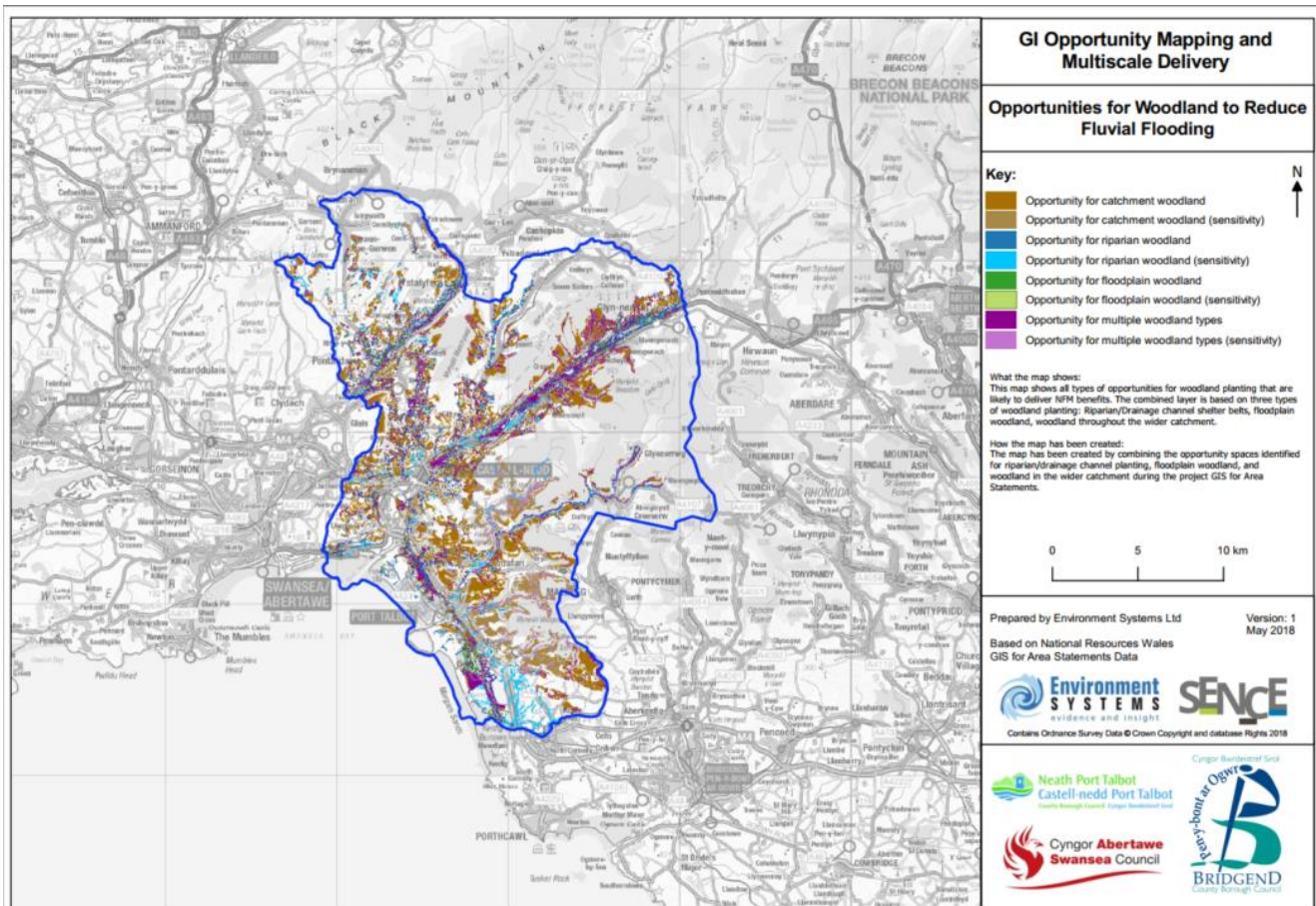
- 3.2.1 Engagement in the natural environment is now a strong element across all biodiversity projects being delivered by the C&W Team, either by participation in conservation activities, or through more focused well-being activities, designed to encourage new users to a site and / or increase confidence in engaging in these kinds of activities.
- 3.2.2 **Working with Nature** has, in particular, focused on well-being as a key outcome, engaging with a range of people of differing abilities and interests across the County Borough. The project has engaged with over 700 participants in the natural environment through the delivery of over 300 conservation and well-being activities since the project started. Participants have reported improved mental and physical well-being through increased physical activity, social engagement and interaction with nature. Partnership working with Coed Lleol (Small Woods Wales) has provided more targeted health and well-being activities, to increase opportunities for engagement and to benefit from access to the natural environment.



Wild cooking at Cwm Du Glen and Glanrhyd Plantation LNR, Pontardawe

- 3.2.3 A **Regional Green Infrastructure (GI) project** covered NPT, Bridgend and Swansea areas. Maps were produced that identified areas suitable for GI for various ecosystem services. One main driver of the project was to enhance access to open space to improve health and wellbeing. The data and maps will be used to feed into the production of the Neath Port Talbot Green Infrastructure Assessment (GIA) and steer future work on the ground.

3. Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues



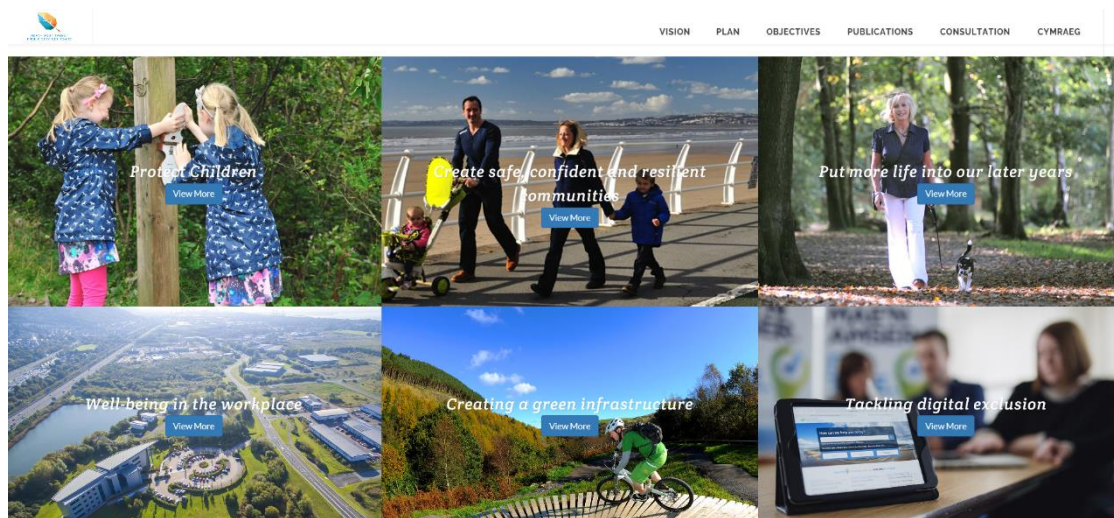
Example of a map produced for the GI project

