



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

15th November 2023

Report of the Director of Environment and Regeneration Nicola Pearce

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 – Consideration of the Biodiversity Duty Plan (2020-2023) Implementation Report and the updated Biodiversity Duty Plan (2023-2026) along with the publication procedures to be implemented.

Purpose of the Report

To consider the Biodiversity Duty Plan (2020-2023) Implementation Report and the updated Biodiversity Duty Plan (2023-2026) along with the publication procedures to be implemented.

This Report was considered by Cabinet on 8th November 2023 where it was commended to Council for approval.

Executive Summary

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced a duty (the S6 Duty) on public authorities 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 is therefore required by the Act to prepare, publish and keep under review a plan setting out how it intends to comply with the duty.

The last iteration of the Council's Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) was published in December 2020. This report presents the Implementation Report for this Plan and sets out a number of recommendations to be incorporated into a revised version of the Plan. These include updating or removing actions to reflect the current position and adding new actions to achieve against updated or new legislation, policies and plans.

This report therefore seeks consideration of the BDP (2020-2023) Implementation Report, and endorsement of the third iteration of the BDP (2023-2026) along with the publication procedures to be implemented.

Background

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced a duty (the S6 Duty) on public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity, thereby promoting the resilience of ecosystems, in the exercise of its functions. The Council is required by the Act to prepare and publish a plan setting out how it intends to comply with the Duty.

Following the publication of the Plan, the Act further requires that all public authorities must publish a report on what they have done to comply with the S6 Duty. In order to comply with the Duty, Councils 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.

The Biodiversity Duty Plan outlines the natural heritage that exists within Neath Port Talbot, why it is so special, how it is threatened and what activities are already underway to protect them. It also sets out the mechanisms for delivery, along with detailed actions to be achieved and milestones for reporting.

Implementation of the Biodiversity Duty Plan

The 'Implementation Report' associated with the existing BDP sets out what has been achieved over the period of the BDP (2020-2023), what needs to be improved, and what revisions and improvements are necessary to the published BDP, including recommendations of how to move each of the actions forward.

The key outcomes and recommendations set out in the BDP (2020-2023) have informed the preparation of the updated BDP (2023-2026). There are a number of recommended minor changes to the actions, which includes the removal of two actions (as they are no longer applicable) and the addition of some new actions in order to achieve against updated or new legislation, policies and plans.

The full BDP (2020-2023) Implementation Report is presented in **Appendix 2** – a summary of changes, removals and additions to the actions can be found on pages 41-45. The key changes and additions recommended by the Implementation Report for inclusion in the new BDP (2023-2026) include updating (11) and removing (2) actions to reflect the current position, and introducing the following (8) new actions to achieve against updated or new legislation, policies and plans:

1. Maximise the biodiversity potential of 'Sustainable Drainage Systems' through the 'SuDs Approval Body' processes;
2. Include Biodiversity / Sustainability impacts as a consideration in the procurement process;
3. Address current issues that cause a threat to nature such as preventing the installation of artificial grass and honey bee hives on Council land;
4. 30x30 Target – examine the potential to increase land managed / protected for biodiversity to 30% of all land by 2030;
5. Continue to explore opportunities for Habitat Creation on Council Buildings – (taking into account building use and maintenance commitments);
6. Biodiversity Contact created for each service area; and
7. Investigate the Motion for the Ocean¹ and potential deliverables for Neath Port Talbot.
8. Review/assess opportunities for nature in public spaces/public realm.

Biodiversity Duty Plan (2023-2026)

The updated Biodiversity Duty Plan (2023-2026) is presented in **Appendix 3**. As before, the Plan has been prepared by the Countryside and Wildlife Team in consultation with departments across the Council. The document outlines actions already being undertaken by the Council and further actions that will be undertaken to ensure compliance with the Duty.

The Plan focuses on evaluating our existing work practices and assimilating the 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.

Following Welsh Government guidance, the actions assigned to the Plan have been drawn up in line with the objectives of the Welsh Government's Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) for Wales. The NRAP sets out the objectives needed in Wales to deliver its ambition to reverse the decline in biodiversity. It also sets out the actions needed to contribute to these objectives, which, where relevant to the Council, have been incorporated into the Plan.

The 6 objectives incorporated into the Plan include requirements such as embedding biodiversity into decision making at all levels; managing and enhancing

¹ A model 'Ocean Recovery Declaration' – or 'Motion for the Ocean' – seeks to help local authorities play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring. The world's Ocean is a fundamental part of climate regulation and must be considered as part of an effective climate emergency response.

our habitats; improving our understanding and monitoring of biodiversity; and putting in place a framework for delivery.

Advice and guidance on implementation of the Duty, and reporting against the Plan, will be undertaken by the Countryside and Wildlife Team.

Publication Procedures and Next Steps

Pending approval by Council, the BDP (2020-2023) Implementation Report and the BDP (2023-2026) will be submitted to the Welsh Government and made available on the Council's website. In accordance with the Council's Welsh Language Standards Policy, the document will be made available in Welsh.

Hard copies of the Plan will also be 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 post and package at the prevailing cost. Electronic copies will be made available at no cost.

Moving forward, at the end of every 3-year period an Implementation Report will be prepared in order to again review the actions and progress made towards achieving them. The next report will therefore be produced towards the end of 2026.

Financial Impacts

Given there is no additional funding being made available for the implementation of this Duty, the actions assigned to the Plan are intended to be achievable within current budgets, with a focus on making changes to work practices that can be achieved without placing a financial burden on the Council.

Improvement works requiring additional resources are intended to be delivered through the use of external grants or partnership working.

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 1**) has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

In summary, the updated BDP will make a positive contribution to biodiversity conservation and enhancement in NPT (and beyond), which have knock on positive outcomes for people in the County Borough, particularly in relation to health and well-being. The Plan ensures the Council will comply with its statutory duty under the Environment Wales Act and particularly contribute to the Resilient Wales Goal of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Council Wellbeing objectives and global commitments for biodiversity.

Socio-Economic Duty

Biodiversity affects all generations and all areas of society. Implementation of the actions will be inclusive and as such will support equality and social cohesion. The Plan and any related communications will be provided in both Welsh and English. Through the conservation of biodiversity the public will benefit through improved health and well-being, particularly in communities of high deprivation and health inequalities.

Valleys Communities Impacts

Delivering on the S6 Duty through implementation of the Biodiversity Duty Plan would bring equal benefits across the whole of the County Borough.

Workforce Impacts

No current implications but will be kept under review and reported to Cabinet following further development of the actions.

Legal Impacts

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts

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

Consultation

The Plan has been the subject of internal consultation and its final form reflects the outcome of that process. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

That having considered the report and having due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment, it is resolved to commend the following to Council for approval:

1. The Biodiversity Duty Plan (2020-2023) Implementation Report as presented in **Appendix 2** be agreed.
2. The Biodiversity Duty Plan (2023-2026) as presented in **Appendix 3** be agreed.
3. The publication procedures as set out in the report are implemented.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

The recommendations are needed to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and to ensure that the Council commits to take steps to help nature recover.

Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – First Stage Integrated Impact Assessment.

Appendix 2 – NPTC Biodiversity Duty Plan (2020-2023) Implementation Report.

Appendix 3 – NPTC Biodiversity Duty Plan (2023-2026).

List of Background Papers

Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales.

State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for Neath Port Talbot 2023.

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APPENDIX 1 : Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) – First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

| | |
|-----------|---|
| | Title of the Initiative: Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2020-2023 Implementation Report and BDP 2023-2026 |
| 1a | Service Area: Planning and Public Protection, Planning Policy, (Countryside and Wildlife Team) |
| 1b | Directorate: Environment and Regeneration |
| 1c | <p>Summary of the initiative: Presenting the Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2020-2023 Implementation Report and the new BDP 2023-2026 for consideration and adoption. These are produced in line with our legal Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (the section 6 or S6 duty) under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.</p> <p>The Countryside and Wildlife Team within the Environment Directorate has coordinated and produced this report and plan, but responsibility for delivery of the plan is the responsibility of the Council as a whole.</p> |
| 1d | Is this a ‘strategic decision’? Yes |
| 1e | <p>Who will be directly affected by this initiative? The BDP outlines how NPT CBC will meet its statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity in exercising its functions. Responsibility of delivery of the plan falls on the council as a whole and in some cases, ways of working for staff may need to adjust to ensure that service areas are meeting their Section 6 duty. Service users and the wider community will benefit from the BDP, which ensures that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced with regards to NPT CBC activities, maintaining and improving the natural environment of the county. The BDP is not aimed at any particular protected groups.</p> |
| 1f | <p>When and how were people consulted? Staff members whose service areas may be implicated have been consulted on relevant actions to ensure they are achievable. External consultation has not been undertaken as the proposed actions are considered to be the minimum necessary to meet the statutory Section 6 duty and the actions within the BDP should not directly impact on service users or the wider community, with each action requiring further consultation if necessary.</p> |
| 1g | <p>What were the outcomes of the consultation? Minor changes to some actions following recommendation of relevant staff members.</p> |

2. Evidence

What evidence was used in assessing the initiative?

- Feedback from internal staff consultation;
- [State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for NPT](#);
- NPT Well-being Assessment;
- NPT Well-being Plan;
- Wildlife and Countryside ‘People and the Natural Environment – a critical partnership’;
- Paavola 2017 ‘Health impacts of climate change and health and social inequalities in the UK’;
- ‘Health effects of climate change in the UK’ Department of Health 2001;
- Levy and Patz 2015 ; Climate Change and Public Health’;
- ‘Human Health: Impacts, Adaptation, and Co-benefits’ IPCC 2014; and
- Díaz S, Fargione J, Chapin FS 3rd, Tilman D. Biodiversity loss threatens human well-being. PLoS Biol. 2006.

3. Equalities

a) How does the initiative impact on people who share a **protected characteristic**?

| Protected Characteristic | + | - | +/- | Why will it have this impact? |
|------------------------------|---|---|-----|---|
| Age | ✓ | | | Groups with protected characteristics have been identified as most at risk from biodiversity loss and climate change. The ecosystem services we receive from our natural environment e.g. flood management / pollination, are at risk from biodiversity loss. This is likely to disproportionately affect those with protected characteristics, who are most vulnerable to the loss of ecosystem services. For example, Port Talbot has the lowest canopy cover in the county, which exacerbates the urban heat island effect and contributes to the ward having the highest temperatures in the County Borough and possibly Wales. This has a negative effect on older people, who are more likely to suffer with heat stress. |
| Disability | ✓ | | | |
| Gender reassignment | ✓ | | | |
| Marriage & civil partnership | ✓ | | | |
| Pregnancy and maternity | ✓ | | | |
| Race | ✓ | | | |
| Religion or belief | ✓ | | | |
| Sex | ✓ | | | The actions set out within the Biodiversity Duty Plan (2023-2026) aim to allow NPT CBC to maintain and enhance biodiversity. Actions within the plan, such as those aimed at tackling key pressures on species and habitats, will help nature to recover and therefore benefit all as |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|--|
| Sexual orientation | ✓ | | <p>well as reducing the risk to those groups with protected characteristics. It also 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Policies to prevent the unnecessary installations of artificial grass and honeybee hives will include caveats to allow their installation where there is sufficient reason to do so e.g. if it will have a negative impact for a protected characteristic. For example, where artificial grass is required for a sports field or honeybee hives required for food production or wellbeing reasons.</p> |
|--------------------|---|--|--|

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Some actions can be focussed where the need is identified as highest e.g. GI projects focus on where there is the greatest need e.g. where there is low canopy cover and higher levels of air pollution.

b) How will the initiative assist or inhibit the ability to meet the **Public Sector Equality Duty**?

| Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) | + | - | +/- | Why will it have this impact? |
|---|----------|----------|------------|--|
| To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation | | | ✓ | The BDP does not propose any initiatives to discriminate, harass or victimise. The plan itself does not positively or negatively discriminate against any individuals or groups of people. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| To advance equality of opportunity between different groups | | | ✓ | The BDP encourages inclusivity and involvement. It will provide equal opportunities to all different groups, no groups or individuals will be treated differently to others. |
| To foster good relations between different groups | ✓ | | | The BDP involves cross-department working to improve opportunities to enhance biodiversity and provide opportunities for different groups to work together to help nature recovery. An action within the BDP commits NPTCBC to coordinate the NPT Local Nature Partnership, an initiative which allows many different groups to work together to steer nature recovery in NPT. |

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Establish further communication links internally to improve cross-department working.

4. Socio Economic Duty

| Impact | Details of the impact/advantage/disadvantage |
|-----------------------|--|
| Positive/Advantage | Those living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others in the same society are most at risk from biodiversity loss and climate change. The BDP, by helping to maintain and enhance nature in NPT, will benefit all who live and work in NPT and though it does not directly target those with socio-economic disadvantage, the benefits may be more pronounced. |
| Negative/Disadvantage | N/A |
| Neutral | N/A |

What action will be taken to reduce inequality of outcome

Some actions can be focussed where the need is identified as highest e.g. GI projects focus on where there is the greatest need e.g. where there is low canopy cover and higher levels of air pollution.

5. Community Cohesion/Social Exclusion/Poverty

| | + | - | +/- | Why will it have this impact? |
|--------------------|---|---|-----|---|
| Community Cohesion | ✓ | | | Place-based projects leading from the BDP will be indiscriminate and inclusive, allowing everyone in the community to take part e.g. provision of bilingual wildlife walks. |
| Social Exclusion | | | ✓ | The BDP does not directly impact on social exclusion but it encourages cross-department working and can lead to initiatives which could positively impact on social exclusion e.g. Local Area Coordinators having the resources to engage socially excluded individuals in nature-based projects. |
| Poverty | ✓ | | | The BDP encourages inclusivity and involvement across all demographics of society and does not exclude those who may be affected by poverty. For example, wildlife events are free and in easy-to-get to locations. |

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

All initiatives undertaken through the BDP will be inclusive and undertake steps to maximise involvement.

6. Welsh

| | + | - | +/- | Why will it have this effect? |
|--|---|---|-----|---|
| What effect does the initiative have on: – people’s opportunities to use the Welsh language | ✓ | | | <p>All of the actions contained within the BDP adhere to the Welsh Language Standards and any amendments to actions or new proposed actions recommended by the Implementation Report will also adhere to these Standards.</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 and English languages equally | ✓ | | | <p>All of the actions contained within the BDP adhere to the Welsh Language Standards and any amendments to actions or new proposed actions recommended by the Implementation Report will also adhere to these Standards.</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> |

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Work with partners to improve the Welsh language offer for events.

7. Biodiversity

How will the initiative assist or inhibit the ability to meet the **Biodiversity Duty**?

| Biodiversity Duty | + | - | +/- | Why will it have this impact? |
|--|---|---|-----|--|
| To maintain and enhance biodiversity | ✓ | | | This is the remit of the BDP and Implementation Report. Actions contained within the BDP are 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. |
| To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc. | ✓ | | | This is one of the aims of the BDP and Implementation Report. Actions contained within the BDP are 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. 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 BDP with progress and further recommendations for improvement listed within the Implementation Report. For example, the Lost Peatlands Project. |

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Continue to update the BDP in line with new information and national plans and initiatives.

8. Well-being of Future Generations

How have the five ways of working been applied in the development of the initiative?

| Ways of Working | Details |
|--|---|
| i. Long term – looking at least 10 years (and up to 25 years) ahead | By monitoring the actions set out within the 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. |
| ii. Prevention – preventing problems occurring or getting worse | 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. |
| iii. Collaboration – working with other services internal or external | Achieving the identified actions set out within the 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. |
| iv. Involvement – involving people, ensuring they reflect the diversity of the population | Whilst officers from across the Council have been involved in developing the actions included within the BDP, the progress review of the actions contained within the Plan has been undertaken by the Ecologist (Plans and Projects) within the C&WT who ensures that the data on the actions is appropriately stored, assessed and accurately reported. |

| | |
|---|--|
| | 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. |
| v. Integration – making connections to maximise contribution to: | 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. |
| Council's well-being objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To ensure all our communities are thriving and sustainable. ▪ To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations. ▪ To ensure there are more secure, green and well paid jobs and that skills across the area are improved. |
| Other public bodies objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To ensure all our communities are thriving and sustainable. ▪ To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations. ▪ To ensure there are more secure, green and well paid jobs and that skills across the area are improved. |

9. Monitoring Arrangements

Provide information on the monitoring arrangements to:

Monitor the impact of the initiative on Equalities, Community Cohesion, the Welsh Measure, Biodiversity Duty and the Wellbeing Objectives.

Monitoring mechanisms and milestones for each action are defined within the BDP itself. If changes are made or new information comes to light with regards to Equalities, Community Cohesion, the Welsh Measure, Biodiversity Duty and the Wellbeing Objectives, this IIA will be refreshed to ensure it is still relevant and accurate.

10. Assessment Conclusions

Please provide details of the conclusions reached in relation to each element of the assessment:

| | Conclusion |
|---|---|
| Equalities | Biodiversity affects all generations and all areas of society and nature recovery will help to reduce the risks for groups with protected characteristics. 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. |
| Socio Economic Disadvantage | Those living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others in the same society are most at risk from biodiversity loss and climate change. The BDP, by helping to maintain and enhance nature in NPT, will benefit all who live and work in NPT and though it does not directly target those with socio-economic disadvantage, the benefits may be more pronounced. |
| Community Cohesion/ Social Exclusion/Poverty | The BDP encourages partnership working on nature recovery projects and cross-boundary working across the whole of the council. No individuals or groups are excluded due to their social situation or if they are affected by poverty. |
| Welsh | All of the actions contained within the BDP adhere to the Welsh Language Standards and any amendments to actions or new proposed actions recommended by the Implementation Report will also adhere to these Standards. 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 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. 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 Generations | The BDP Report embraces all five ways of working. The Implementation Report provides progress achieved on the 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. |
|--|--|

11. Sign off

| | Name | Position | Date |
|----------------------|--------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Completed by | Lana Beynon | Planning Policy Manager | 29th September 2023 |
| Signed off by | Ceri Morris | Head of Planning & Public Protection | 2nd October 2023 |



Neath Port Talbot Council Biodiversity Duty Plan 2020-2023 Implementation Report



November 2023

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BDP: Biodiversity Duty Plan
C&W Team: NPT Council Countryside and Wildlife Team
ENRaW: Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being Scheme
GI: Green Infrastructure
IIA: Integrated Impact Assessment
LDP: Local Development Plan
LNR: Local Nature Reserve
LNP: Local Nature Partnership
NLHF: National Lottery Heritage Fund
NPT: Neath Port Talbot
NPTC: Neath Port Talbot Council
NRAP: Nature Recovery Action Plan
NRW: Natural Resources Wales
PSB: Public Service Board
RLDP: Replacement Local Development Plan
S6: Section 6 Duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016
SINC: Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
SPG: Supplementary Planning Guidance
SSSI: Special Site of Scientific Interest
SAB: SuDS Approving Body
SuDS: Sustainable Drainage System
WG: Welsh Government
WLGA: Welsh Local Government Association

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.



Figure 1. NPTC Offices at The Quays, with the neighbouring NPT Bee Friendly site

1.2. Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Biodiversity Duty Plan 2020-2023 Implementation Report

- 1.2.1. The second Biodiversity Duty Plan 2020-2023 was published in December 2021, following on from BDP 2017-2020, and adopting recommended changes as laid out in the BDP 2017-2020 Implementation Report.
- 1.2.2. BDP 2020-2023 outlines how NPTC intended to comply with the S6 duty, with targeted actions that would be undertaken by the Council to meet the requirements of the Act for the period of 2020-2023. 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.
- 1.2.3. This BDP 2020-2023 Implementation Report provides an overview of highlights, key outcomes and issues presented during delivery of the BDP 2020-2023. It reports on progress against actions and suggests recommendations for updates or new actions to be included in the next iteration of the BDP, BDP 2023-2026.



Figure 2. Peatland restoration taking place as part of the Lost Peatlands project. NPTC is lead partner on this project.

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 BDP in line with grant funding streams and to allow for political reporting the monitoring timeline aligns with financial years.
- 1.3.3. This implementation report is dated November 2023 as this is the date at which it gained approval at full Council, however, the report monitors the actions from initial publication up to financial year end 2023—i.e. 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023.
- 1.3.4. Accordingly, the Council will monitor the actions of the next BDP 2023-2026, from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2026.
- 1.3.5. The Implementation Report will be submitted to WG and placed on the Council's website.
- 1.3.6. The S6 duty guidance states that the Council can amend the BDP at any time. If such circumstances arise,

this report will appear as an appendix to the new BDP 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.

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 peat bogs extend right across the plateau into Rhondda Cynon Taf. Brownfield land such as coal tips scattered throughout the county support rare plants and invertebrates.



Figure 3. Honey Buzzard (c) Steve Roberts

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.

2.1.4. Delivery of the S6 Duty and implementation of the BDP is the responsibility of the Council as a whole. As of 2017, the coordination and monitoring of the BDP has been embedded into a staff post. Following a restructure of the Countryside and Wildlife Team in 2021, the Ecologist (Plans and Projects) of the Countryside and Wildlife Team is now lead officer for the BDP.

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 6). It also highlights key enablers and barriers that have or are continuing to influence action.

3.1. Key Biodiversity Actions

3.1.1. Governance / Corporate Processes

- 3.1.1.1. The Countryside and Wildlife Team continue to provide an advisory service to enable the council to consider biodiversity in a wide range of functions. This includes through the development management process, as part of the SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) Approving Body and for casual queries e.g. regarding land management.
- 3.1.1.2. Service assessments to determine their potential impact on biodiversity and opportunities for best practice have taken place for a number of council service areas. These have had the added benefit of establishing new contacts between the Countryside and Wildlife Team and other service areas, who are now aware of the advisory and consultancy services provided to enable them to achieve their biodiversity duty.

CASE STUDY: Service Assessments

Under Action 1.2. of BDP 2020-2023, all services were required to be risk assessed to determine their potential impact on biodiversity and opportunities for best practice. These service assessments were started in Year 5 (1st April 2022- 31st March 2023), beginning with the Environment and Regeneration Directorate. These service assessments have identified impact pathways of each service, any risks and opportunities for enhancement. They have also been valuable for raising awareness of the Biodiversity Duty amongst Accountable Managers. Some key opportunities for improvements to processes and achievable enhancements for service areas have been identified and are in progress as a result of these service assessments:

- Passenger Transport Unit are now helping to promote nature information and nature events and activities through video screens in transport hubs e.g. Neath Bus Station;
- Highways and Drainage now have in place a protocol for checking utility companies and others undertaking works on Local Authority land to ensure that the works do not negatively impact biodiversity;
- SAB and Highway Development Control are working with the Countryside and Wildlife Team to identify how SUDS can reach its full potential for biodiversity; and
- Officers from across the Environment directorate will be attending training on the BDP, how they recognise wildlife interest on site and when to involve the Countryside and Wildlife Team.

The service assessments are ongoing but expected to be completed in Year 6 (1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024) of BDP 2023-2026.

- 3.1.1.3. The Countryside and Wildlife Team have continued to provide a key service to other departments through consultancy. The Ecologists work closely with other departments from the start of project to completion, to ensure that works result in an enhancement for biodiversity.

CASE STUDY: Glynneath Flood Alleviation Scheme

The Highways and Drainage department were undertaking a Flood Alleviation Scheme in Glynneath in order to protect over two hundred properties from flooding. In order for works to take place, a number of trees were required to be felled and disturbance was caused to a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

The Highways and Drainage team secured the assistance of the Countryside and Wildlife Team early in the project to help minimise negative impact on biodiversity and design enhancements.

In order to mitigate and enhance for the works, a nature conservation management plan has been agreed for the SINC, which prior to these works, was not being routinely managed for nature and so was degrading. In addition, in order to replace the trees that were felled, the Woodland Officer in the Countryside and Wildlife Team will be strategically planting trees and hedgerows in locations that have a proven need for increased tree cover.

- 3.1.1.4. Elected Members and officers have undergone biodiversity training on a number of subjects including the Biodiversity Duty Plan, NPT Bee Friendly and Green Infrastructure. Regular training sessions are now programmed for officers, to increase understanding of the Biodiversity Duty, and to enable relevant staff members to recognise wildlife interest on site.



Figure 4. NPTC Staff Bat training walk at Margam Park

- 3.1.1.5. The Countryside and Wildlife Team have continued to collaborate, where appropriate, with other sections to aid in the development of strategies or plans that contribute towards biodiversity conservation or may impact on biodiversity.

CASE STUDY: NPT Bee Friendly

Action 6.5. of the BDP 2020-2023 placed a responsibility on NPTC to undertake a review of the Nature Conservation Sites scheme to include management of all verges and of key council owned sites.

In September 2020, a working group made up of members from the Countryside and Wildlife Team and Neighbourhood Services team was established. This group worked together to look specifically at management of grassland sites from the Nature Conservation Sites scheme.

In July 2021, the NPT Bee Friendly scheme was adopted, with the key aim to increase the extent of wildflower grassland across NPT.

Approximately 32 hectares are now under management as meadows through the NPT Bee Friendly scheme. A map of these sites is available [online here](#).



Figure 5. NPT Bee Friendly site in Tonmawr

- 3.1.1.6. The NPTC Corporate Plan 2022-2027 commits to delivering key actions against the objective ‘To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations’; including to further develop the NPT Nature Partnership and implement the BDP. The Public Service Board’s Well-being Plan (2023-2028) has recognised the threat presented by the nature crisis and therefore has strengthened its ambitions for nature and the environment.
- 3.1.1.7. NPTC Countryside and Wildlife Team has continued to provide the Secretariat for the NPT Local Nature Partnership and has supported the development of a [State of Nature of NPT](#), combined with a [Nature Recovery Action Plan](#) (NRAP). The Action Plan is a key mechanism for species and habitat conservation in the County. NPTC is supporting implementation of the NRAP on its own land and through support for other partners e.g. through securing funding for an LNP Grant Fund.

CASE STUDY: NPT for Nature

[NPT for Nature](#) is a sub-group for the NPT Local Nature Partnership, which is aimed at engaging with enthusiastic community groups and individuals that want to make a difference for nature in NPT, but perhaps need a hand to get going.

The group has met once every 3 months since January 2022 to discuss the important species and habitats in NPT, provide advice to anyone looking to start a project, and give ideas for activities and events that can be organised or participated in with local communities.

The group is facilitated by project staff funded by Welsh Government Local Places for Nature Fund and hosted by NPTC Countryside and Wildlife Team.

- 3.1.1.8. NPTC Countryside and Wildlife Team have continued to raise awareness of biodiversity through a variety of methods, including social media, interpretation panels on sites, leaflets and walks and talks.



Figure 6. NPT Bee Friendly Interpretation Panel

CASE STUDY: Wales Nature Week 2020

Wales Nature Week 2020 was held from the 30th May to 7th June 2020. Due to the pandemic, the usual programme of events and activities was unable to take place. A programme of virtual events was planned instead, with a number of these being hosted by NPTC on the NPT Wildlife social media channels. These events included:

- [Garden Bee Q&A](#) – 622 views
- [Moth Trap Live](#) – 2800 views ‘Brilliant session from Barry- learnt so much, thank you NPT for arranging’
- [Garden Dragons Q&A](#) – 506 views
- [Virtual Bat Walk](#) – 1600 views “Thanks Richard it’s been really interesting and thank you NPT wildlife for organising!”
- [Feathered Friends Q&A](#) with Laura Palmer NPTC Countryside and Wildlife Team – 372 views

- 3.1.1.9. A biodiversity audit on land within our ownership and control is underway, to identify where we have protected habitats and species on our land. The potential for managing this land for the benefit of biodiversity is determined on a case-by-case basis. Key biodiversity information for NPTC land holdings is now available to our Estates department, informing any decisions for the future of those land holdings. The audit started with protected and priority sites for biodiversity.
- 3.1.1.10. The Countryside and Wildlife Team have a proven track record of success of applying for and securing funding to undertake vital nature conservation work in the county. Over the period we are reporting on in this report, the Countryside and Wildlife Team drew down over £2million in funding from external sources.
- 3.1.1.11. As a result of said funding and of new NPTC strategies (e.g. NPT Bee Friendly) an increased area of NPTC land is managed for biodiversity. This now stands at 287 hectares, an increase of 127 hectares since the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) within the Corporate Plan were agreed in May 2022.



Figure 7. Cut and Collect management taking place under the NPT Bee Friendly scheme

- 3.1.1.12. NPTC considers biodiversity through the development management process, and through this process, habitat management plans are put in place increasing the resilience of our natural environment and improving the management of priority habitats.

CASE STUDY: Habitat Management through the Development Management Process

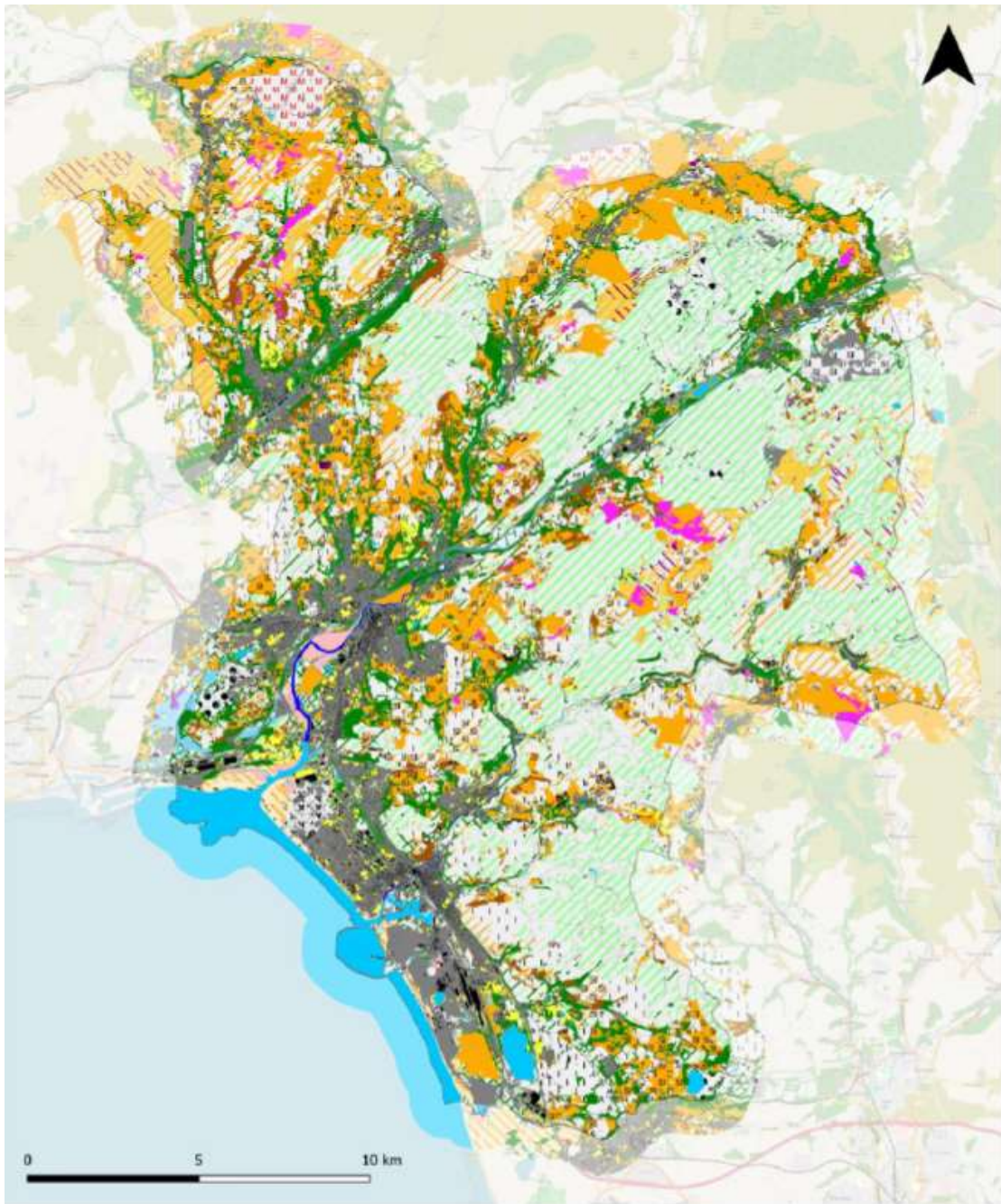
NPTC has continued to consider biodiversity (including species and habitats of principal importance, designated sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), habitats and species that meet the SINC criteria, and important natural features) through the development management process, in line with the Local Development Plan.