3.3 Key Enablers

- 3.3.1 The Council’s long established C&WT provide services and advice throughout the authority. The responsibility for this Plan was embedded into a permanent post, the Biodiversity Implementation Officer, whilst the scope and capacity of the team has been enhanced by the creation of a new consultancy service and employment of a graduate ecologist to support this service. This has allowed closer working with other service areas and wider awareness of the Council’s statutory duties.
- 3.3.2 There is good support for the C&WT at a corporate level, in delivering the requirements of the Plan, and in taking forward wider projects and initiatives. This has enabled a prominent role in regional and multi-agency projects, adding significant value to existing Council resources, whilst also supporting improved collaborative working with other departments.
- 3.3.3 Having a named Member as Biodiversity Champion has raised the profile of the biodiversity of NPT. It has also enabled a closer working relationship with Members.
- 3.3.4 The Well-being and Future Generations Act has supported an enhanced profile for biodiversity at a corporate and multi-agency level, also leading to increased opportunities for more cross-sector partnership working. The inclusion of Green

3. Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

Infrastructure as a cross-cutting theme in the Public Service Board's Well-being Plan was a notable achievement.



NPT Public Service Board Objectives

3.4 Notable Barriers

- 3.4.1 Biodiversity has consistently been under-resourced over the years and this is equally the case in Neath Port Talbot. Whilst the Council has succeeded in putting in place a good size team to deliver on biodiversity, this is heavily supported by income generation schemes and external grant funding, and consequently many posts are temporary. NPT Council made a commitment to secure a permanent post in order to deliver this Plan, however, this has inevitably put pressure on the team in delivering its wider functions. The provision of core funding to Public Bodies to appropriately resource the delivery of the Biodiversity Duty would have been welcomed, and going forward would provide greater opportunity to deliver against the Act.
- 3.4.2 The loss of regular and long term funding (i.e. the loss of the NRW Funding Partnership stream) and subsequently the Single Revenue Grant, has led to uncertainty for staff members and reduced capacity to deliver for biodiversity. Whilst the team has been successful in drawing down funding, these are often short term and related to specific project delivery. Whilst schemes such as ENRaW are extremely valuable for delivery of larger projects, there remains a gap in core funding, which reduces ability for long term planning and delivery. This is equally relevant for loss of core funding for voluntary organisations, the impact of which has already been seen in NPT by the loss of core funding for PONT, and subsequently the loss of the Glamorgan Grazing Scheme.
- 3.4.3 Whilst significant progress has been made in integrating biodiversity into decision making, there remains challenges in accommodating biodiversity requirements to the fullest extent possible. Some departments can be constrained by financial pressures, their own grant requirements and other statutory duties, and there remains a need to further integrate biodiversity requirements at a corporate level, and into governance and funding mechanisms fed down from Welsh Government.

4. Action Report

4 Action Report

4.1 Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Objectives

- 4.1.1 This section reports on actions in the S6 duty plan, which were based on the objectives in the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) for Wales. The NRAP outlines how Wales will meet the commitments of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is the key international agreement on biodiversity to which the UK Government is the signatory.
- 4.1.2 Progress against the milestones in the Plan are given with recommendations on future action. Amendments are explained and proposed new actions are suggested.
- 4.1.3 Identification of new milestones for years 3 to 5 will be undertaken for the new 2020 Plan. Where relevant in relation to amended actions, some of these milestones are included within this implementation report.

Figure 2 – Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Objectives

NRAP Objectives	
1	Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels
2	Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management
3	Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation
4	Tackle key pressures on species and habitats
5	Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring
6	Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

- 4.1.4 Some actions deliver against a range of objectives, however to avoid duplication, the actions are organised into the most appropriate NRAP objective with any additional relevant objectives (that they contribute to) highlighted in the coloured table below each action.
- 4.1.5 When producing the Plan, any actions that were already being carried out by the Council were highlighted in **Blue** and those that would be instigated through the Plan were highlighted in **Green**. Those that have started will revert to blue in the new Plan and actions recommended for deletion are highlighted in **Red**.

NB. C&WT = Countryside and Wildlife Team; Year 1 = December 2017 – March 2019 and Year 2 = April 2019 – March 2020.

4. Action Report

NRAP Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels

1.1	BIODIVERSITY ADVISORY SERVICE
Action	NPTC currently consider biodiversity in a wide range of functions, specifically through implementing the policies of the Local Development Plan (LDP) when making decisions through the development management process.
Reporting mechanism	C&WT planning spreadsheet which lists all planning applications that have received a Biodiversity response. The spreadsheet lists net loss / gain of habitat and recommendations to improve the scheme i.e. bat boxes. This information is also plotted on GIS.
Milestone year 1	Meet with the development management team to ensure the Biodiversity recommendations are in an appropriate format and update on the latest legislation/policy/regulations.
Progress	Internal response templates changed to reflect changes in legislation/policy/regulations.
Milestone year 2	Continue to liaise with the development management team to ensure the biodiversity recommendations (including the standardised biodiversity conditions) are included within the DM officer's reports in an appropriate format and provide an update to the DM Team on the latest legislation/policy/regulations.
Progress	Currently working with the development management team to standardise the wording of some planning conditions.
Recommendation	<p>Amend Action 1.1 to make reference to providing biodiversity advice to the SAB (SuDs Approving Body) team</p> <p>Action - the Council currently consider biodiversity in a wide range of functions, specifically through implementing the policies of the LDP when making decisions through the development management process and as part of the SuDs (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) Approving Body.</p> <p>Milestones - All advice recorded in the spreadsheet followed.</p>

NRAP Objectives	1					6
-----------------	---	--	--	--	--	---

1.2	NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP
Action	The NPT Natural Resources Management working group has been set up to consider opportunities to deliver sustainable natural resource management through the functions of the Environment Directorate.
Reporting mechanism	Attendance at regular meetings.
Milestone year 1	In line with the requirements of the group – awareness raising and sharing of good practice.

4. Action Report

Progress	Initial meetings were held, providing the opportunity for increased understanding of wider departmental remits and work practices.
Milestone year 2	N/A
Progress	N/A
Recommendation	Remove this action. The NPT Green Infrastructure Core Group has since been established, to lead on delivery of the Public Service Board's (PSB) Green Infrastructure (GI) theme. Resources have been reprioritised to this group, due to the opportunity for wider partnership working.