In October 2022, a planning application was approved for a new glass-processing factory on Baglan Way. The land in question is a SINC, designated for its post-industrial habitats and associated protected species. Post-industrial habitats such as these require management in order to retain the important features. Unfortunately, the site had been unmanaged for many years and as a result, the designating features were slowly being lost.

Although the proposed glass-processing factory would result in a loss of some of this SINC, a 50-year habitat management plan was agreed for the remainder of the site, safeguarding the important features of this site for 50 years into the future. As it is likely that without management these important features would have been lost in that time, this represents a net benefit for biodiversity. In addition, the factory will have a 'green roof' incorporating new habitat features such as bare ground, wildflowers and tussocky grassland of value to birds and invertebrates.

3.1.2. Surveying and Data

- 3.1.2.1. The Countryside and Wildlife Team continues to maintain and update species records for NPT through a MapMate database. The Countryside and Wildlife Team has also established a 'Biodiversity Master Map' to record any relevant information relating to biodiversity in the county. This is proving to be an invaluable tool for the Countryside and Wildlife Team for protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- 3.1.2.2. In order to inform the State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for NPT, NPTC secured funding to commission a new Phase 1 habitat map for NPT, drawn to a high degree of accuracy and precision. The resulting Phase 1 habitat map has provided key evidence for the assessment of ecosystem resilience of each habitat group in NPT (based on an assessment of diversity, extent, condition and connectivity of each habitat).



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| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| A1.1.1 - Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural | B6 - Marsh/marshy grassland | E3.1.1 - Modified valley mire | J1.2.1 - Sedge - acid/neutral |
| A1.1.2 - Broadleaved woodland - plantation | B5.1 - Marshy grassland <i>Juncus</i> dominated | E3.2.1 - Modified basin mire | J1.4.1 - Other exposure - acid/neutral |
| A1.2.1 - Coniferous woodland - semi-natural | B5.2 - Marshy grassland <i>Molinia</i> dominated | F1 - Swamp | J2.1 - Quarry |
| A1.2.2 - Coniferous woodland - plantation | B6 - Poor semi-improved grassland | G - Open water | J2.2 - Spoil |
| A1.3.2 - Mixed woodland - plantation | C1.1 - Bracken - continuous | G1 - Standing water | J2.3 - Mine |
| A2.1 - Scrub - dense/continuous | C1.2 - Bracken - scattered | G1.1 - Standing water - eutrophic | J2.4 - Refuse tip |
| A2.2 - Scrub - scattered | C3.1 - Other tall herb and fern - ruderal | G2 - Running water | J3.1 - Cultivated/disturbed land - arable |
| A3.1 - Broadleaved Parkland/scattered trees | D1.1 - Dry dwarf shrub heath - acid | H1.1 - Intertidal - mudflat | J3.2 - Cultivated/disturbed land - amenity grassland |
| A3.2 - Coniferous Parkland/scattered trees | D2 - Wet dwarf shrub heath | H1.1.1 - Intertidal - mudflat - zoostera beds | J3.3 - Cultivated/disturbed land - spheruliferous/short perennial |
| A3.3 - Mixed Parkland/scattered trees | D6 - Dry heath/acid grassland | H1.3 - Intertidal - boulder/rocks | J4.1 - Introduced shrub |
| A4.1 - Broadleaved woodland - recently felled | D6 - Wet heath/acid grassland | H2 - Saltmarsh | J4.5 - Gardens |
| A4.2 - Coniferous woodland - recently felled | E1.0.1 - Blanket sphagnum bog | HC.6 - Saltmarsh - dense/continuous | J2.1 - Inset hedge |
| A4.3 - Mixed woodland - recently felled | E1.0.2 - Raised sphagnum bog | H3.1 - Mudflat above mhw | J2.3.1 - Hedge with trees - native species-rich |
| B1.1 - Acid grassland - unimproved | E1.7 - Wet modified bog | H6.5 - Dune grassland | J2.6 - Dry ditch |
| B1.2 - Acid grassland - semi-improved | E1.8 - Dry modified bog | H6.7 - Dune scrub | J3 - Built-up area |
| B2.1 - Neutral grassland - unimproved | E2 - Flush and spring | H6.8 - Open dune | J3.6 - Buildings |
| B2.2 - Neutral grassland - semi-improved | E3.1 - Flush and spring - acid/neutral flush | H6.4 - Coastal grassland | J4 - Bare ground |
| B3.2 - Calcareous grassland - semi-improved | E3 - Fen | I1.1 - Inland cliff | J5 - Other habitat |
| B4 - Improved grassland | E3.1.1 - Fen - valley mire | I1.2 - Scree | |

Figure 8. Phase 1 Habitat Map of NPT and legend

- 3.1.2.3. NPTC has undertaken regular species and habitat surveys, through core work or funded projects. For example, annual monitoring of NPT Bee Friendly sites and nest box monitoring across our land holdings. The resulting records have been recorded in MapMate and submitted to the Local Records Centre SEWBReC.

CASE STUDY: Wildblitz

Through the Lost Peatlands Project, regular Wildblitzes are held at Community Wild Spaces (local community greenspaces managed for nature). The aim of a Wildblitz is to collect as many species records as possible for the site. A programme of guided walks and surveys are also held on the day to help local people to explore nature.

Hundreds of new species records have been captured at the Wildblitzes so far, helping to inform the habitat management and nature conservation priorities for the sites going forward.



- 3.1.2.4. All relevant planning applications containing biodiversity information require a Local Environmental Records Centre search for biological data, undertaken by/on behalf of the applicant. This information is used to inform planning decisions and any proposed mitigation and enhancements.

3.1.3. Projects

- 3.1.3.1. As of 2020, Welsh Government have allocated annual funding to NPTC and NPT LNP to undertake projects that create or enhance local places for nature. Through this funding, we have purchased machinery to allow us to appropriately manage our NPT Bee Friendly sites and transformed five defunct playground sites from grey to green through our Stepping Stones Nature Reserve Projects.

CASE STUDY: Stepping Stones Nature Reserves

Using funding from Welsh Government Local Places for Nature fund, NPTC has created 'Stepping Stones Nature Reserves' around the county. These sites were abandoned playgrounds, with bare patches of tarmac providing little benefit to people or nature. As part of this project, we have ripped out the grey to make way for some green.

Three pioneer sites at Vivian Park, off the cycle track between Velindre and Cwmafan and between Wood Street and Alba Avenue in Port Talbot were chosen due to their potential and accessibility. The tarmac has been lifted and piled up to create hibernation sites for reptiles, making way for publicly accessible native wildflower meadows. These patches will only get more diverse each year, encouraging more invertebrates and helping our pollinators as time goes on. Bat and bird boxes have also been installed.

Following this, four more sites have been improved for nature through this project, including Talbot Memorial Park and a defunct tarmac area in Goytre.



Figure 9. Goytre Stepping Stones Site before (Left) and after (Right)

- 3.1.3.2. In July 2021, the Lost Peatlands Project secured £2.8m of funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund, Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm and other partners for a partnership project comprising Neath Port Talbot Council (Lead), Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, Natural Resources Wales, Swansea University and Coed Lleol (Small Woods). Between 2021 and 2025, the project will restore and manage more than 490 hectares of this historic landscape and habitats, including heathland, grassland and native woodland. Of particular focus is the direct restoration of 256 hectares of previously afforested peat bogs and pools. As part of the project, an extensive series of volunteer sessions and events are taking place to help local people discover and enjoy the Lost Peatlands of South Wales.



Figure 10. Surveys taking place as part of the Lost Peatlands project

- 3.1.3.3. In 2021, the Countryside and Wildlife Team secured funding from Welsh Government through the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) Grant to deliver the South West Wales Green Infrastructure Project, a partnership project with Swansea Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, Coed Lleol and Cwmaman Town Council. This is a multi-disciplinary project, taking a strategic approach to the maintenance, enhancement and creation of green infrastructure and biodiversity resource, for the benefit of people, the economy and wildlife. The project has achieved many positive outcomes, including workshops for key officers to define 'Green Infrastructure' (GI), determine why GI is important and to discuss what potential barriers we face as a local authority or public service board to deliver and maintain sustainable GI. The project has also resulted in installation of best practice examples of GI in the county, including a green roof bin store at the Gnoll Estate Country Park and a green roof bus stop in Aberavon.



Figure 11. Green Roof Bin Shelters at Gnoll Country Park

- 3.1.3.4. The Countryside and Wildlife Team has secured further grant funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund, Swansea University and Welsh Government to continue to maintain Craig Gwladus Country Park for wildlife and people, with key activities including nature conservation volunteering, establishment of nature and heritage trails and training.
- 3.1.3.5. The Countryside and Wildlife Team has secured grant funding for a variety of other small projects from a wide variety of funding streams. Some projects delivered directly and some in partnership with other organisations. Some of the projects have included: Greenspace Mapping, Biodiversity in the Welsh Government Woodland Estate and Developing our Coast and Marine Environment 4 Nature and Climate.

3.2. Positive Outcomes for Health and Wellbeing

3.2.1. The Lost Peatland Project's community outreach programme is a great example of how nature is intrinsically linked to our own health and mental wellbeing. Through a variety of events that offer outdoor activities such as bush craft and nature bathing, around two hundred community members over a two year period benefitted from this council led initiative, in partnership with Coed Lleol/Small Woods. 100% of participants in these sessions agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions made them feel happy (and contributed to their overall wellbeing) and 62% evidenced increased wellbeing using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) as a measure of change.

'These sessions have resulted in me feeling more relaxed when outdoors, feeling more optimistic when it comes to outdoor activities / group events and tackling my social anxiety'
Participant, Glyncorrwg Adults Group

3.3. Key Enablers

3.3.1. Good Internal Working Relationships

There are numerous examples of how good internal working relationships have led to achievements against the Biodiversity Duty. Some examples of these are:

- 3.3.1.1. Neighbourhood Services and the Countryside and Wildlife Team working together to increase the area and extent of wildflower grassland (i.e. roadside verges and larger meadow areas which are managed to encourage wildflowers and pollinating insects) through the NPT Bee Friendly Scheme.
- 3.3.1.2. Development Management Team and the Countryside and Wildlife Team working together to secure strong mitigation and enhancement for biodiversity through development.
- 3.3.1.3. Countryside and Wildlife Team supporting Engineering Team Projects to minimise negative impacts on biodiversity and maximise opportunities for enhancement through these projects.



Figure 12. Countryside and Wildlife Team Ecologist undertaking a bat survey to inform engineering works

- 3.3.1.4. The Countryside and Wildlife Team have helped to shape the objectives in the NPT Council Corporate Plan and contributed to the evidence base of the Replacement Local Development Plan, along with other strategies and policies.

3.3.2. External Funding

- 3.3.2.1. A key enabler of the work of the Wildlife Team has been external funding. The Wildlife Team (not including staff undertaking a Countryside function) only has 3.5 core full-time equivalent members of staff but supports an additional 10.6 full-time equivalent members of staff through project funding. As a result of the Biodiversity Deep Dive recently completed by WG, for the first time since the S6 Duty was introduced, WG are now providing temporary funding to public bodies to support action which promotes and disseminates best practice for the undertaking of S6.
- 3.3.2.2. External funding greatly increases the capacity of the Countryside and Wildlife Team to support action against the BDP.

3.4. Notable Barriers

3.4.1. Capacity of the Countryside and Wildlife Team

- 3.4.1.1. Although the team has increased in size through externally-funded project staff, there has been increased pressure on core staff undertaking core functions e.g. from the development management process. The need to apply for project funding adding continual increased pressure on these staff. This presents a capacity issue for the Countryside and Wildlife Team and is reflected in the Service Recovery Plan for the section.

3.4.2. Longevity of funding

- 3.4.2.1. As demonstrated above, external funding is a key enabler of action against the BDP. However, this funding is temporary, with the large majority of projects covering periods of a year or less. This represents a lack of security for the Countryside and Wildlife Team and a risk of further loss of capacity if further external funding is not secured at the end of projects. This also has impacts upon the sustainability of project outcomes. A particular concern is the ability to provide consistency in Local Nature Reserve/green space management and support for volunteer groups and schools.



Figure 13. Cwm Du Glen Local Nature Reserve

3.4.3. Countryside and Wildlife Team Early Engagement

- 3.4.3.1. Although a number of service areas work closely with the Countryside and Wildlife Team, there is still a lack of awareness within some service areas of the Countryside and Wildlife Team and the BDP. This is evident in reviewing some of the past Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) in Cabinet and Council Reports, which fail to show engagement with the Countryside and Wildlife Team in order to evidence the biodiversity section of the IIA. Another barrier to the Council meeting its biodiversity duty is a failure to involve the Countryside and Wildlife Team from the start of projects. This can lead to project delays if surveys are required or problems if biodiversity impacts are identified too far down the line. This has highlighted the need for further training that will be overseen by the Corporate Governance Group.

3.4.4. Lack of suitable sites

- 3.4.4.1. Availability of sites for biodiversity conservation and compensation purposes is limited due to other land uses, including economic development, taking priority. This has been limiting for implementing the biodiversity compensation scheme as set out in the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). The SPG aims for 'Habitat Banking'; 'To enable development and reduce delays, the process aims to bank ('habitat banking') a number of sites in readiness to deliver necessary compensation works. This will reduce significant delays currently experienced whilst a compensation site is being identified / located e.g. biodiversity compensation scheme is limited by lack of sites.' Habitat Banking has not been possible due to a lack of available sites and lack of support to invest in the purchase of sites.

4. Updates to legislation, policies and plans

Since the last BDP 2020-2023 was published, there have been a number of updates and changes to legislation, policies and plans, which we have considered when reviewing the actions throughout this Implementation Report. Some of these are summarised below. Other national policies and plans such as Future Wales and the Placemaking Charter have also strengthened the environmental and biodiversity requirements and expectations. We have recommended that additional actions are included in BDP 2023-2026, to achieve against these updated or new legislation, policies and plans. These new actions are listed in Section 7.3.

4.1. State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for NPT

- 4.1.1. We are entering the planet's sixth mass extinction event, the first linked to human activity. Research suggests the average rate of vertebrate species loss over the last century is up to 100 times higher than pre-human extinction rates. Since biodiversity provides 'ecosystem services', such as pollination and flood prevention, its loss causes risks to human safety and well-being.
- 4.1.2. On June 30th 2021, the Welsh Government declared a nature emergency, in recognition of the dramatic human-induced declines in biodiversity. The motion also recognised that there should be parity between actions taken to tackle climate change and those taken to tackle biodiversity loss.



Figure 14. Greater Butterfly Orchid at Hafod Wennol SSSI, currently only found in two locations in Neath Port Talbot and threatened with extinction if management on these sites were to change

- 4.1.3. On a local level, this decline has also been noted. Since the adoption of the BDP 2020-2023, NPT Local Nature Partnership has produced a local '[State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for NPT 2023](#)' (SON/ NRAP 2023), which provides an evidence-based assessment of the ecosystem resilience of each broad habitat type in NPT, linked with a plan to help nature recover in the county.
- 4.1.4. The habitats of NPT were grouped into 11 broad categories (e.g. woodland, coastal etc.), and sadly, of these 11 habitat categories, only two were assessed to be achieving 'good' ecosystem resilience. This means that habitats across NPT are not resilient enough to deal with pressures and demands such as climate change. Action needs to be taken now to improve the ecosystem resilience of our habitats across NPT.