NRAP Objectives	1		3	4		6
-----------------	---	--	---	---	--	---

1.3	SERVICE ASSESSMENT
Action	All services to be risk assessed to determine their potential impact on biodiversity and opportunities for best practice. Training provided as appropriate.
Reporting mechanism	Standard reports by the C&WT for each service.
Milestone year 1	Programme of assessment to be drawn up by C&WT - Assessments have started.
Progress	6 assessments carried out so far.
Milestone year 2	Assessments progressing and actions resulting from the recommendations included within the next Plan.
Progress	Work needed to identify roles and hierarchy of departments was greater than anticipated, therefore initial assessments will take longer than originally anticipated. Actions to be proposed once service assessment complete.
Recommendation	Retain action.

NRAP Objectives	1					
-----------------	---	--	--	--	--	--

1.4	C&WT EARLY ENGAGEMENT
Action	The C&WT will identify service areas and set up regular meetings as appropriate, to discuss work plans and identify early issues/opportunities for biodiversity/ecosystem enhancements.
Reporting mechanism	Attendance at regular meetings.
Milestone year 1	Programme of meetings to be agreed. Meetings started.
Progress	Meetings held on an ad hoc basis since the Graduate Ecologist has been in post, as projects come up. This has allowed for early engagement and the flexibility for continual involvement and reaction to issues. The need for regular meetings will be kept under review and revisited if current programme of meeting is considered to be inadequate.
Milestone year 2	Meetings continuing.

4. Action Report

Progress	More departments have contacted the C&WT for advice, which is being provided.
Recommendation	<p>Amend action and reporting mechanism as set out below:</p> <p>Action - The C&WT are regularly consulted by other service areas and give appropriate advice and services.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism – Spreadsheet /PASTA.</p> <p>Milestones - Retain internal consultancy function and continue to provide early advice to service areas throughout the Authority. All advice followed.</p>
NRAP Objectives	

1.5	DECISION MAKING PROCESS
Action	Biodiversity will be integrated into the impact assessment toolkit (Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)) being developed as part of the Council's decision making process.
Reporting mechanism	Standard section in Committee reports.
Milestone year1	Proposals put forward for inclusion in the toolkit.
Progress	Inclusion in toolkit.
Milestone year 2	All committee reports to contain a report on outcomes of the impact assessment.
Progress	Specific biodiversity impact question in the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA).
Recommendation	<p>Amend action as set out below:</p> <p>Action - The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) that accompanies all committee reports includes an assessment of the impact on biodiversity in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.</p>
NRAP Objectives	

1.6	TRAINING
Action	Integrate biodiversity into any Elected Member or officer training being delivered as part of the Well-being and Future Generations Act, 2015.
Reporting mechanism	Training in line with well-being objectives.
Milestone year1	Agreement made to include biodiversity in training material being developed.
Progress	Training has been provided as part of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process to officers and members, of which

4. Action Report

	biodiversity is a key element. No further training has been carried out as part of the Well-being and Future Generations Act.
Milestone year 2	Biodiversity integrated into the training programme.
Progress	Training has been provided as part of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process to officers and members, of which biodiversity is a key element. No further training has been carried out as part of the Well-being and future Generations Act.
Recommendation	Amend action as set out below: Opportunities are taken to integrate biodiversity into any Elected Member or officer training (where appropriate) being delivered to raise awareness of S6 Duty / Biodiversity.
NRAP Objectives	1 6

1.7	BIODIVERSITY SPG
Action	Prepare, adopt and implement the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance in line with LDP policies.
Reporting mechanism	SPG written.
Milestone year 1	SPG draft June 2017.
Progress	Published.
Milestone year 2	Implement SPG.
Progress	SPG being used to assess planning applications.
Recommendation	Amend the Action and Reporting mechanism as set out below: Action - Implement the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance in line with LDP policies. Reporting Mechanism – C&WT Planning spreadsheet. Milestones - Implement SPG.
NRAP Objectives	1 2 3 4 5 6

1.8	WELL-BEING PROCESS
Action	A healthy, functioning ecosystem is a vital component of our well-being, and the principles of the Biodiversity Plan will need to be integrated into the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015. Ensure that actions taken to deliver the Biodiversity Duty are part of the Council's Well-being objectives.
Reporting mechanism	Via well-being objectives.
Milestone year 1	TBC from Well-being objectives.

4. Action Report

Progress	An overarching action to deliver the Biodiversity Duty Plan has been integrated into Well-being Objective 3 - to develop the local economy and environment so that the well-being of people can be improved. Ref. 3.5.1: All services work together to deliver the Biodiversity Duty Plan and Green Infrastructure across the County Borough. In addition, a Key Performance Indicator is built into the Corporate Plan for management of council owned land.
Milestone year 2	Further detail on delivery against the Biodiversity Duty Plan achieved through monitoring of performance indicators, reporting on a quarterly basis.
Progress	Delivery against performance indicators reported at Committee quarterly, with delivery against the Biodiversity Duty included in the annual update on the Corporate Plan. Furthermore, the Council is a key partner in the Public Service Board, which is responsible for delivery of the NPT Well-being Plan. Biodiversity is seen as an integral part of green infrastructure, which in turn is recognised as a cross-cutting theme across each of the well-being objectives.
Recommendation	<p>Amend text of action and reporting mechanism as set out below:</p> <p>Action - Deliver against 'Shaping NPT, the Council Corporate Plan's Improvement Priority 3.5; protect, conserve and enhance our natural environment and increasing awareness of its value and encouraging wider participation. Support delivery of the Green Infrastructure Cross Cutting Objective of the Public Service Board's Well-being Plan.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism - Via the Corporate Plan and PSB annual reports.</p>

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

Proposed new action

1.8	NEW COUNCIL STRATEGIES
Action	C&WT to collaborate where appropriate with other sections to aid in the development of strategies or plans that contribute towards biodiversity conservation and respond to consultations and reviews of existing plans.
Reporting mechanism	BDP Reporting Spreadsheet (presented within the next report).
Milestone year 3	N/A
Milestone year 4	N/A
Milestone year 5	N/A
Recommendation	Adopt this action as part of the new Plan.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

4. Action Report

NRAP Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management

2.1	RE-VISIT CURRENT SCHEMES
Action	Through a series of previous projects, including Conservation Areas and Verges, other service areas are aware of the importance of biodiversity. C&WT are reviewing these projects to assess their effectiveness, and if relevant, will seek amendments to existing schemes.
Reporting mechanism	Review report.
Milestone year 1	The review will be complete.
Progress	All known sites brought into one GIS layer.
Milestone year 2	Infrastructure across the County Borough.
Progress	Implementation of management requirements across infrastructure and sites continued. Early discussions have been held on a further review of the scheme to include all verges.
Recommendation	<p>Amend Action to: Nature Conservation Sites Scheme. Undertake a review of the Nature Conservation Sites' scheme to include management of all verges and of council owned sites.</p> <p>Milestone year 3 – A working group is underway to develop the new scheme Milestone year 4 and 5 – implement the new scheme.</p>
NRAP Objectives	