Ecosystem resilience is the capacity of an ecosystem to deal with pressures and demands, either by resisting, recovering or adapting to them whilst retaining their ability to deliver ecosystem services and benefits now and into the future.

| | | |
|---|------------------------|---------|
|  | Woodland | GOOD |
|  | Heathland and Moorland | POOR |
|  | Semi-Natural Grassland | POOR |
|  | Open Mosaic Habitats | GOOD |
|  | Enclosed Farmland | UNKNOWN |
|  | Urban Habitats | FAIR |
|  | Freshwater Habitats | FAIR |
|  | Wetland Habitats | POOR |
|  | Inland Rock and Cliff | FAIR |
|  | Coastal Habitats | POOR |
|  | Marine Habitats | POOR |

Figure 15. The assessment of ecosystem resilience for each broad habitat type in NPT (c) NPT LNP

4.1.5. When adopting the BDP 2020-2023, NPTC signed up to the [Edinburgh Declaration](#) on post-2020 global biodiversity framework, recognising the key role that subnational governments have in achieving global biodiversity goals and targets.

4.1.6. There are key actions within the SON/ NRAP 2023 which NPTC, as the Local Authority, has the ability to achieve. These include actions such as tackling Invasive Non-Native Species, installing green infrastructure solutions and increasing wildflower grassland. The Council will support the NPT Nature Partnership in implementing the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan and an action is included in this BDP 2023-2026 to deliver against NRAP actions, where possible when relevant to NPTC (Actions 2.2 and 6.4) .

4.2. [Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board \(PSB\) Local Well-being Plan \(2023-2028\)](#)

4.2.1. [The Well-being Plan](#) sets out the Public Service Board's (PSB) long term vision for NPT, as required by the WCFG Act. This updated Well-being Plan (2023-2028) prioritises four well-being objectives. The BDP achieves against all four of these objectives but particularly the following:

To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations

4.2.2. Action 1.7. commits NPTC to deliver and support others to deliver the Public Service Board's Well-being Plan 'Well-being Objective 3; To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations', as well as relevant actions under the other three Well-being Objectives.

4.3. [Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan 2022-2027](#)

4.3.1. The updated NPTC Corporate Plan covers the period 2022 to 2027 and sets out how the council will approach recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic in the short, medium and longer term. The council's strategic change programme have been set in line with the WCFG Act and the PSB Well-being Plan.

4.3.2. Both the Well-being Plan and Corporate Plan have a strong focus on improving well-being, alongside valuing and protecting our local environment. Delivery of actions outlined within the BDP 2023-2026 will be an integral element of meeting the Council's, and PSB's, well-being priorities and goals. Furthermore,

whilst this plan contributes to all of the goals set out in the legislation, in particular it can be used to demonstrate our contribution to the *A Resilient Wales* goal.

- 4.3.3. Action 1.7. commits NPTC to deliver and support others to deliver against ‘Recover, Reset, Renew’, the Council Corporate Plan’s ‘Well-being Objective 3; To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations’, as well as relevant actions under the other three Well-being Objectives.

4.4. 30 by 30

- 4.4.1. At COP15, the UN Biodiversity Summit, held in Montreal, Canada, from 7 to 19 December 2022, a new global framework was agreed with a suite of measures which aim to address the global loss of biodiversity and restore natural ecosystems. A key target of this framework is the ‘30x30’ target, which looks to protect 30% of terrestrial, inland water and coastal and marine areas by 2030:

Ensure that at least 30 per cent globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes [by 2030]

Convention on Biological Diversity 2021

- 4.4.2. The Welsh Government, along with 100 other countries, has committed to support the 30x30 target and has completed a [Biodiversity Deep Dive](#) to identify recommendations in order to achieve this.



Figure 16. Bee Orchid at Bryn Tip Local Nature Reserve

- 4.4.3. NPTC currently protects and manages 11% of its landholdings for biodiversity. It is not clear if it is possible to increase the amount of land protected and managed for biodiversity to 30%, due to conflicting factors such as demand for housing. It should be noted that sites can have dual purpose e.g. a factory with biodiverse landscaping, nest boxes and a green roof/ walls could be considered as being managed for biodiversity, even though this is not the key purpose of the site. Sites such as these are defined as “other effective area based conservation measures” (OECM). Devised under the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity, OECM’s are an alternative to traditional protected areas, in that they can include any geographically defined area that has a management structure and can show a long-term positive impact on biodiversity.
- 4.4.4. It is proposed that an action is included in the BDP 2023-2026 to examine the potential to increase the

amount of land protected for biodiversity or classified as OECM, for both NPTC and the county as a whole, in line with the 30x30 target and the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations (Section 7.3).

4.5. Planning Policy Wales 11

- 4.5.1. In February 2021, Planning Policy Wales 11 came into force. PPW 11 sets out that “planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity”.
- 4.5.2. A letter from Welsh Government dated 23/10/2019 makes it clear that where biodiversity enhancement is not proposed as part of an application, significant weight will be given to its absence, and unless other significant material considerations indicate otherwise, it will be necessary to refuse permission.
- 4.5.3. Action 2.1. has been amended to reflect the changes within Planning Policy Wales 11 (as well as Future Wales: The National Plan 2040).

5. Other Opportunities

5.1. Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

- 5.1.1. The IIA that accompanies all committee reports includes an assessment of the impact on biodiversity in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Countryside and Wildlife Team are available to help officers to assess the impact of their projects on biodiversity, but very few utilise this service. As a result, some IIAs submitted with committee reports have demonstrated a lack of understanding of the impact of their project on biodiversity. An update to Action 1.4 is recommended for BDP 2023-2026 in order to help address this.

5.2. SuDS Approval Body (SAB)

- 5.2.1. As a result of the Service Assessment undertaken to meet Action 1.2 in BDP 2020-2023, a number of opportunities for biodiversity enhancement have been identified, as well as potential risks. A key area for improvement was identified around the SuDS Approval Body.
- 5.2.2. Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA) requires surface water drainage for new developments to comply with mandatory National Standards for Sustainable Drainage. The SuDS Approval Body (SAB) is a service delivered by the Local Authority to ensure that drainage proposals for all new developments of at least 2 properties OR over 100m² of construction area are fit for purpose, designed and built in accordance with the National Standards for Sustainable Drainage published by Welsh Ministers. The duty to provide a SAB falls upon the local authority as a whole. The SAB must aim to maximise the multiple benefits which SuDS can provide and directors and officers should be aligned and integrated as far as possible to support and deliver the SAB service.
- 5.2.3. The SAB has identified that so far, although complying with the legislation, SuDS in NPT are not reaching their full potential for biodiversity. This is due to a lack of knowledge within the SAB on SuDS design for biodiversity. The SAB requires increased support from the Countryside and Wildlife Team or more in-house knowledge on how to achieve biodiverse SuDS.
- 5.2.4. It is suggested that an action is included in the BDP 2023-2026 to determine how to maximise the biodiversity potential of SuDS in NPT (Section 7.3.).

5.3. Procurement

- 5.3.1. Through the service assessment undertaken to meet Action 1.2 in BDP 2020-2023, it was determined that some service areas place higher weighting on sustainability/ environmental impact through the

procurement process than others, whilst some others do not consider sustainability at all. Procurement are currently reviewing their Tender Strategy document to include an environmental / sustainability objective(s), in line with Welsh Government guidance.

5.3.2. It is proposed that biodiversity impacts should be included as a consideration in the procurement process, with appropriate weighting in tender evaluation. This is addressed in a new action, detailed in Section 7.3.

5.4. Habitat creation on buildings

5.4.1. Through the BDP 2020-2023 service assessment and biodiversity audit of NPTC land and buildings, it has become clear that NPTC owned and managed buildings could be enhanced for nature e.g. through nest boxes and green infrastructure.

5.4.2. It is proposed that a review of buildings is undertaken to determine where there are opportunities for increasing habitat on the buildings, as appropriate for the use of the building (new action detail in Section 7.3.). Maintenance requirements will be appropriately considered.



Figure 17. Swift boxes installed on NPTC-owned building in Resolven

5.5. Biodiversity Contact

5.5.1. Through the service assessment undertaken to meet Action 1.2 in BDP 2020-2023, key contacts have been made between each service area and the Countryside and Wildlife Team. However, when biodiversity issues or opportunities arise, it is still not always clear who is the appropriate person to contact for the service. A point of contact for each service area who can then direct the enquiry to the appropriate person would make lines of communication clearer and improve efficiency.

5.5.2. An action to establish Biodiversity Contacts in each service area is recommended for inclusion in BDP 2023-2026 (Section 7.3.).

5.6. Motion for the Ocean

5.6.1. The health of our ocean is inextricably linked with our climate and with human health, wellbeing and prosperity. A healthy ocean is fundamental in regulating the global climate system and is an essential ally in our fight against climate change. The ocean absorbs more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system as well as absorbing around 20% of annual carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions generated by human activity.

5.6.2. However, decades of irresponsible marine exploitation and pollution have led to significant levels of

degradation, and this together with the detrimental impacts of our changing climate on marine ecosystems has led to national and global recognition that the world ocean is in crisis. An unhealthy ocean does not absorb or store carbon as effectively as a healthy one, further worsening the impacts of the climate crisis.

- 5.6.3. To help start the process of ocean recovery, the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group is promoting a '[Motion for the Ocean](#)' to help local authorities play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring.
- 5.6.4. It is proposed that an action to investigate the Motion for the Ocean and potential deliverables for NPT is incorporated into the BDP 2023-2026 (Section 7.3.).

5.7. Artificial grass

- 5.7.1. Artificial grass has become increasingly popular in recent years, due to the perceived notion that it is easier to maintain. Artificial grass is made of plastic and although it doesn't require mowing, it does require regular cleaning and only has a life span of 8 to 15 years, after which it is not currently possible to dispose of it sustainably. Research has also shown that artificial grass has negative impacts on biodiversity, as well as leaching micro-plastics into the environment. Artificial grass also reaches significantly greater temperatures than those reached by natural grass under the same weather conditions, contributing to the urban heat island effect.
- 5.7.2. In recognition of this, Swansea Council has committed to discontinue the use of artificial turf in the public realm, even on a temporary basis.
- 5.7.3. In line with neighbouring councils, it is proposed that NPTC adopts a policy to prevent the use of artificial grass on its public estate (with the exception of sports fields). A new action for BDP 2023-2025, to respond to current issues such as this, is detailed in Section 7.3.

5.8. Honeybees

- 5.8.1. Whilst honeybees are wonderful for food production or wellbeing, unfortunately, under some circumstances, managed hives can have a harmful effect on local biodiversity. The honeybee is not an endangered species and in NPT we have small populations of endangered wild pollinators, such as the Shril Carder Bee (*Bombus sylvarum*) and Brown-banded Carder Bee (*Bombus humilis*). There is increasing concern that declines in wild pollinators may be exacerbated by unnaturally high densities of honeybees, associated with some forms of beekeeping.



Figure 18. Brown-banded Carder Bee

- 5.8.2. Managed honeybees are known to affect wild pollinators in two main ways: competition for floral

resources, and the spread of diseases. Each hive introduces an extra 35-40,000 honeybees to the area, and therefore beekeepers should create significant floral resources for each hive in order to reduce the pressure on wild bees already present in the locality of the hive.

- 5.8.3. It is proposed that, going forward, NPTC will no longer grant permission for hives through leases, except perhaps for sites with historic or heritage history of bee keeping or if wanted for food production (with the caveat that they need to provide suitable habitat to support the hive). A new action for BDP 2023-2025, to respond to current issues such as this, is detailed in Section 7.3.

5.9. Opportunities for nature in public spaces/public realm

- 5.9.1. To ensure we make the most of public spaces and realms to deliver benefits for nature. Small changes over the whole county will provide additional connections and habitats for nature, where they did not exist previously, improving the county's nature network. These small changes could be as simple as changing planting regimes to include pollinator friendly perennials or native species in flowerbeds, native woodland bulbs added to green spaces, rain gardens instead of standard planters. An example of a change of approach to flower beds has already been successful at the Gnoll Country Park and the flowerbed next to the underpass near Port Talbot Civic Centre, where native perennials produce dramatic flower displays as well providing important habitat for wildlife. With the urban heat island effect being a concern, particularly for Port Talbot, additional greenery would also help provide shade and reduce temperatures. A change in approach towards more nature-based planting and features in the public realm also provides opportunities to engage and educate local people. Use of signage and educational PR, building on the existing NPT bee-friendly scheme, would enhance our ability to encourage local people to make changes in their garden for example.

- 5.9.2. An action for inclusion in BDP 2023-2026 (set out in section 7.3) is recommended for a review and assessment to be undertaken by the Countryside and Wildlife Team, in collaboration with other depts. (Streetcare, Regeneration, Estates), to identify opportunities for change/ additional features and to incorporate these into 'business as usual' as well as project planning and funding bids. It is also noted that the proposed new procurement action will also support a change in approach.

6. Action Report

6.1. Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Objectives

- 6.1.1. This section reports on actions in the Biodiversity Duty Plan 2020-2023, 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.
- 6.1.2. Progress against the milestones in the BDP 2020-2023 are given, with recommendations on future action to be included in BDP 2023-2026. Amendments are explained and proposed new actions are suggested in Section 7.3.
- 6.1.3. Identification of new milestones for years 6 to 8 will be undertaken for the new BDP 2023-2026. Where relevant in relation to amended actions, some of these milestones are included within this implementation report.
- 6.1.4. Actions are categorised by Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales objectives (shown below). 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) listed in the final row of the table.

| | 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 |

NB. Year 3 = April 2020 – March 2021, Year 4 = April 2021 – March 2022 and Year 5 = April 2022 – March 2023.

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

| 1.1 | BIODIVERSITY ADVISORY SERVICE |
|-----------------------|---|
| Action | The Council currently considers biodiversity in a wide range of functions, including through implementing the policies of the LDP when making decisions through the development management process and as part of the SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) Approving Body. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&WT planning spreadsheet |
| Milestone year 3 | All advice recorded in the spreadsheet followed |
| Progress | All applications that required a response after 1 st April and before 31 st March inclusive and have been approved or refused on biodiversity grounds have been checked. 70% of application decisions/requests for further information were followed. |
| Milestone year 4 | All advice recorded in the spreadsheet followed |
| Progress | All applications that required a response after 1 st April and before 31 st March inclusive and have been approved or refused on biodiversity grounds have been checked. 81% of application decisions/requests for further information were followed. |
| Milestone year 5 | All advice recorded in the spreadsheet followed |
| Progress | All applications that required a response after 1 st April and before 31 st March inclusive and have been approved or refused on biodiversity grounds have been checked. 86% of application decisions/requests for further information were followed. |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 6 |

| 1.2 | 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 3 | Service assessments ongoing |
| Progress | Service assessments not yet begun |

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| 1.2 | SERVICE ASSESSMENT |
| Milestone year 4 | Service assessments ongoing |
| Progress | Service assessments not yet begun |
| Milestone year 5 | Service assessments completed |
| Progress | <p>Service assessments started. 74% of assessments for the Environment and Regeneration Directorate are completed. Each service area is assessed and given a RAG (Red/ Amber / Green) rating demonstrating their progress towards meeting their biodiversity duties:</p> <p>RED – Non-compliance with Biodiversity Duty. Current activity could be damaging with no mitigation or enhancement sought. Potential for offences to be committed by normal working practices.</p> <p>AMBER – Some steps towards maintenance and enhancement but improvement is required.</p> <p>GREEN – Considering biodiversity appropriately and delivering enhancement.</p> <p>6 service areas are Green, 8 are Amber and unfortunately one service has been assessed as Red. The full breakdown of service assessment results are in Appendix 1.</p> <p>All assessments expected to be completed by the end of Milestone year 6.</p> |
| Recommendation | <p>Amend text of action and reporting mechanism as set out below:</p> <p>Action – Complete service assessment and provide reports with recommendations to each service. All services to follow recommendations as outlined in their reports.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism – Countryside and Wildlife Team to keep a spreadsheet recording action against recommendations. Internal Audit team to assist with collecting this information.</p> |
| NRAP Objectives | 1 |