2.2	DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCESS
Action	NPTC currently consider biodiversity (including species and habitats of principal importance, designated sites, sites of importance for nature conservation (SINC), habitats and species that meet the SINC criteria, and important natural features) through the development management process, in line with the Local Development Plan. Losses of protected/priority habitat/species (where known) are recorded.
Reporting mechanism	C&WT planning spreadsheet.
Milestone year 1	No net loss and, where possible, net gain of S7 and SINC habitats/species through the planning process. No net loss of habitat / species that are designating features of a site.
Progress	There was no net loss.
Milestone year 2	No net loss and, where possible, net gain of S7 and SINC habitats/species through the planning process. No net loss of habitat / species that are designating features of a site.
Progress	Net loss of 0.15ha of SINC habitat (open mosaic on previously developed land).
Recommendation	Retain.

4. Action Report

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

2.3	WG ESD LA GRANT
Action	NPTCBC draw down funding from the WG Environment and Sustainable Development (ESD) Grant. This is partly allocated to the C&WT who utilise it to administer biodiversity enhancement and engagement projects.
Reporting mechanism	As grant requirements.
Milestone year 1	As grant requirements.
Progress	A range of projects and initiatives were delivered as part of the grant, including community support, habitat management and species surveys, delivery of outdoor focussed health and well-being programmes and volunteer training, partnership support and landowner support for woodland creation and management.
Milestone year 2	As grant requirements.
Progress	The ESD grant has been discontinued by Welsh Government and replaced by the competitive Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being Grant (EnRAW). The Council were initially awarded funding for one year and have now resubmitted for a three year project to run from 1 st April, 2020. An expression of interest was successful and the outcome of the full application is pending.
Recommendation	Remove this Action.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3			
-----------------	---	---	---	--	--	--

2.4	WORKING WITH NATURE
Action	The grant funded Working with Nature Project undertakes conservation and community engagement activities at publicly accessible sites, focusing on the multiple benefits to be had from the natural environment.
Reporting mechanism	As grant funded requirements, including RDP LEADER and WG ESD LA Grant.
Milestone year 1	As grant requirements.
Progress	The Working with Nature Project started in August 2016. The project has delivered environmental and access improvements to a number of sites, through the help of volunteers and community groups. The project has engaged with 616 people by March, 2019, 230 of which were during the 18/19 financial year. A combined total of 156 activities were completed, including a range of educational, volunteer and engagement events, working across 17 sites across the County Borough.
Milestone year 2	As grant requirements.
Progress	The project has continued, with additional funding support secured as part of the WG Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being Grant. A further 164 activities have been carried out, bringing the total to 320 across the project duration, with 791

4. Action Report

	people engaged from project start. The project has been extremely successful however is nearing the end of its funding stream. Continuation of Working with Nature is being sought as part of a wider Green Infrastructure project through ENRaW funding.
Recommendation	Delete and incorporate into an amended action 2.9, as part of wider funding opportunities.
NRAP Objectives	2

2.5	NPT NATURE PARTNERSHIP
Action	NPTCBC facilitates the NPT Nature Partnership which implements the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). This is a key mechanism for species and habitat conservation in the County Borough.
Reporting mechanism	The NPT LBAP reporting spreadsheet.
Milestone year 1	Continue to provide secretariat for the NPT Nature Partnership, providing support in the delivery of targeted action.
Progress	Ongoing.
Milestone year 2	Continue to provide secretariat for the NPT Nature Partnership, providing support in the delivery of targeted action.
Progress	NPT Nature Partnership have decided to re-write the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and they will create a new reporting mechanism. A replacement system to the UK-wide 'Biodiversity Action Reporting System' from WG is pending.
Recommendation	Amend Action and Reporting Mechanism as set out below: Action: The Council facilitates the NPT Nature Partnership which implements the NPT Nature Plan. This is a key mechanism for species and habitat conservation in the County. Milestone Year 3 – Timescale and Process will be agreed with the Nature Partnership.
NRAP Objectives	1 2 3 4 5 6

2.6	AWARENESS RAISING
Action	The C&WT raise awareness of biodiversity through a variety of methods; training, public engagement (walks/talks), interpretation panels, leaflets, web pages, social media.
Reporting mechanism	Project delivery and ongoing upkeep of the NPTCBC web pages and NPT Wildlife Facebook page.
Milestone year 1	2 awareness raising projects per year; and year on year increase in visitors to the web pages and likes on the Facebook page.
Progress	As of Jan 1st 2019 NPT Wildlife Facebook had 725 followers which increased to 785 in May 15th.

4. Action Report

	Beach Festival; and The Gnoll Wildlife Explorer Trail.
Milestone year 2	2 awareness raising projects per year; and year on year increase in visitors to the web pages and likes on the Facebook page.
Progress	Craig Gwladus bio-blitz; Fen raft spider walk; As of March 2020, the NPT Wildlife Facebook page has 802 followers with an approximately 750 likes to the Group.
Recommendation	Amend Milestones: by changing likes to followers and remove hits to webpage as there is no single landing page. Two awareness raising projects per year and year on year increase in followers on the Facebook page.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	4	5
-----------------	---	---	---	---

2.7	BIODIVERSITY AUDIT
Action	<p>Undertake a biodiversity audit on land within our ownership and control, to identify where we have protected/S7 habitats and species on our land. Priority will then be given to those areas / sites where protected Section 7 habitats / species have been identified which offer the greatest benefit to biodiversity, considering one of the following options:</p> <p>1) The status quo – with no further action being taken. 2) Be brought into appropriate management for the benefit of biodiversity. This may be through: The Authority and, where necessary, suitable revenue sources can be secured by way of external funding to support and manage the identified sites. Lease to external parties. NB Any notional financial loss to the Authority needs to be reported and agreed before any lease is granted. 3) Any future disposal of a site will include relevant information from the audit so that the purchaser / tenant can comply with the relevant requirements. 4) In advance of undertaking any works and / or any material changes in land use on sites owned and controlled by the Authority, it will take into consideration the findings of the audit, taking steps to conserve and where possible enhance the biodiversity value</p>
Reporting mechanism	First report will be results of audit.
Milestone year 1	Programme of assessment to be drawn up by C&WT.
Progress	Assessment started. Stock phrases created. Sites audited looking at each valley working east to west across the county.
Milestone year 2	Assessments completed and actions put forward for the next stage of the plan.
Progress	Audit still ongoing with priority being given to sites that are being considered for change of use / management. This is a large and

4. Action Report

	complex task that will take longer to complete than originally anticipated.
Recommendation	Amend Milestones as set out below: Milestone year 3 - Assessment ongoing. Milestone year 4 - Advice provided as part of assessment followed. Milestone year 5 - Ongoing communications. Advice followed.
NRAP Objectives	

2.8	NATIONAL GUIDANCE
Action	Implement any national/regional guidance on enhancing biodiversity and ecosystems resilience through the planning system. Any new guidance will be taken into account and integrated into the system.
Reporting mechanism	C&WT Planning spreadsheet.
Milestone year 1	All national/regional guidance to be integrated into the planning system within 3 months of its release.
Progress	New guidance includes Planning Policy Wales 10 and the new guidance on bats and wind turbines.
Milestone year 2	All national/regional guidance to be integrated into the planning system within 3 months of its release.
Progress	Ongoing.
Recommendation	Retain.
NRAP Objectives	

2.9	FUNDING
Action	Apply for funding as opportunities arise, either specifically for biodiversity or as part of wider schemes delivering multiple benefits.
Reporting mechanism	As funding requirements.
Milestone year 1	As opportunities arise.
Progress	<p>Successful Heritage Fund bid for the Lost Peatlands Project £434,751 development phase, with the potential to apply for a further £1.8million HF funding with overall project cost of £2.1 million.</p> <p>Money secured from the WG GI capital grant. The Council led on the regional, multi partner project. The project included mapping demand and opportunity areas, engaging with local communities, GI design and delivery of on the ground GI infrastructure.</p> <p>Additional funding has also been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural Resources Wales for distinct areas;</p>

4. Action Report

	Dyffryn Railway Wildlife Site and Craig Gwladus Country Park. Each were delivered in partnership with dedicated community groups: Afan Environment Volunteers and Friends of Craig Gwladus respectively.
Milestone year 2	As opportunities arise.
Progress	<p>Funding was secured for the Connecting Green Infrastructure – South West Wales Project, through the Welsh Government Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (EnRAW). £425K was drawn down for the region, with a further application for £2.6M progressed to full application through the RDP ENRaW funding stream.</p> <p>Additional funding was secured for further delivery at Craig Gwladus Country Park as part of a long term strategy, whilst Dyffryn Railway delivered again its final year of funding.</p> <p>The Council is a collaborative partner in the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Cymru Project, providing a supporting role for NPT's Nature Partnership. Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) are project lead, and was again funded through the ENRaW funding stream.</p>
Recommendation	<p>Amend action as set out below:</p> <p>Apply for funding as opportunities arise, to continue to deliver on Working with Nature, for biodiversity, or as part of strategic, multi-functional projects delivering multiple benefits.</p>

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

NRAP Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation

3.1	CURRENT MANAGEMENT
Action	NPTC areas are currently being managed to ensure their resilience.
Reporting mechanism	GIS layer kept of areas under active management.
Milestone year 1	Sites continue to be managed for the resilience of our natural environment.
Progress	Nature Conservation Sites' GIS layer created and maintained.
Milestone year 2	There is an increase in sites being managed for the resilience of our natural environment.
Progress	There has been an overall increase in the area of land being managed through the creation of a reptile compensation site on council land.

4. Action Report

Recommendation	<p>Retain, but amend measure from ‘number of sites’ to an area based measure, and to exclude areas within the verge management scheme.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism: reported through the KPI’s within the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Milestones year 3 - Agree an amended KPI as part of the Corporate Plan.</p>
----------------	--

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

3.2	HABITAT MANAGEMENT THROUGH DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
Action	Through the development management process habitat management plans are put in place increasing the resilience of our natural environment and improving the management of S7 habitats.
Reporting mechanism	C&WT Planning spreadsheet.
Milestone year 1	Appropriate assessments of ecosystems resilience submitted through the planning process and appropriate measures to deliver improvements taken.
Progress	Ecosystem resilience assessments are being submitted for relevant planning applications, however, due to the lack of national guidance the quality and detail of this assessment is lacking.
Milestone year 2	Appropriate assessments of ecosystems resilience submitted through the planning process and appropriate measures to deliver improvements taken.
Progress	Ecosystem resilience assessments are being submitted for relevant planning applications, however, due to the lack of national guidance the quality and detail of this assessment is lacking.
Recommendation	Retain.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

3.3	COED CYMRU
Action	NPTC are key partners in the Coed Cymru initiative, Wales’ foremost woodland organisation. Coed Cymru aims to improve the condition of Welsh woodland and integrate new woodlands into the landscape, through the provision of advice, support, innovation and access to grant aid. They bring research about the role of trees in flooding, soils and water, agricultural productivity and wider ecosystem services into practice.
Reporting mechanism	Annual funding reports.

4. Action Report

Milestone year 1	As Coed Cymru objectives.
Progress	Woodland management advice ongoing and woodland creation plans approved and implemented on private land, including local businesses.
Milestone year 2	As Coed Cymru objectives.
Progress	Landowner advice continued with plans in place for future woodland creation. Collaborated with Green Infrastructure project on Trees for Schools project – planting trees across 11 school grounds in NPT. Worked with Tai Tarian (Registered Social Landlord (RSL)) – to identify and design planting on social housing sites throughout NPT.
Recommendation	Retain.
NRAP Objectives	

3.4	AREA STATEMENTS
Action	NPTCBC will assist NRW in writing and implementing Area Statements as required.
Reporting mechanism	As required.
Milestone year 1	As appropriate.
Progress	NRW have not sought NPT input yet.
Milestone year 2	As appropriate.
Progress	Hosted an Area Statement workshop in The Quays, fed back on questions NRW required. Attended and contributed towards numerous Area Statement stakeholder events. Area Statements have now been published.
Recommendation	Amend action as set out below: The Council will assist NRW in implementing Area Statements as required.
NRAP Objectives	

Proposed new action

3.5	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT
Action	The Council will undertake a Green Infrastructure Assessment (GIA) in line with the requirements of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) for Neath Port Talbot (NPT).
Reporting mechanism	LDP Planning Inspectorate and Welsh Government approval as part of the evidence base that will underpin the LDP.
Milestone year 3	Engagement, participation and contribution in partnership with the LDP Team to produce a GIA for the Authority.
Milestone year 4	Engagement, participation and contribution in partnership with the LDP Team to produce a GIA for the Authority.
Milestone year 5	GIA complete.