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| 1.3 | C&WT EARLY ENGAGEMENT |
| Action | The C&WT are regularly consulted by other service areas and give appropriate advice and services. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&WT Consultancy GIS layer / STiR (time recording database) |
| Milestone year 3 | Retain internal consultancy function and continue to provide early advice to service areas throughout the Authority. All advice followed. |
| Progress | Internal consultancy function retained and utilised. |
| Milestone year 4 | Retain internal consultancy function and continue to provide early advice to service areas throughout the Authority. All advice followed. |
| Progress | Internal consultancy function retained and utilised. |
| Milestone year 5 | Retain internal consultancy function and continue to provide early advice to service areas throughout the Authority. All advice followed. |
| Progress | Internal consultancy function retained and utilised. |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 1.4 | DECISION MAKING PROCESS |
| 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. |
| Reporting mechanism | Standard section in committee reports. |
| Milestone year 3 | All committee reports to contain a report on outcomes of the impact assessment. |
| Progress | Committee reports all contained a report on outcomes of the impact assessment. |
| Milestone year 4 | All committee reports to contain a report on outcomes of the impact assessment. |
| Progress | Committee reports all contained a report on outcomes of the impact assessment. |
| Milestone year 5 | All committee reports to contain a report on outcomes of the impact assessment. |
| Progress | Committee reports all contained a report on outcomes of the impact assessment. A review of submitted IIAs has shown that some IIAs demonstrated a lack of understanding of the |

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| 1.4 | DECISION MAKING PROCESS |
| | impact of their project on biodiversity. |
| Recommendation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for officers to ensure they understand how to evidence their assessment of biodiversity impacts of projects. • Training for cabinet members to ensure they can recognise when an IIA does not provide appropriate evidence for the biodiversity impact of the proposal OR a protocol is set in place to send IIAs to Countryside and Wildlife Team to assess prior to cabinet. <p>Amend text of action and reporting mechanism as set out below:</p> <p>Action - The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) that accompanies all committee reports includes an appropriately evidenced assessment of the impact on biodiversity in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Where necessary, training for staff and officers is undertaken to support this.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism - Committee reports all containing a report on outcomes of the impact assessment. An annual IIA review is undertaken by Countryside and Wildlife Team and reported back to relevant service areas, with follow-up training if necessary.</p> |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 1.5 | TRAINING |
| Action | Opportunities are taken to integrate biodiversity into any Elected Member or officer training (where appropriate) being delivered to raise awareness of S6 Duty / Biodiversity. |
| Reporting mechanism | Attendance at training. |
| Milestone year 3 | Investigate training options. |
| Progress | Members Seminar held on 'NPT Bee Friendly; A new approach to managing verges and grasslands in NPT'. 19 attendees and recording circulated to full Member list. |
| Milestone year 4 | Deliver training. |
| Progress | NPT Bee Friendly training held for Neighbourhood Services Supervisors and Operators. 15 attendees in total. |
| Milestone year 5 | Deliver training. |
| Progress | 191 Elected Members and officers trained through a variety of training courses including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members Seminar 'Biodiversity Duty; our responsibility to care for nature as a Local Authority'; • Members Seminar 'Green Infrastructure'; • Green Infrastructure workshop and training for officers from architecture team, Neighbourhood Services, Engineers, Estates and Planning; • Nature-wise NPT training for Margam Country Park Staff and Engineering team; and • 1to1 training on Biodiversity Duty for accountable managers. Mandatory online training for all staff being planned as part of Well-being Objective 3 Training Offer. |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 6 |

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| 1.6 | BIODIVERSITY SPG |
| Action | Implement the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in line with LDP policies. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&WT Planning spreadsheet. |
| Milestone year 3 | Implement SPG. |
| Progress | SPG being used to assess planning applications. |

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| 1.6 | BIODIVERSITY SPG |
| Milestone year 4 | Implement SPG. |
| Progress | SPG being used to assess planning applications. |
| Milestone year 5 | Implement SPG. |
| Progress | SPG being used to assess planning applications. |
| Recommendation | Amend text of action as set out below: Implement the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in line with LDP policies and develop a mechanism for habitat banking to ensure we have compensation sites ready to go when needed. Ensure that the Replacement LDP considers nature appropriately within its key issues, objectives, strategy and policies. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 1.7 | WELL-BEING PROCESS |
| 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. |
| Reporting mechanism | Via the Corporate Plan and PSB annual reports. |
| Milestone year 3 | As required by the Corporate Plan and PSB reporting mechanisms. |
| Progress | N/A |
| Milestone year 4 | As required by the Corporate Plan and PSB reporting mechanisms. |
| Progress | <p>New Corporate Plan 2022-2027 approved at cabinet on 28th February 2022. Now required to report against 'Well-being Objective 3; Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations.</p> <p>Inputted to Well-being Assessment to inform the new Well-being Plan. Quarterly reporting began against activities that deliver Objective 3, including a narrative on measures including the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and encourage volunteering at council owned nature sites; 2. Extend opportunities for children, young people and citizens to learn about their local environment, heritage and culture; 3. Increase the engagement of the workforce and citizens in the climate change agenda; 4. Further develop the NPT Nature Partnership; 5. Drive the implementation of the Biodiversity Duty Plan; 6. Seek external funding opportunities to conserve and enhance the local environment, culture and heritage; 7. Strengthen planning and partnership arrangement so that greater weight is given to conserving and improving the local environment, heritage and culture; 8. Deliver our planning programme of projects and service changes to improve access to local sport, leisure, culture and heritage; and 9. Deliver planning projects to conserve our local environment. <p>KPI's established for annual reporting and baseline figures submitted including following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Environmental Volunteers: 48. • Area of council owned land (or within council control) used as green space, local nature reserves = 820ha. • The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is protected through designation and/or is subject to appropriate management for biodiversity conservation as set out in an approved management plan = 160.8ha and 23.12km. • The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is designated or meets the criteria for designation as a Site of Importance for Conservation (SINCs) =782ha. |

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| 1.7 | WELL-BEING PROCESS |
| Milestone year 5 | As required by the Corporate Plan and PSB reporting mechanisms |
| Progress | <p>New Well-being Plan 2023-2028 drafted based on the same Well-being Objectives laid out in the NPTC Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Annual KPI's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Environmental Volunteers = 79. • Area of council owned land (or within council control) used as green space, local nature reserves (hectares) = 820ha. • The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is protected through designation and/or is subject to appropriate management for biodiversity conservation as set out in an approved management plan (hectares / km) = 287ha and 30km. • The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is designated or meets the criteria for designation as a Site of Importance for Conservation (SINCs) = No change 782ha. <p>Increase in areas managed for biodiversity, largely due to the implementation of the NPT Bee Friendly scheme.</p> |
| Recommendation | <p>Amend text of action as set out below:</p> <p>Action – Deliver and support others to deliver against ‘Recover, Reset, Renew’, the Council Corporate Plan and the Public Service Board’s Well-being Plan ‘Well-being Objective 3; To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations’, as well as relevant actions under the other three Well-being Objectives.</p> |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 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. |
| Milestone year 3 | N/A |
| Progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working group established with Countryside and Wildlife Team and Neighbourhood Services to create a new scheme to replace the Conservation Verges scheme. • Countryside and Wildlife Team met regularly with Policy team to inform the development of the Replacement Local Development Plan. • Countryside and Wildlife Team contributed to the development of the new NPTC Corporate Plan. |
| Milestone year 4 | N/A |
| Progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPT Bee Friendly (NPTBF) scheme adopted. Working group with Neighbourhood Services continued to meet monthly to continue growing the NPTBF scheme and discuss other projects. • Countryside and Wildlife Team met regularly with Policy team to inform the development of the Replacement Local Development Plan. • Countryside and Wildlife Team contributed to the Wellbeing Assessment to inform the development of the PSB Wellbeing Plan (2023-2028). |
| Milestone year 5 | N/A |
| Progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPT Bee Friendly (NPTBF) scheme adopted. Working group with Neighbourhood Services continued to meet monthly to continue growing the NPTBF scheme and discuss other projects. • Countryside and Wildlife Team met regularly with Policy team to inform the development of the Replacement Local Development Plan. • Countryside and Wildlife Team met regularly with Regeneration team to discuss |

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| 1.8 | NEW COUNCIL STRATEGIES |
| | projects. |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 |

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

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| 2.1 | 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 3 | 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 | No net loss to report. The majority of approvals include some enhancement e.g. bird boxes. |
| Milestone year 4 | 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 | A planning decision was made which will result in the loss of S7 habitats and bird/reptile habitat. However, this was an outline permission with proposals for off-site compensation so the amount of loss may not be fully realised. |
| Milestone year 5 | 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 | No net loss to report. The majority of approvals include some enhancement e.g. bird boxes. |
| Recommendation | Due to changes in policy wording in Future Wales – The National Plan and Planning Policy Wales we will no longer use net gain/loss terminology but change this to net benefit. This is a more accurate term to use for biodiversity, for example we can get smaller but better for longer which can result in a long term net benefit for ecosystems/habitats/species. Keep but amend milestones to ‘Achieve net benefit for biodiversity through the planning process.’ |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 2.2 | NPT NATURE PARTNERSHIP |
| Action | The Council will support the NPT Nature Partnership in developing and implementing the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan. The Action Plan is a key mechanism for species and habitat conservation in the County. |
| Reporting mechanism | A plan will be in place and actions will be recorded and published. |
| Milestone year 3 | Timescale and Process will be agreed with the Nature Partnership. |
| Progress | Priority species list and habitat groupings drafted. These lists are dynamic and will be updated when necessary. Habitat profiling to determine ecosystem resilience of each broad habitat type complete. Structure of NRAP agreed. |
| Milestone year 4 | TBC |
| Progress | Phase 1 Habitat Map completed to inform the NRAP. Actions drafted and discussed. Drafting of NRAP ongoing. |
| Milestone year 5 | TBC |

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| 2.2 | NPT NATURE PARTNERSHIP |
| Progress | The State of Nature of NPT and Nature Recovery Action Plan completed by NPT LNP. This is a dynamic plan and will be reviewed and updated each year in the first LNP meeting of the new year. The State of Nature will be reviewed in 2028 to determine if the ecosystem resilience of each broad habitat type has changed. |
| Recommendation | <p>Amend text of action and reporting mechanism as set out below:</p> <p>Action – The Council will support the NPT Nature Partnership in implementing the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan. The Action Plan is a key mechanism for species and habitat conservation in the County.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism – Action to be recorded and reviewed annually in the first LNP meeting of the new year.</p> <p>Milestones - Progress against relevant actions as outlined in the NRAP.</p> |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 2.3 | 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 NPTC web pages and NPT Wildlife Facebook page. |
| Milestone year 3 | 2 awareness raising projects per year and year on year increase in followers on the Facebook page. |
| Progress | <p>A minimum of two awareness-raising projects took place this year, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wales Nature Week – NPT Wildlife hosted several virtual events for Wales Nature Week 2020 (e.g. Moth Trap Live). 2. #NPTWildChallenge – through the COVID-19 lockdowns, we posted a daily ‘wild challenge’ to our social media, with the aim to engage people with the nature in their gardens or local area. <p>The Facebook page following increased by 319.</p> |
| Milestone year 4 | 2 awareness raising projects per year and year on year increase in followers on the Facebook page. |
| Progress | <p>A minimum of two awareness-raising projects took place this year, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Virtual Tour of Bryn Tip Local Nature Reserve was produced. 2. The Lost Peatlands project raises awareness of peatlands in NPT and the project through a new website and social media. An extensive programme of events runs through this project all year round. <p>The Facebook page following increased by 476 to 1979.</p> <p>A new sub-group of NPT LNP was established to support community groups to take action for nature. This group, ‘NPT for Nature’ is facilitated by NPTC project-funded staff.</p> |
| Milestone year 5 | 2 awareness raising projects per year and year on year increase in followers on the Facebook page. |
| Progress | <p>A minimum of two awareness-raising projects took place this year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘What’s in my Ward’ leaflets and webpages produced to inform elected Members and residents about the wildlife in their wards. • National Bat Night walk held at Margam Park with 25 attendees. <p>Facebook page following increased to over 2200 by the end of year 5.</p> |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 5 |

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| 2.4 | BIODIVERSITY AUDIT |
| Action | Undertake a biodiversity audit on land within our ownership and control, to identify where |

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| 2.4 | BIODIVERSITY AUDIT |
| | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 3 | Assessment ongoing. |
| Progress | Initial meetings with Estates department held to establish course of action for audit. Map layer created. |
| Milestone year 4 | Advice provided as part of assessment followed. |
| Progress | Assessment ongoing. |
| Milestone year 5 | Ongoing communications. Advice followed. |
| Progress | Assessment ongoing and sent to Estates in batches on a monthly basis. |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 2.5 | 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 3 | All national/regional guidance to be integrated into the planning system within 3 months of its release. |
| Progress | Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 was published February 2021. All planning staff are aware and integrate it into their responses. Planning Policy Wales 11 published February 2021. All planning staff are aware and integrate it into their responses. |
| Milestone year 4 | All national/regional guidance to be integrated into the planning system within 3 months of its release. |
| Progress | As appropriate. |
| Milestone year 5 | All national/regional guidance to be integrated into the planning system within 3 months of its release. |
| Progress | As appropriate. |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 2.6 | FUNDING |
| Action | Apply for funding as opportunities arise, to continue to deliver on Working with Nature, for |

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| 2.6 | FUNDING |
| | biodiversity, or as part of strategic, multi-functional projects delivering multiple benefits. |
| Reporting mechanism | As funding requirements. |
| Milestone year 3 | As opportunities arise. |
| Progress | Funding secured for biodiversity conservation projects including Local Places For Nature, Lost Peatlands, Working for Nature, LNP Cymru, Connecting GI and Craig Gwladus. |
| Milestone year 4 | As opportunities arise. |
| Progress | Funding secured for biodiversity conservation projects including Local Places for Nature, Connecting GI and Bryn TIP LNR. |
| Milestone year 5 | As opportunities arise. |
| Progress | Funding secured for biodiversity conservation projects including Local Places for Nature, Coastal Communities and National Nature Service. |
| Recommendation | <p>Amend text of action and reporting mechanism as set out below:</p> <p>Action – Apply for funding as opportunities arise to continue to deliver for biodiversity, or as part of strategic, multi-functional projects delivering multiple benefits.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism – As per funding requirements.</p> |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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

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| 3.1 | CURRENT MANAGEMENT |
| Action | NPTC areas are being managed for biodiversity and to ensure their resilience. |
| Reporting mechanism | Extent of area under management reported through the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) within the Corporate Plan. |
| Milestone year 3 | Agree an amended KPI as part of the Corporate Plan. |
| Progress | Amended KPIs not yet agreed. |
| Milestone year 4 | As set by the KPI. |
| Progress | <p>KPIs agreed and baseline for each KPI reported on.</p> <p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Environmental Volunteers = 48. • Area of council owned land (or within council control) used as green space, local nature reserves (hectares) = 820ha. • The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is protected through designation and/or is subject to appropriate management for biodiversity conservation as set out in an approved management plan (hectares / km) = 160.8ha and 23.12km. • The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is designated or meets the criteria for designation as a Site of Importance for Conservation (SINCs) = 782ha. |
| Milestone year 5 | As set by the KPI. |
| Progress | <p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Environmental Volunteers = 79. • Area of council owned land (or within council control) used as green space, local nature reserves (hectares) = 820ha. • The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is protected through designation and/or is subject to appropriate management for biodiversity |

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| 3.1 | CURRENT MANAGEMENT |
| | <p>conservation as set out in an approved management plan (hectares / km) = 287ha and 30km.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent of council owned land (or land in council control) that is designated or meets the criteria for designation as a Site of Importance for Conservation (SINCs) = No change 782ha. <p>Increase in areas managed for biodiversity, largely due to the implementation of the NPT Bee Friendly scheme.</p> |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 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 3 | Appropriate assessments of ecosystems resilience submitted through the planning process and appropriate measures to deliver improvements taken. |
| Progress | Ecosystem resilience assessments are submitted for appropriate applications. Enhancements are secured by Habitat Management Plans (HMP) or suitably worded conditions. |
| Milestone year 4 | Appropriate assessments of ecosystems resilience submitted through the planning process and appropriate measures to deliver improvements taken. |
| Progress | Ecosystem resilience assessments are submitted for appropriate applications. Enhancements are secured by Habitat Management Plans (HMP) or suitably worded conditions. |
| Milestone year 5 | Appropriate assessments of ecosystems resilience submitted through the planning process and appropriate measures to deliver improvements taken. |
| Progress | Ecosystem resilience assessments are submitted for appropriate applications. Enhancements are secured by Habitat Management Plans (HMP) or suitably worded conditions. |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 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. |
| Milestone year 3 | As Coed Cymru objectives. |
| Progress | Ongoing. |
| Milestone year 4 | As Coed Cymru objectives. |
| Progress | Partnership with Coed Cymru suspended due to organisational issues within Coed Cymru. Associated Officer given wider scope as a Woodland Officer for the Authority. Milestone no longer relevant. |
| Milestone year 5 | As Coed Cymru objectives. |
| Progress | Milestone no longer relevant. |
| Recommendation | Remove |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 3.4 | AREA STATEMENTS |
| Action | NPTC will assist NRW in implementing Area Statements as required. |
| Reporting | As required. |

| 3.4 | AREA STATEMENTS |
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| mechanism | |
| Milestone year 3 | As appropriate. |
| Progress | Area Statements team presented an update of Area Statements at NPT LNP meeting. Habitat profiling to determine ecosystem resilience of each broad habitat type completed by NPT LNP, based on Area Statements methodology. Assessments submitted to NRW Area Statements team. |
| Milestone year 4 | As appropriate. |
| Progress | Liaison between NPTC Countryside and Wildlife Team and Area Statements team continuing as appropriate. |
| Milestone year 5 | As appropriate. |
| Progress | Liaison between NPTC Countryside and Wildlife Team and Area Statements team continuing as appropriate. Countryside and Wildlife Team responded to Area Statements review. |
| Recommendation | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

| 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. |
| Reporting mechanism | LDP Planning Inspector from (PEDW – Planning and Environment Decisions Wales) 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. |
| Progress | Awaited further guidance from WG and clarification of RLDP delivery programme. |
| Milestone year 4 | Engagement, participation and contribution in partnership with the LDP Team to produce a GIA for the Authority. |
| Progress | Awaited further guidance from WG and clarification of RLDP delivery programme. Project with University delivered a number of GI datasets to be used in the GIA. |
| Milestone year 5 | GIA complete. |
| Progress | GIA progressing in collaboration with the LDP Team and neighbouring authorities. The RLDP timetable has changed so the GIA completion will now be in year 6. A lack of guidance from WG has not helped the timetable for this assessment. |
| Recommendations | Keep Milestones updated to reflect that the GIA will be completed in Year 7 and then updated as necessary. |
| NRAP Objectives | 3, 4, 5 |

6.5. NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

| 4.1 | INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES (INNS) |
|---------------------|---|
| 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. |
| Milestone year 3 | As appropriate. |
| Progress | Internal team regularly treating Japanese Knotweed on council land and offering a service to external landowners. INNS control incorporated as part of externally funded Countryside and Wildlife Team funding e.g. cotoneaster treatment and removal from grassland as part of HLF-funded project at Bryn Tip Local Nature Reserve. |
| Milestone year 4 | As appropriate. |

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| 4.1 | INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES (INNS) |
| Progress | Internal team regularly treating Japanese Knotweed on council land and offering a service to external landowners. INNS control incorporated as part of externally funded Countryside and Wildlife Team funding e.g. Balsam bashing with volunteers through the NLHF-funded Lost Peatlands project. |
| Milestone year 5 | As appropriate. |
| Progress | Actions relating to INNS incorporated into NPT LNP Nature Recovery Action Plan. Internal team regularly treating Japanese Knotweed on council land and offering a service to external landowners. INNS control incorporated as part of externally funded Countryside and Wildlife Team funding e.g. Rhododendron clearance from woodland with volunteers as part of ENRaW-funded Connecting GI project. |
| Recommendations | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 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 3 | All development proposals assessed as appropriate. |
| Progress | All development proposals assessed as appropriate and HRAs undertaken where required. |
| Milestone year 4 | All development proposals assessed as appropriate. |
| Progress | All development proposals assessed as appropriate and HRAs undertaken where required. |
| Milestone year 5 | All development proposals assessed as appropriate. |
| Progress | All development proposals assessed as appropriate and HRAs undertaken where required. |
| Recommendations | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 4.3 | STATE OF NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT (SONARR) |
| Action | Collate all of the local information and identify local pressures, including SoNaRR, a NPT State of Nature Report, the Green Infrastructure Assessment and Area Statement evidence. |
| Reporting mechanism | Report on local pressures identified. |
| Milestone year 3 | Agree mechanism for reporting. |
| Progress | Assessed which pressures identified in SoNaRR were applicable on a local level, but these were considered too high level to be usable at a local level. |
| Milestone year 4 | TBC |
| Progress | The Local Nature Partnership began producing a local State of Nature using framework of SoNaRR. |
| Milestone year 5 | TBC |
| Progress | A State of Nature of NPT report, produced by NPT LNP, is now available, reporting on the local pressures on our natural environment and the ecosystem resilience of NPT habitats as of 2023. |
| Recommendations | Amend name and text of action and reporting mechanism as set out below: Name – State of Nature in NPT. Action – Support the Local Nature Partnership to review all of the local information and evidence and review the State of Nature of NPT in 2028. Reporting Mechanism – State of Nature in NPT reviewed and updated report produced. |
| NRAP Objectives | 4, 5 |

6.6. NRAP 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. |
| Reporting mechanism | Metadata from MapMate. |
| Milestone year 3 | Maintenance of the MapMate database and Biodiversity GIS layers. |
| Progress | 345 additional records added to the MapMate database by NPTC, synchronised with partners. All GIS layers up to date. |
| Milestone year 4 | Maintenance of the MapMate database and Biodiversity GIS layers. |
| Progress | 241 additional records added to the MapMate database by NPTC, synchronised with partners. All GIS layers up to date. |
| Milestone year 5 | Maintenance of the MapMate database and Biodiversity GIS layers. |
| Progress | Central Biodiversity Master Map created and maintained by Countryside and Wildlife Team to record projects and biodiversity information about sites. 378 additional records added to the MapMate database by NPTC, synchronised with partners. All GIS layers up to date. |
| Recommendations | Keep Amend wording of milestone to reflect that alternative databases could be made available in the future. |
| 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. We will continue with a programme of, on average, 10% of SINC's being reviewed annually and GIS layer updated and shared with SEWBRcC. |
| Reporting mechanism | Annual SINC report produced. |
| Milestone year 3 | 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. |
| Progress | COVID-19 pandemic put a halt on SINC surveys this year. |
| Milestone year 4 | 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. |
| Progress | Capacity issues meant less than 10% SINC's reviewed this year. |
| Milestone year 5 | 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. |
| Progress | Review of SINC's completed and surveys for the next financial year planned. Capacity issues meant less than 10% SINC's reviewed this year. |
| Recommendations | Keep but amend to reflect that capacity issues have meant that the target of 10% of SINC's being reviewed annually cannot be met. Instead, SINC's will be reviewed as necessary or through other means such as the development management process. Change action wording to '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. Sites will be reviewed periodically through surveys and the development management process. The GIS layer will be updated and shared with SEWBRcC as required.' Change milestones to 'Update periodically through surveys and the development management process'. |

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| 5.2 | SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION |
| | Reporting Mechanism changed to 'Update GIS layer periodically and report updates to SEWBReC'. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 5.3 | SURVEYS |
| Action | NPTC provides the secretariat for the NPT Nature Partnership which includes a number of specialist surveyors and SEWBReC. We utilise this expertise by organising surveys for targeted sites and species. |
| Reporting mechanism | Evidence based report by C&WT. |
| Milestone year 3 | Work with the Local Nature Partnership to take forward specialist surveys where most appropriate. |
| Progress | Specialist surveys completed to inform peatland restoration, as part of the development phase of the Lost Peatlands project e.g. peat depth surveys, ornithological surveys, Water Vole surveys. Ornithological surveys supported through an LNP grant fund e.g. Barn Owl and Dipper nest box monitoring. |
| Milestone year 4 | Work with the Local Nature Partnership to take forward specialist surveys where most appropriate. |
| Progress | NPTC secured funding to commission a new Phase 1 habitat map for NPT. Ornithological surveys supported through an LNP grant fund e.g. Nightjar migration tracking. |
| Milestone year 5 | Work with the Local Nature Partnership to take forward specialist surveys where most appropriate. |
| Progress | Surveys to identify Swift activity and nesting sites completed by NPT LNP. |
| Recommendations | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 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 3 | All biodiversity information contained in a planning application must be accompanied by a SEWBReC search, unless agreed otherwise. Section 7 Species Record Search. |
| Progress | All relevant planning applications accompanied by a SEWBReC search. |
| Milestone year 4 | All biodiversity information contained in a planning application must be accompanied by a SEWBReC search, unless agreed otherwise. |
| Progress | All relevant planning applications accompanied by a SEWBReC search. |
| Milestone year 5 | All biodiversity information contained in a planning application must be accompanied by a SEWBReC search, unless agreed otherwise. |
| Progress | All relevant planning applications accompanied by a SEWBReC search. |
| Recommendations | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 5.5 | BIODIVERSITY COMPENSATION SCHEME |
| Action | Implement the compensation scheme as set out in the Biodiversity SPG. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&WT Planning spreadsheet. |
| Milestone year 3 | Implement SPG via the development management process. |
| Progress | No requirement to use compensation sites through the development management process. |

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| 5.5 | BIODIVERSITY COMPENSATION SCHEME |
| Milestone year 4 | Implement SPG via the development management process. |
| Progress | Planning permission granted for a development including usage of off-site compensation. This was secured by a Section 106 legal agreement between the council, the applicants and tenant farmers. |
| Milestone year 5 | Implement SPG via the development management process. |
| Progress | Clarify that additional Compensation Schemes need to be identified as capacity is limited. Habitat banking not achieved, though we have identified sites where it could be achieved. |
| Recommendations | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 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 3 | As required. |
| Progress | No biodiversity indicator agreed or data requested. |
| Milestone year 4 | As required. |
| Progress | No biodiversity indicator agreed or data requested. |
| Milestone year 5 | As required. |
| Progress | No biodiversity indicator agreed or data requested. |
| Recommendations | Remove until indicator is agreed |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 5, 6 |

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| 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 3 | Ongoing. |
| Progress | Ongoing. |
| Milestone year 4 | Ongoing. |
| Progress | Ongoing. |
| Milestone year 5 | Ongoing. |
| Progress | Ongoing. |
| Recommendations | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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

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| 6.1 | COUNTRYSIDE AND WILDLIFE TEAM RESOURCES |
| Action | There is currently enough skills and capacity in the C&WT 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. |
| Reporting mechanism | The Biodiversity Duty report. |
| Milestone year 3 | Maintain current core staff levels and retain / employ additional project staff to deliver grant-funded projects as and when funding becomes available. |
| Progress | Wildlife Team Core Permanent Staff Number = 2.5 FTE (only counting 0.5 of Team Leader time). Project Staff Number = 5 FTE. Income generation reliant Staff Number = 1FTE. |

| 6.1 | COUNTRYSIDE AND WILDLIFE TEAM RESOURCES |
|------------------------|---|
| Milestone year 4 | Maintain current core staff levels and retain / employ additional project staff to deliver grant-funded projects as and when funding becomes available. |
| Progress | Wildlife Team Core Permanent Staff Number = 3.5 FTE (including 0.5 FTE income generated) (only counting 0.5 of Team Leader time). Project Staff Number = 8.1 FTE. Restructure of Biodiversity staff following Countryside and Wildlife Team Leader leaving secured a permanent post for an existing core ecologist (albeit no permanent core funding, income generation role). Increase in project staff seen as a result of significant funding secured for Lost Peatlands Project and for Connecting Green Infrastructure project. However, capacity remained an issue as demands on core staff have increased e.g. development planning. Project-funded staff are unable to assist with core duties. |
| Milestone year 5 | Maintain current core staff levels and retain / employ additional project staff to deliver grant-funded projects as and when funding becomes available. |
| Progress | Wildlife Team Core Permanent Staff Number = 3.5 FTE (including 0.5FTE income generated). Project/income generation reliant Staff Number = 10.6 FTE. Staff numbers have increased due to project staff and funding of an additional Ecologist through Planning Performance Agreements. However, capacity remains an issue as demands on core staff have increased e.g. development planning. Project-funded staff are unable to assist with core duties. |
| Recommendations | Amend text of action as set out below: Action – Maintain enough skills and capacity in the C&WT to co-ordinate the work needed to comply with the legislation and in response to increasing investment by WG and other funders. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

| 6.2 | NPT LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP |
|------------------------|---|
| Action | Continue to support the NPT Local Nature Partnership, providing the secretariat, steering the objectives and collating information on member activities through the C&WT. |
| Reporting mechanism | Partnership minutes. |
| Milestone year 3 | Continue to provide the secretariat for the NPT Local Nature Partnership. |
| Progress | Secretariat provided. |
| Milestone year 4 | Continue to provide the secretariat for the NPT Local Nature Partnership. |
| Progress | Secretariat provided. New sub-group of NPT LNP set up and facilitated by Countryside and Wildlife Team, aimed at engaging with enthusiastic community groups and individuals that want to make a difference for nature in NPT. |
| Milestone year 5 | Continue to provide the secretariat for the NPT Local Nature Partnership. |
| Progress | Secretariat provided. Full LNP and NPT for Nature sub-group continue to meet regularly. |
| Recommendations | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 6 |

| 6.3 | BIODIVERSITY CHAMPION |
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| Action | A NPTC Councillor is appointed Biodiversity Champion and attends events/meetings as appropriate. |
| Reporting mechanism | Attendance at regular meetings. |
| Milestone year 3 | Continued engagement as appropriate. |
| Progress | Biodiversity Champion continued to support Countryside and Wildlife Team. |
| Milestone year 4 | Continued engagement as appropriate. |

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| 6.3 | BIODIVERSITY CHAMPION |
| Progress | Biodiversity Champion continued to support Countryside and Wildlife Team. |
| Milestone year 5 | Continued engagement as appropriate. |
| Progress | County Borough Elections held and new Biodiversity Champion appointed as a result. Biodiversity Champion briefed about Countryside and Wildlife Team and is in regular contact with the team. |
| Recommendations | Keep |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 6 |

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| 6.5 | NATURE RECOVERY ACTION PLAN |
| Action | Through the NPT Nature Plan, maximise opportunities to deliver priorities via volunteers and partners. |
| Reporting mechanism | <i>Awaiting new reporting mechanisms from WG.</i> |
| Milestone year 3 | Delivery of biodiversity conservation as per Nature Action Plan/ LNP Cymru Project. Reporting as per grant requirements. |
| Progress | Biodiversity conservation projects delivered through the LNP Cymru project, including provision of nest boxes for Barn Owls and Dippers. |
| Milestone year 4 | Delivery of biodiversity conservation as per Nature Action Plan/ LNP Cymru Project. Reporting as per grant requirements. |
| Progress | Biodiversity conservation projects delivered through the LNP Cymru project, including wildlife garden installation at Tonna Hospital Mother and Baby Unit. |
| Milestone year 5 | Dependent on future funding. |
| Progress | Funding secured for continuation of LNP fund through Local Places for Nature. Biodiversity conservation projects continue to be delivered. NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan published, which will help to focus action for upcoming years. |
| Recommendations | <p>Amend text of action and reporting mechanism as set out below:</p> <p>Action – Through the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan, maximise opportunities to deliver priorities via volunteers and partners. NPTC delivers against any relevant actions in agreement with relevant departments. Please see the list of potential relevant actions in Appendix 2.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism – Delivery against actions to be reported to the LNP in first LNP meeting of the new year.</p> |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

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| 6.6 | NATURE CONSERVATION SITES SCHEME |
| Action | Undertake a review of the Nature Conservation Sites scheme to include management of all verges and of key council owned sites. |
| Reporting mechanism | GIS layer of verges to be managed as conservation verge. |
| Milestone year 3 | A working group is underway to develop the new scheme. |
| Progress | A working group made up of members from Neighborhood Services and the Countryside and Wildlife Team was formed. |
| Milestone year 4 | Implement the new scheme. |
| Progress | New iteration of the Nature Conservation Sites scheme, NPT Bee Friendly, approved by the County Council's Regeneration and Sustainable Development Cabinet Board on 30th July 2021. |
| Milestone year 5 | Implement the new scheme. |
| Progress | Implementation of NPT Bee Friendly scheme. |
| Recommendations | Amend text of action and reporting mechanism as set out below: |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 6.6 | NATURE CONSERVATION SITES SCHEME |
| | <p>Action – Implement the NPT Bee Friendly scheme, increasing sites included in the scheme each year. Review and update the Conservation Sites Scheme to include sites which are not managed under NPTBF.</p> <p>Reporting Mechanism – Hectarage of sites or kilometres of linear features reported through Corporate Reporting.</p> |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 2, 5, 6 |

7. Summary

7.1. Updated actions

Some actions have been updated. The reasoning for this has been summarised below. The new wording for each updated action has been included in the reporting in Section 6.