4. Action Report

Recommendation	Adopt as part of the new Plan.					
NRAP Objectives			3	4	5	

Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

4.1	INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES (INNS)
Action	INNS are dealt with through the development management process by requesting surveys and conditioning remedial actions where appropriate.
Reporting mechanism	Planning decision notices.
Milestone year 1	Appropriate conditions applied where INNS are identified.
Progress	Ongoing.
Milestone year 2	Appropriate conditions applied where INNS are identified.
Progress	Ongoing. There are additional activities being undertaken on Council owned land.
Recommendation	Amend action and Reporting Mechanism as set out below: Action - A proactive approach is taken to dealing with INNS including Development Management Process and treatment on Council land. Reporting Mechanism - C&WT Planning spreadsheet and BDP Spreadsheet.

NRAP Objectives	1		3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	--	---	---	---	---

4.2	AIR QUALITY
Action	The air quality implications of plans and projects are fully assessed for their potential effects on sensitive habitats and species through the HRA process.
Reporting mechanism	C&WT Planning spreadsheet.
Milestone year 1	All development proposals assessed as appropriate.
Progress	Ongoing.
Milestone year 2	All development proposals assessed as appropriate.
Progress	There have been no plans or projects that have required a HRA in the period since the Plan was written.
Recommendation	Retain.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

4.3	GLAMORGAN GRAZING
-----	--------------------------

4. Action Report

Action	NPTCBC is currently supporting PONT to set up a Glamorgan Grazing project which allows land to be managed in a sensitive way. Whilst the project continues to be led by PONT, we will input into the project through landowner and grazier engagement, and identification of sites.
Reporting mechanism	Database will be held by PONT, with local contacts shared with C&WT.
Milestone year 1	Project set up and initial lists of grazers and landowners available.
Progress	List set up.
Milestone year 2	List is being utilised to bring sites under our ownership into conservation grazing.
Progress	PONT have lost their funding. Due to this loss of funding, the project is unable to continue.
Recommendation	Remove.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

4.4	STATE OF NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT (SoNaRR)
Action	Review the SoNaRR report and identify key pressures for NPT.
Reporting mechanism	Report on key pressures identified via SoNaRR.
Milestone year 1	Report written.
Progress	Key pressures for NPT were identified from SoNaRR.
Milestone year 2	Any additional actions identified and actioned, or built into the next review process.
Progress	There was an interim SoNaRR published by WG and several other projects are gathering data – these will be used to identify local pressures.
Recommendation	Amend Action and Reporting Mechanism as set out below: Action: Collate all of the local information and identify local pressures. Reporting Mechanism: Report on local pressures identified.

NRAP Objectives				4		
-----------------	--	--	--	---	--	--

Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

5.1	DATA CAPTURE
Action	NPT uses a range of data capture tools and techniques. This has led to a large number of species records which are passed on to the Local Records Centre and, therefore, shared with the wider community.

4. Action Report

Reporting mechanism	Metadata from MapMate.
Milestone year 1	Maintenance of the MapMate database.
Progress	Ongoing.
Milestone year 2	Maintenance of the MapMate database.
Progress	Ongoing. NPTC Biodiversity has generated 11,785 records to date.
Recommendation	Amend Milestones - Maintenance of the MapMate database and Biodiversity GIS layers.

NRAP Objectives		2		4	5	
-----------------	--	---	--	---	---	--

5.2	SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION
Action	NPTC have a programme of identifying sites that qualify as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). This allows us to assess the quality of a site against national guidelines and each site will be reviewed within 10 years. Within this reporting round, we will ensure that all SINC's have been reviewed within the 10 year timescale. Following this, we will introduce a programme of, on average, 10% of SINC's being reviewed annually and QGIS layer updated and shared with SEWBRc.
Reporting mechanism	Annual SINC report produced.
Milestone year 1	Put together a programme of sites to be reviewed.
Progress	Sites identified for review on a rolling 10 year programme.
Milestone year 2	Carry out a review of all SINC's that are scheduled for review this year.
Progress	17 sites were reviewed (target 12).
Recommendation	Amend Milestones - Carry out a review of all SINC's that are scheduled for review this year. Undertake SINC surveys on new sites as necessary, designating where appropriate.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

5.3	SURVEYS
Action	NPTCBC provides secretariat for the NPT Nature Partnership which includes a number of specialist surveyors and SEWBRc. We utilise this expertise by organising surveys for targeted sites and species.
Reporting mechanism	Evidence based report by C&WT.
Milestone year 1	Work with the Partnership to take forward specialist surveys where most appropriate.

4. Action Report

Progress	Colliery spoil biodiversity initiative 2018 (report available). Specialist invertebrate surveys identified the high quality of our coal spoil as a habitat.
Milestone year 2	Work with the Partnership to take forward specialist surveys where most appropriate.
Progress	Blue ground beetle 2019 run by Buglife. Skewen is the only area in Wales where this beetle is found. Several suitable woodland were surveyed and population estimates gathered. Craig Gwladus bio blitz 2019. With members of the NPT Nature Partnership, Friends of Craig Gwladus the species list for the site was updated.
Recommendation	Retain.
NRAP Objectives	

5.4	RECORD CENTRE SEARCHES
Action	All planning applications containing biodiversity information must be accompanied by a SEWBReC search undertaken by/on behalf of the applicant, unless agreement is reached with the C&WT that sufficient justification exists to negate this need.
Reporting mechanism	C&WT Planning spreadsheet.
Milestone year 1	All biodiversity information contained in a planning application must be accompanied by a SEWBReC search, unless agreed otherwise.
Progress	Ongoing.
Milestone year 2	All biodiversity information contained in a planning application must be accompanied by a SEWBReC search, unless agreed otherwise.
Progress	Ongoing.
Recommendation	Retain.
NRAP Objectives	

5.5	BIODIVERSITY COMPENSATION SCHEME
Action	The grant funded Biodiversity Compensation Scheme is currently researching the potential for a compensations scheme that would allow development to move along quicker by banking compensation sites.
Reporting mechanism	As grant funding reporting.
Milestone year 1	Incorporate research findings from the 2015 project into Biodiversity SPG.
Progress	Completed.
Milestone year 2	Implement SPG via the development management process.

4. Action Report

Progress	Working group set up and met. Identifying potential compensation sites but only 1 site being progressed at the moment.
Recommendation	Amend Action and Reporting Mechanism as set out below: Action - Implement the compensation scheme as set out within the Biodiversity SPG. Reporting Mechanism – C&WT Planning spreadsheet.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

5.6	RESILIENT WALES GOAL
Action	Contribute data towards the Wales biodiversity indicators for the Resilient Wales goal of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
Reporting mechanism	Responses.
Milestone year 1	As required.
Progress	No data has been requested by WG.
Milestone year 2	As required.
Progress	No data has been requested by WG.
Recommendation	Retain.