Please note that the action number may change in BDP 2023-2026 due to the removal of some actions.

7.1.1. NRAP Objective 1

7.1.1.1. *Action 1.2. Service Assessment;*

A change to wording to reflect that the service assessment will be completed by the end of year 6. The updated action recommends that services follow the recommendations outlined in their service assessment reports.

7.1.1.2. *Action 1.4. Decision Making Process;*

Amended to reflect the need for increased training for staff and members.

7.1.1.3. *Action 1.7. Well-being Process;*

Updated wording to reflect updates to the PSB Well-being Plan and the NPTC Corporate Plan

7.1.2. NRAP Objective 2

7.1.2.1. *Action 2.1. Development Management Process;*

Due to changes in policy wording in 'Future Wales – The National Plan' and 'Planning Policy Wales' we will no longer use net gain/loss terminology but change this to net benefit. This is a more accurate term to use for biodiversity, for example, we can get smaller but better for longer, which can result in a long term net benefit for ecosystems/habitats/species.

7.1.2.2. *Action 2.2. NPT Nature Partnership;*

Wording is amended to reflect that the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan has been developed and published.

7.1.2.3. *Action 2.6. Funding;*

Amended wording to remove the reference of 'Working with Nature', a project which is now built into other larger projects. The action now reflects that funding will be applied for any project incorporating biodiversity as appropriate.

7.1.3. NRAP Objective 4

7.1.3.1. *Action 4.3. State of Natural Resources Report (SONARR);*

This action has been updated to acknowledge that SONARR has been superseded on a local level by the State of Nature of NPT report produced by NPT LNP.

7.1.4. NRAP Objective 5

7.1.4.1. *Action 5.2. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation;*

The wording has been updated to reflect that current capacity does not allow for regular surveys of SINC, surveys will instead be updated when necessary.

7.1.5. NRAP Objective 6

7.1.5.1. *Action 6.1. Countryside and Wildlife Team Resources;*

Amended action wording to reflect that Welsh Government (and other funders) investment in biodiversity and demand for the services of the Countryside and Wildlife Team have both increased.

7.1.5.2. *Action 6.5 Nature Recovery Action Plan;*

This action has been amended to reflect that the Nature Recovery Action Plan has now been published. The action now focusses more on delivering action against the NRAP.

7.1.5.3. *Action 6.6. Nature Conservation Sites Scheme;*

Updated wording to include the NPT Bee Friendly Scheme and clarify how this will be reported.

7.2. **Removal of actions**

Some actions have been updated. The reasoning for this has been summarised below.

7.2.1. **NRAP Objective 3**

7.2.1.1. *Action 3.3. Coed Cymru;*

In Year 4, the partnership with Coed Cymru suspended due to organisational issues within Coed Cymru. An associated Officer has instead been given wider scope as a Woodland Officer for the Authority. The action is no longer considered relevant and so is recommended for removal.

7.2.2. **NRAP Objective 5**

7.2.2.1. *Action 5.6. Resilient Wales Goal;*

In the BDP 2020-2023, we included an action to contribute data towards the Wales biodiversity indicators for the Resilient Wales goal of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The milestones for this action were to be decided by Welsh Government. At the time of publishing of this Implementation Report, a biodiversity indicator has not been agreed and so it is recommended that this action is removed until an indicator is agreed.

7.3. **New actions**

We have recommended that additional actions are included in BDP 2023-2026, in order to achieve against updated or new legislation, policies and plans listed in Section 4.

As with the current actions, these are categorised under the most appropriate NRAP Objective.

7.3.1. **NRAP Objective 1**

7.3.1.1. *SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) Approving Body (SAB);*

A new action for the Countryside and Wildlife Team to work together with the SAB team to identify knowledge gaps, train staff and increase the understanding of developers of how to improve SUDS for biodiversity. This action aims to enable the SAB to maximise the biodiversity potential of SUDS in NPT.

| | SuDS (SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS) APPROVING BODY (SAB) |
|-----------------------|---|
| Action | Maximise the biodiversity potential of SuDS in NPT. |
| Reporting mechanism | Through SAB processes. |
| Milestone year 6 | Work with SAB team to determine the knowledge gaps and what is required to help maximise the biodiversity potential of SuDS in NPT. |
| Milestone year 7 | TBC |
| Milestone year 8 | TBC |
| Recommendation | Adopt this action as part of the new plan |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 5, 6 |

7.3.1.2. *Procurement;*

This action will result in increased consideration of biodiversity impact through the procurement process.

| | PROCUREMENT |
|--------|---|
| Action | Include biodiversity/ sustainability impacts as a consideration in the procurement process, |

| | PROCUREMENT |
|-----------------------|--|
| | with appropriate weighting in tender evaluation. |
| Reporting mechanism | To be agreed with procurement. |
| Milestone year 6 | Work with Procurement team to determine appropriate considerations for biodiversity/ sustainability to include in the procurement process. |
| Milestone year 7 | Impacts on biodiversity / sustainability considered through the procurement process. |
| Milestone year 8 | Impacts on biodiversity / sustainability considered through the procurement process. |
| Recommendation | Adopt this action as part of the new plan |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,6 |

7.3.1.3. Current Issues;

Our knowledge of nature and the issues it faces evolves and changes rapidly. Since the BDP 2020-2023 was published, we have been made aware of new issues which cause a threat to nature, such as the trend for installing artificial grass. We propose a new action for BDP 2023-2026 to ensure that NPTC keeps policies and steering statements up to date in light of current issues.

| | CURRENT ISSUES |
|-----------------------|--|
| Action | Keep policies and steering statements up to date in light of current issues. |
| Reporting mechanism | Through appropriate council processes. |
| Milestone year 6 | Policies and steering statements adopted or updated as necessary. |
| Milestone year 7 | Policies and steering statements adopted or updated as necessary. |
| Milestone year 8 | Policies and steering statements adopted or updated as necessary. |
| Recommendation | Adopt this action as part of the new plan |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 5, 6 |

7.3.2. NRAP Objective 2

7.3.2.1. 30x30;

A new action to determine if it is possible to increase the amount of land managed and /or protected for biodiversity to 30% of all land, for both NPTC and the county as a whole. This is in line with the 30x30 target and the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations. It can include both protected land and 'OECM's' aka. any geographically defined area that has a management structure and can show a long-term positive impact on biodiversity.

| | 30x30 |
|---------------------|---|
| Action | Examine the potential to increase the amount of protected or 'other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs)' land in NPT, in line with the 30x30 target and the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations. This can be completed for both NPTC land and for the county of NPT as a whole, working with the LNP. |
| Reporting mechanism | TBC (Welsh Government are yet to define how to measure other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs)). |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | 30x30 |
| Milestone year 6 | Complete biodiversity audit. |
| Milestone year 7 | Use the information from the biodiversity audit to identify the maximum percentage of NPTC land holdings which have the potential to be protected for biodiversity or classified as OECMs i.e. not in other use etc. |
| Milestone year 8 | Feasibility study to determine what would need to happen in order to achieve 30% of council land holdings protected for biodiversity / OECMs. |
| Recommendation | Adopt this action as part of the new plan |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

7.3.3. NRAP Objective 3

7.3.3.1. *Habitat Creation on Buildings;*

This action recognises that there may be unidentified opportunities to enhance NPTC buildings for biodiversity e.g. through installing nest boxes or green infrastructure. It commits NPTC to identify opportunities and continue the work in relation to habitat creation projects on NPTC buildings, as appropriate taking into account building use and maintenance commitments.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| | HABITAT CREATION ON NPTC BUILDINGS |
| Action | NPTC buildings are reviewed to determine where there are opportunities to continue the work in relation to habitat creation on council buildings, as appropriate for the use of the building. Opportunities are pursued where possible. |
| Reporting mechanism | Report on opportunities. |
| Milestone year 6 | NPTC Building review ongoing. |
| Milestone year 7 | NPTC Building review ongoing. |
| Milestone year 8 | NPTC Building review completed. |
| Recommendation | Adopt this action as part of the new Plan. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

7.3.3.2. *Review and assessment of opportunities for nature in the public spaces and public realm;*

We propose that a new action is included to review and assess opportunities to change and/or add features to public spaces and the public realm that deliver benefits for nature alongside existing necessary functions/benefits.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | Review of opportunities for nature in public spaces and public realm |
| Action | Review and assess opportunities to change and/or add features to public spaces and the public realm that deliver benefits for nature alongside existing necessary functions/benefits |
| Reporting mechanism | Report on opportunities. |
| Milestone year 6 | Review/assessment started |
| Milestone year 7 | Review/assessment ongoing. |
| Milestone year 8 | Review/assessment ongoing |
| Recommendation | Adopt as part of the new plan |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,3,4,6 |

7.3.4. NRAP Objective 6

7.3.4.1. Biodiversity Contact;

This new action aims to improve inter-departmental communication and efficiency, by ensuring queries are directed to the right member of staff and regular communication is maintained.

| BIODIVERSITY CONTACT | |
|------------------------|--|
| Action | Each service area has a point of contact for biodiversity matters. |
| Reporting mechanism | Key Contacts spreadsheet. |
| Milestone year 6 | Engagement as appropriate. |
| Milestone year 7 | Engagement as appropriate. |
| Milestone year 8 | Engagement as appropriate. |
| Recommendations | Adopt as part of the new plan |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,6 |

7.3.4.2. Motion for the Ocean;

We propose that a new action is included to investigate the Motion for the Ocean and how it could be delivered in NPT.

| MOTION FOR THE OCEAN | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Action | Investigate the Motion for the Ocean and potential deliverables for NPT. |
| Reporting mechanism | TBC |
| Milestone year 6 | Feasibility for Motion for the Ocean. |
| Milestone year 7 | Start process of declaring a Motion for the Ocean if considered feasible. |
| Milestone year 8 | Motion for the Ocean declared, if feasible. |
| Recommendation | Adopt as part of the new plan |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,5,6 |

8. Conclusion

The Council has a long tradition of environmental conservation through dedicated staff, strong policy implementation and links to the wider community. BDP 2020-2023 has allowed the Authority to further embed biodiversity into decision making outside of the traditional service areas. Through the period covered by BDP 2020-2023, internal networks have significantly improved and further opportunities for enhancement for biodiversity have been identified.

Although some actions have taken longer to fulfil than expected, progress has been made on all actions. A number of changes and additions to actions have been proposed in order to meet requirements placed on NPTC through changes in policy, legislation and plans, as well as to rise to current issues and take advantage of useful opportunities. This includes introducing new policies aimed at relieving pressure on biodiversity e.g. preventing the installation of artificial grass and honeybee hives on NPTC land.

In light of the nature emergency declared by Welsh Government, and the declines in ecosystem resilience noted on a local level in the State of Nature for NPT, it has never been more important for NPT Council to play its part in nature recovery. BDP 2023-2026 will demonstrate how Neath Port Talbot Council will be doing all it can to maintain and enhance biodiversity in Neath Port Talbot.

9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix 1; Service Assessments

| Service | RAG Rating | Recommendations |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--|
| Parking Management | | Biodiversity considered through planning system and enhancements being made through reduction in paper usage, travelling, use of solar and EV etc. Proposed living wall for Port Talbot Civic Centre Car Park will fit requirements for enhancement and give this service a green status. |
| Engineering Services | | Mostly working closely with Ecology team to ensure that projects consider biodiversity and enhancement is being achieved appropriately through the bridges/ structures service area. However, there is a major risk to the service in Ecologists recommendations not being followed for some projects. This puts the service at risk of not achieving its Biodiversity Duty. In order to achieve green, all staff need to be made fully aware of their legal requirements under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act. Involve ecologists in projects from the earliest possible stage in order to gain full understanding of potential limitations to projects / get the best solution. Aim for prevention of habitat loss over mitigation wherever possible. Ensure that every project includes an element of enhancement. Ensure that Ecologists recommendations are followed and not ignored. |
| Road Safety | | No major impact pathways though it should be noted that road safety projects must always seek to protect and enhance biodiversity. Opportunities for enhancement have been identified during this process i.e. linking engagement programmes with biodiversity for added value. Achieve these to get green. |
| Sab & Highway Development Control | | Considering biodiversity appropriately but not currently enhancing to full potential, as don't have sufficient support to know how to do so. Countryside and Wildlife Team and Sab and Highway Development control team to work together to find a solution. |
| Fleet | | This service is low risk. There is a possibility to deliver enhancement for biodiversity on Fleet sites, this requires further investigation after accommodation review is completed. Delivery of enhancement in the form of nest boxes on buildings or similar will put the service in the green. |
| EV project | | A SINCE is being lost as a result of this project and though mitigation and enhancement is being achieved through the planning system, an alternative site could have been considered. For this reason, the project cannot achieve green status. |
| Passenger Transport Unit | | Main potential for impact on biodiversity is via external contractors, which is addressed via sustainability questions in procurement process. There is some risk to the service through not evidencing biodiversity statements in IIAs and by not reviewing environmental policies of external contractors / them not having much weight during procurement process. By checking IIAs and environmental policies of contractors with Countryside and Wildlife Team any risk will be eliminated. Enhancement to be achieved through awareness raising of NPT Wildlife campaigns/ information on bus station video screens. |
| Building Control | | Considering biodiversity appropriately e.g. sending demolition notices to Ecologists although need to ensure that all notices come to Ecologists. Biodiversity awareness training to be scheduled for officers. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Development Management | | Considering biodiversity appropriately and delivering appropriate enhancement through planning. |
| Planning Policy | | Considering biodiversity appropriately and delivering enhancement. |
| Environmental Health & Trading Standards | | Biodiversity is currently being considered appropriately in most cases but it is possible to improve. There is a possible opportunity for enhancement (air quality sites) which will be discussed between Countryside and Wildlife Team and EH team leader. Follow recommendations to achieve green. |
| Architectural Design & Project Management | | This service is considering biodiversity appropriately and delivering enhancements. Begin including enhancement as standard in all projects (including those outside the planning process) where possible, to maintain green. |
| Strategic Property and Valuation Management | | Whilst the service is mostly considering biodiversity appropriately and delivering enhancements, there are still concerns about the netting at the Quays (placed to prevent the nesting of a Section 7 species). Further work is urgently needed to be undertaken to appropriately mitigate the impacts of the netting upon the local population of breeding birds, particularly those listed under Section 7. If a solution can be found, as suggested, for the netting at the Quays, this service will be amber, representing that some steps have been taken towards maintenance and enhancement but improvement is required. |
| Regeneration & Economic Development | | This service is considering biodiversity appropriately and delivering enhancements such as green roofs through projects. Recommendations to get staff training from Countryside and Wildlife Team on nature in the built environment / install nest boxes etc. on buildings managed by the service and to check all projects with ecologists even if they don't think there is an impact on ecology. |
| Neighbourhood Services | | Biodiversity is considered and mitigated for appropriately in normal working practices. Enhancement taking place in the form of NPT Bee Friendly and through specific projects e.g. mitigation. Some recommendations including staff training and pesticide / herbicide review. |

9.2. Appendix 2; Potential actions relevant to NPTC, from NPT LNP Nature Recovery Action Plan

| Action Name | Action Description |
|---|---|
| Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) | Investigate where ALAN is an issue in the county and determine where improvements could be made. |
| Nature Networks | Improve the condition, connectivity and resilience of protected sites. |
| Tree Planting | Prevent inappropriate tree planting in the county e.g. on important grassland habitats. Encourage natural regeneration in place of tree planting where possible. |
| Invasive non-native species | Prevent the encroachment of INNS on important habitats in NPT. |
| Prevent the encroachment of INNS on important habitats in NPT | Education programme to raise awareness of the damage caused by dumping garden waste and within NPTC teams to enable them to recognise INNS in fly-tipped material and deal with them appropriately. |
| NPT Bee Friendly | Continue to increase the area and extent of land managed as wildflower grassland, including roadside verge, on land managed by members of the partnership. Encourage similar management to take place on others' land. |
| Burial grounds for nature | Engage with churches and cemeteries to change mowing regimes to increase the extent and area of wildflower and waxcap grasslands. |
| Parks, Amenity Grassland and Cemeteries | Undertake an assessment of the biodiversity value of parks and amenity grassland in NPT and identify opportunities to enhance habitat, for example, through grassland management or pursuing pollinator-friendly planting in landscaping. |
| Green Infrastructure | Increase the installation of green infrastructure e.g. green roofs, living walls. |

| Action Name | Action Description |
|------------------------------|---|
| Natural Flood Management | Undertake natural flood management projects in high flood risk areas where appropriate. |
| Sustainable Drainage Systems | Encourage the use of SuDS such as swales and rain gardens, particularly in new developments and urban centres to create habitat, reduce pollution and alleviate flood risk. |



Neath Port Talbot Council Biodiversity Duty Plan 2023 – 2026



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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC) Biodiversity Duty Plan (BDP) 2023-2026. This Plan has been produced following a review of the actions in the 2020-2023 plan, which can be found in the BDP (2020-2023) Implementation Report (November 2023).