NRAP Objectives	1				5	6
-----------------	---	--	--	--	---	---

5.7	BIODIVERSITY PLAN EVIDENCE
Action	Evidence to be collected to ensure compliance with this Plan.
Reporting mechanism	All reporting to be gathered and collated to report on this Plan.
Milestone year 1	End of year report.
Progress	Completed and fed into this Report.
Milestone year 2	End of year report.
Progress	Completed and fed into this Report.
Recommendation	Retain.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

NRAP Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

6.1	COUNTRYSIDE AND WILDLIFE TEAM RESOURCES
Action	There is currently enough skills and capacity in the Countryside and Wildlife Team to co-ordinate the work needed to comply with the legislation, however sustaining this in the long term will be a challenge given budgetary pressures.

4. Action Report

Reporting mechanism	This duty reporting.
Milestone year 1	Secure the temporary post on a permanent basis.
Progress	Secured new, permanent, Biodiversity Implementation Officer post including a specific remit to implement this Plan. Income funded Graduate Ecologist employed to help build internal consultancy service.
Milestone year 2	Maintain current staffing levels.
Progress	Additional staff linked to specific grant-funded project employed - Lost Peatlands (project manager, 2x part-time ecologists) - Green Infrastructure Project (Green Infrastructure Officer).
Recommendation	Amend Milestones as set out below: Milestones - Maintain current core staff levels and retain / employ additional project staff to deliver grant funded projects as and when funding becomes available.

NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

6.2	NPT NATURE PARTNERSHIP
Action	Continue to support the NPT Nature Partnership, providing the secretariat, steering the objectives and collating information on member activities through the Biodiversity Officer post.
Reporting mechanism	Partnership minutes.
Milestone year 1	Continue to provide secretariat for the NPT Nature Partnership.
Progress	Ongoing.
Milestone year 2	Continue to provide secretariat for the NPT Nature Partnership.
Progress	Ongoing.
Recommendation	Amend Action as set out below: To reflect the supporting role the Biodiversity Officer has with supporting partnership actions, the following amendment to the action is proposed: Continue to support the NPT Nature Partnership, providing the secretariat, steering the objectives and supporting delivery of member action through the Biodiversity Officer post.

NRAP Objectives						6
-----------------	--	--	--	--	--	---

6.3	BIODIVERSITY CHAMPION
Action	A NPTC Councillor is appointed Biodiversity Champion and attends events/meetings as appropriate.

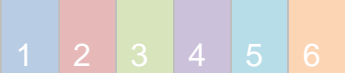
4. Action Report

Reporting mechanism	Attendance at regular meetings.					
Milestone year 1	Continued engagement as appropriate.					
Progress	A good working relationship has been established between the Biodiversity Champion and the C&W Team, with support provided as required.					
Milestone year 2	Continued engagement as appropriate.					
Progress	A good working relationship has been established between the Biodiversity Champion and the C&W Team, with support provided as required.					
Recommendation	Retain.					
NRAP Objectives	1					6

6.4	NPT NATURE PLAN					
Action	Through the NPT Nature Plan, maximise opportunities to deliver priorities via volunteers and partners.					
Reporting mechanism	LBAP spreadsheet.					
Milestone year 1	Spreadsheet is being updated with a continual process of new actions being added and delivered.					
Progress	Change to new Nature Plan.					
Milestone year 2	Spreadsheet is being updated with a continual process of new actions being added and delivered.					
Progress	Limited reporting whilst new Nature Plan being developed.					
Recommendation	<p>Amend action and Reporting Mechanism as set out below:</p> <p>(There is a new plan (Nature Recovery Action Plan) being written by the NPT Nature Partnership as part of the LNP Cymru project).</p> <p>Action 6.4 - Nature Recovery Action Plan</p> <p>Reporting Mechanisms: <i>Awaiting new reporting mechanisms from WG.</i></p> <p>Milestones: Delivery of biodiversity conservation as per Nature action plan/ LNP Cymru Project. Reporting as per grant requirements.</p>					
NRAP Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6

6.5	AREA STATEMENTS					
Action	Feed into the delivery of Area Statements where appropriate.					
Reporting mechanism	As appropriate.					
Milestone year 1	As appropriate.					
Progress	NRW have not sought NPT input yet.					

5. Conclusions

Milestone year 2	As appropriate.
Progress	Hosted Area Statement workshop in The Quays, fed back on questions NRW required. Attended and contributed towards numerous Area Statement stakeholder events.
Recommendation	Remove - replicated in Action 3.4.
NRAP Objectives	

5 Conclusions

5.1 New Actions

- 5.1.1 Since adoption of the Plan, new legislation has been introduced requiring the Local Authority to act as a SuDS (Sustainable Drainage) Approving Body (SAB). The SAB requires the management of surface water drainage for new developments to comply with mandatory National Standards for SuDS. Once built and functioning in accordance with approved proposals, the SuDS are adopted by the Local Authority. One of the Standards of SuDs relates to biodiversity and consequently the C&WT are a consultee on all SABs applications in relation to the biodiversity Standard. This function is dealt with in Action 1.1 through the biodiversity advisory service.
- 5.1.2 At the time of writing, the Council is preparing a number of new strategies/assessments in relation to issues such as decarbonisation and green infrastructure. A new Action 1.8 has been included to adopt and implement general strategies as they are put forward.
- 5.1.3 The 2018 Green Infrastructure project resulted in a suite of bespoke GIS layers and plans identifying demand and opportunity maps for a number of different interventions for differing needs. These maps will feed into the Green Infrastructure Assessment (GIA) which is now covered by a new Action 3.5.

5.2 Overview

- 5.2.1 The Council has a long tradition of environmental conservation through dedicated staff, strong policy implementation and links to the wider community. The Plan has allowed the Authority to further embed biodiversity into decision making outside of the traditional service areas. As this was a new plan the first 1 ½ years has primarily focused on getting to know about wider services being delivered by the Council and details of corporate governance. Appointing a specific officer to bring together The Plan ensures that there is no duplication and all areas of work are covered.
- 5.2.2 Local Authorities are large and extremely multi-functional and consequently it has taken longer than anticipated to carry out the internal service area audit and the land audit. These actions are ongoing with milestones for the updated Plan to reflect this ongoing activity.
- 5.2.3 The Council were one of the first Local Authorities to publish a Biodiversity Duty Plan. Implementation of the plan is led by the Biodiversity Implementation Officer

and it complements other duties including supporting the NPT Nature Partnership and internal collaborations. Although some actions have taken longer to fulfil than expected, progress has been made on all actions.



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

APPENDIX 2

First Stage Assessment: Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) - First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

Initiative description and summary: Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2017 Implementation Report
Service Area: Planning Policy, Planning and Public Protection
Directorate: Environment and Regeneration

2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users	✓	
Staff	✓	
Wider community	✓	
Internal administrative process only		✓

3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age		✓				Biodiversity affects all generations and all areas of society, the actions set out within the Biodiversity Duty Plan (2017), which the attached Implementation Report monitors progress against, encourages inclusivity and involvement. Many of the projects aim to bring communities together creating and improving spaces (i.e. open space, Green Infrastructure (GI), Nature Reserves) for all members of society to meet, explore, exercise and learn. Research states being close to nature improves mental health and wellbeing.
Disability		✓				
Gender Reassignment		✓				
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓				
Pregnancy/Maternity		✓				
Race		✓				
Religion/Belief		✓				
Sex		✓				
Sexual orientation		✓				Implementation of the actions will be inclusive and will involve the Countryside and Wildlife Team (C&WT) working with all

						staff / sections throughout the Council, the wider public and a wide range of partner organisations including those from the public, private and community / voluntary sectors.
--	--	--	--	--	--	---

4. Does the initiative impact on:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/ How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language		✓				<p>All of the actions contained within the 2017 BDP adhere to the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 and any amendments to actions or new proposed actions recommended by the Implementation Report will also adhere to these Regulations.</p> <p>As all of the technical names of species and habitats are required to be translated by the Regulations, as a result, it is felt that the opportunity for people to use and expand upon their Welsh Language vocabulary has increased providing a positive impact (albeit low) on people's use of the Welsh language.</p>
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English		✓				<p>All of the actions contained within the 2017 BDP adhere to the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 and any amendments to actions or new proposed actions recommended by the Implementation Report will also adhere to these Regulations.</p> <p>All communication via the Authority's social media platforms and websites; radio broadcasts and reports etc... (whether written, visual or verbal), is translated into Welsh to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than English.</p>

5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity	✓				H	This is the remit of the 2017 BDP and Report. Actions contained within the BDP and monitored, with recommendations, through the Implementation Report, ensures that the Authority meets its statutory duty to

						<p>maintain and enhance biodiversity as set out within the Environment (Wales) 2016 Act.</p> <p>One of the actions incorporated within the 2017 BDP was to include the impact on Biodiversity into the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to improve the Council's decision-making process.</p>
<p>To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.</p>	✓				H	<p>This is one of the aims of the 2017 BDP and Implementation Report. Actions contained within the BDP and monitored, with recommendations, through the Implementation Report, ensure that the Authority meets its statutory duty to promote the resilience of ecosystems, supporting protection of the wider environment, as set out within the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.</p> <p>Numerous projects and initiatives organised by the C&WT and partners to contribute towards meeting the Authority's Biodiversity Duty (as required by the Act) are set out within the 2017 BDP with progress and further recommendations for improvement listed within the Implementation Report. For example, the Connecting Green Infrastructure – South West Wales regional project.</p>

6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):

	Yes	No	Details
<p>Long term - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people</p>	✓		<p>By monitoring the actions set out within the 2017 BDP the Authority can review the progress that is being made towards achieving its Biodiversity Duty. Progress has been made on all of the actions within the BDP with the majority, if not all, having a direct or indirect link to supporting the long-term well-being of people. Through conserving and enhancing Biodiversity now, will benefit the long term well-being of future generations.</p>

<p>Integration - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives</p>	<p>✓</p>		<p>Positive action on biodiversity is far reaching and all-encompassing and therefore will have a positive impact on the Council's wellbeing objectives. A species and habitat-rich environment will ultimately improve the well-being of children, young people and all adults living in the County Borough.</p>
<p>Involvement - how people have been involved in developing the initiative</p>	<p>✓</p>		<p>Whilst officers from across the Council's Environment Directorate have been mainly involved in developing the actions included within the 2017 BDP, the progress review of the actions contained within the Plan has been undertaken by the Biodiversity Implementation officer within the C&WT who ensures that the data on the actions is appropriately stored, assessed and accurately reported.</p> <p>Implementation of the Biodiversity Duty will be delivered through the functions of the Authority as a whole. There are a number of established internal and external working groups where issues are raised, information disseminated and best practice shared. The Working Groups, together with partners, stakeholders, volunteers and Members (promoted by the Biodiversity Champion) will provide the mechanism to ensure the BDP and the accompanying Implementation Report remains fit for purpose and responsive to changes in circumstances.</p>
<p>Collaboration - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions</p>	<p>✓</p>		<p>Achieving the identified actions set out within the 2017 BDP and subsequent revisions, will require significant contributions internally from across the Council and externally from a wide variety of partner organisations, including cross-boundary collaboration where appropriate. Partner organisations will include those from the public, private and community/voluntary sectors.</p>
<p>Prevention - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>✓</p>		<p>By seeking to address the loss of biodiversity and meet the Council's Section 6 Duty, the Implementation Report provides recommendations on how actions can be improved for tackling issues and barriers for implementation at the local level. The various actions (individually and collectively), will seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems. The ongoing monitoring and evaluation of actions through the Implementation Report will enable the Council to limit any unintended consequences and help mitigate any negative impacts.</p>

7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate)

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required	✓
Reasons for this conclusion	
<p>Equalities – Biodiversity affects all generations and all areas of society. Implementation of the actions will be inclusive and will involve the Countryside and Wildlife Team working with all staff / sections throughout the Council, the wider public and a wide range of partner organisations including those from the public, private and community / voluntary sectors.</p> <p>Welsh Language – All of the actions contained within the 2017 BDP adhere to the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1)) Regulations 2015 and any amendments to actions or new proposed actions recommended by the Implementation Report will also adhere to these Regulations. All communication via the Authority’s social media platforms and websites; radio broadcasts and reports etc... are translated into Welsh and the technical names of species and habitats are also translated which increases people’s opportunity to use and expand upon their Welsh Language vocabulary.</p> <p>Biodiversity – This is the remit of the 2017 BDP and Implementation Report. Actions contained within the BDP and monitored, with recommendations, through the Implementation Report, ensures that the Authority meets its statutory duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity as set out within the Environment (Wales) 2016 Act. One of the actions incorporated within the 2017 BDP was to include the impact on Biodiversity into the Council’s Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). Additionally, numerous projects and initiatives organised by the C&WT and partners contribute towards meeting the Authority’s statutory duty to promote the resilience of ecosystems, supporting protection of the wider environment.</p> <p>Well-being of Future Generation (5 ways of Working) – the BDP 2017 Report embraces all five ways of working. The Implementation Report provides progress achieved on the 2017 BDP actions and recommendations for future improvement in order to meet the Council’s Biodiversity Duty. The BDP and accompanying Implementation Report positively integrates with the Council’s well-being objectives; involves people and partners in its development and implementation; and seeks to prevent problems getting worse.</p>	

	Name	Position	Date
Completed by	Lana Beynon	Planning Policy Manager	16/09/2020
Signed off by	Ceri Morris	Head of Service	20/09/2020