Neath Port Talbot has plenty to celebrate with regards to its biodiversity, including populations of rare and vulnerable species. Our residents are within just a short walk or bus ride to some wonderful habitats, from coastal sand dunes to ancient woodlands, urban parks to wildflower grasslands. Engagement with nature has proven benefits for wellbeing, and as such, I am proud that our county can boast such easy access to nature.

However, in recent years, concerns for the future of our natural heritage has grown. In 2021, the Welsh Government declared a nature emergency, and the NPT Local Nature Partnership have confirmed that the national declines in biodiversity are reflected here in NPT. Our special habitats and species are threatened in many ways, from loss of connectivity to a decline in their condition.

NPTC is committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity in carrying out all its functions, and in doing so, doing its part to help nature to recover.

NPTC also 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 Biodiversity Duty Plan demonstrates how we will fulfil our legal duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and do our part to help nature in NPT to recover.

Councillor Wyndham Fryer Griffiths

Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Transport and Connectivity, Biodiversity Champion and Armed Forces Champion

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BDP: Biodiversity Duty Plan

C&W Team: NPT Council Countryside and Wildlife Team

ENRaW: Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being Scheme

GI: Green Infrastructure

IIA: Integrated Impact Assessment

LDP: Local Development Plan

LNR: Local Nature Reserve

LNP: Local Nature Partnership

NLHF: National Lottery Heritage Fund

NPT: Neath Port Talbot

NPTC: Neath Port Talbot Council

NRAP: Nature Recovery Action Plan

NRW: Natural Resources Wales

PSB: Public Service Board

RLDP: Replacement Local Development Plan

S6: Section 6 Duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016

SINC: Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

SPG: Supplementary Planning Guidance

SSSI: Special Site of Scientific Interest

SAB: SuDS Approval Body

SuDS: Sustainable Drainage System

WG: Welsh Government

WLGA: Welsh Local Government Association

1. Introduction

- 1.1. NPTC is committed to protecting our natural environment for future generations, which is reflected through our Corporate Plan and other strategies.
- 1.2. Under Section 6 of the [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) “the Act”, Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC), has a statutory duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of its functions. As part of that duty we are required to prepare and publish a plan on how we intend to comply with this; the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty.



Figure 1. NPTC Offices at The Quays, with the neighbouring NPT Bee Friendly site

- 1.3. The last [Biodiversity Duty Plan for Neath Port Talbot](#) (NPT) was published in December 2020. In this there were targeted actions that would be undertaken by the Council to meet the requirements of the Act. Subsequently, a report on progress against the plan was produced in 2023, for the period from April 2020 to the end of March 2023. This report, titled the [Implementation Report](#), is available to view on the Council’s website
- 1.4. The Implementation Report highlights the positive work undertaken by NPTC for biodiversity, demonstrating good progress against delivery of the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty. The report also identified changes that should be made to the actions in development of the new, and updated Biodiversity Duty Plan 2023-2026 (BDP 2023-2026). This new Plan, covering the period April 2023 to March 2026, sets out the means by which the Council will deliver against its statutory duty for biodiversity, and consequently support global action in reversing the decline in biodiversity.

2. Why do we need to support biodiversity in NPT

2.1. There is plenty to celebrate about nature in NPT. Many sites in NPT are [designated for nature conservation](#). These include local, national and international designations. Here you can find populations of species unique to Wales, over 70 highly protected species and good populations of some rare and vulnerable plants.

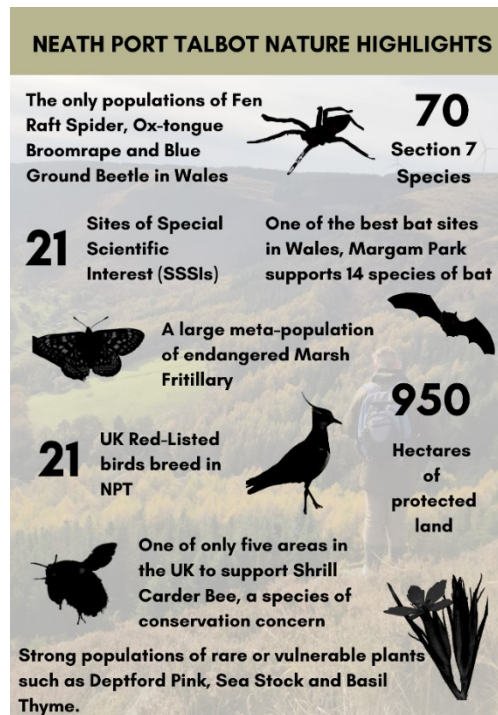


Figure 2. NPT Nature Highlights, courtesy of NPT Local Nature Partnership

2.2. Biodiversity and the natural environment in NPT provides us with many important ecosystem services. Our peatlands and wetlands capture and store atmospheric carbon dioxide. Floodplains in the valleys help dissipate water during high rainfall events, reducing flooding downriver. Woodlands help clean the air of pollutants, provide flood alleviation, reduce the heat island effect in urban environments, provide oxygen and timber products. The varied habitats also bring job opportunities and ways to improve health and well-being.

2.3. Since our natural environment provides so much for us, any decline in our natural environment has an impact on our lives.

Our economies, livelihoods and well-being all depend on our most precious asset: Nature.

The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review, 2021

2.4. Since the last BDP (2020-2023) was published, the Welsh Government has declared a nature emergency, which acknowledged the significant loss of biodiversity caused by humans. A widespread degradation of our ecosystems is taking place, due to pressures such as development, poor management, invasive non-native species and diseases.

2.5. On a local level, NPT Local Nature Partnership (LNP) has undertaken an assessment of the State of Nature of NPT. The habitats of NPT were grouped into 11 broad categories (e.g. woodland, coastal etc.), and sadly, of these 11 habitat categories, only two were assessed to be achieving 'good' ecosystem resilience.

Ecosystem resilience is the capacity of an ecosystem to deal with pressures and demands, either by resisting, recovering or adapting to them whilst retaining their ability to deliver ecosystem services and benefits now and into the future.

| | | |
|---|--|---------|
|  |  Woodland | GOOD |
|  |  Heathland and Moorland | POOR |
|  |  Semi-Natural Grassland | POOR |
|  |  Open Mosaic Habitats | GOOD |
|  |  Enclosed Farmland | UNKNOWN |
|  |  Urban Habitats | FAIR |
|  |  Freshwater Habitats | FAIR |
|  |  Wetland Habitats | POOR |
|  |  Inland Rock and Cliff | FAIR |
|  |  Coastal Habitats | POOR |
|  |  Marine Habitats | POOR |

Figure 3. Ecosystem resilience of habitats in NPT, courtesy of NPT Local Nature Partnership

2.6. This means that habitats across NPT are not resilient enough to deal with pressures and demands such as climate change. Action needs to be taken now to improve the ecosystem resilience of our habitats across NPT.

2.7. Further detail about nature in NPT is available on the [website of the NPT Local Nature Partnership](#).

3. Environment (Wales) Act 2016

3.1. The Environment (Wales) Act became law on 21st March 2016. It puts in place legislation to enable Wales' resources to be managed in a more proactive, sustainable and joined up manner. The Act supports the Welsh Government's wider remit under the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), which allows Wales to enjoy a prosperous economy, a healthy and resilient environment and vibrant, cohesive communities.

Specifically, the Act places an enhanced biodiversity duty on public authorities (see Appendix 1 for the full text of Section 6 of the Act).

Sct. 6(1) A public authority must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.

If a public authority fails to meet its obligations under the Act it could ultimately be subject to judicial review and there is the potential for the Welsh Ministers to issue directions to a public body under Section 10 of the Act.

3.2. There are many ways in which NPTC may impact on biodiversity. For example, Neighbourhood Services such as grass cutting and flailing, building maintenance and development management. With this comes many opportunities to enhance for biodiversity, both directly e.g. by changing mowing regimes to create wildflower areas, and indirectly e.g. through education.

3.3. The focus of the Plan is to determine how Neath Port Talbot Council will seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity over the coming three years.

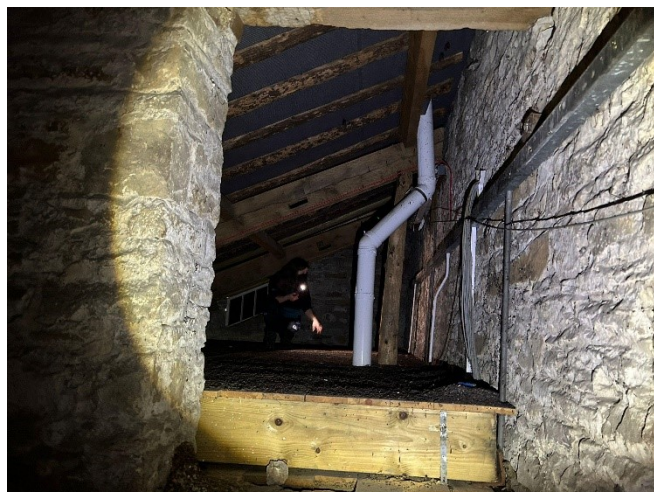


Figure 4. Countryside and Wildlife Team Ecologist undertaking a bat survey to inform engineering works

4. Other Legislative and Policy Context

There is supporting legislation, and a number of national, regional and local plans/strategies which recognise the importance of biodiversity, and the wider benefits it can provide for people and communities.

| Level | Legislation, plans and strategies |
|-------------------------|--|
| National (Wales) | Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales Climate Emergency Declaration Edinburgh Declaration Nature Emergency Declaration 30x30 Target Action Plan for Pollinators Placemaking Charter Future Wales; the National Plan 2040 Planning Policy Wales 11 |
| Regional | Area Statements |
| Local | Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board (PSB) Local Well-being Plan (2023-2028) Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan 2022-2027 State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for NPT Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011-2026) The Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy NPT Air Quality Strategy |

Figure 5. Relevant legislation, plans and strategies

Delivery of the Biodiversity Duty Plan 2023-2026 will support delivery of these wider pieces of legislation, plans and strategies. Further information on some of these are outlined below.

4.1. Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales

4.1.1. The Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) for Wales was originally published in December 2015 as the Nature Recovery Plan. It is the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Wales. The NRAP was refreshed for 2020-21 to provide focus and prioritisation within a fast changing policy context and the emerging ecological crisis. A further update is expected soon. The ambition of the plan is:

To reverse the decline in biodiversity, for its intrinsic value, and to ensure lasting benefits to society.

- 4.1.2. There are 6 objectives laid out in the NRAP to achieve this ambition. The objectives are set out below with full details in Appendix 2. The actions in the BDP 2023-2026 demonstrate how they achieve against these 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 |

4.2. State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for NPT

- 4.2.1. Associated with the NRAP for Wales, NPT Local Nature Partnership has produced a local '[State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for NPT 2023](#)' (SON/ NRAP 2023), which provides an evidence-based assessment of the ecosystem resilience of each broad habitat type in NPT, linked with a plan to help nature recover in the county.
- 4.2.2. The habitats of NPT were grouped into 11 broad categories (e.g. woodland, coastal etc.), and sadly, of these 11 habitat categories, only two were assessed to be achieving 'good' ecosystem resilience. This means that habitats across NPT are not resilient enough to deal with pressures and demands such as climate change. Action needs to be taken now to improve the ecosystem resilience of our habitats across NPT.
- 4.2.3. There are key actions within the SON/ NRAP 2023 which NPTC, as the Local Authority, has the ability to achieve. These include actions such as tackling Invasive Non-Native Species, installing green infrastructure solutions and increasing wildflower grassland. The Council will support the NPT Nature Partnership in implementing the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan and will also deliver against NRAP actions wherever possible when relevant to NPTC.



Figure 6. Green Roof creation at Craig Gwladus Country Park

4.3. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 4.3.1. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the WBFG Act) is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It sets out new ways of working where all elements of well-being are considered together. The full detail of how the BDP 2023-2026 achieves against the WBFG Act is outlined in Appendix 3.

4.4. Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board (PSB) Local Well-being Plan (2023-2028)

- 4.4.1. [The Well-being Plan](#) sets out the Public Service Board's (PSB) long term vision for NPT, as required by the WBFG Act. The Well-being Plan (2023-2028) prioritises four well-being objectives. The BDP 2023-2026 achieves against all four of these objectives but particularly the following:

To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations

4.5. Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan 2022-2027

- 4.5.1. The Corporate plan covers the period 2022 to 2027 and sets out how the council will approach recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic in the short, medium and longer term. The council's strategic change programme have been set in line with the WBFG Act and the PSB Well-being Plan.
- 4.5.2. Both the Well-being Plan and Corporate Plan have a strong focus on improving well-being, alongside valuing and protecting our local environment. Delivery of actions outlined within the BDP 2023-2026 will be an integral element of meeting the Council's, and PSB's, well-being priorities and goals. Furthermore, whilst this plan contributes to all of the goals set out in the legislation, in particular it can be used to demonstrate our contribution to the *A Resilient Wales* goal.

4.6. Area Statements

- 4.6.1. NRW have prepared and published [Area Statements](#). Area Statements are informed by the [State of Natural Resources Report](#) which specifies priorities, risks and opportunities to implement the priorities of the [Natural Resources Policy](#). NPT falls within the [South West Wales](#) area. In the statement NRW have identified 4 main themes. Many of our actions contribute to these themes.

4.7. Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011-2026)

- 4.7.1. Adopted in January 2016, [the Local Development Plan](#) guides the future development of the county. It is an important tool in biodiversity conservation. Policies help protect important habitats and species. This includes sites that have international to local designations. Undesignated but important natural features such as trees, woodlands or ponds are also protected.
- 4.7.2. Details on how to design a development to achieve this protection is found in the [Biodiversity and Geodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance](#) (May 2018). The Countryside and Wildlife Team (C&WT) screen and, where appropriate, comment on planning applications to ensure the policies are met.

4.8. 30 by 30

- 4.8.1. At COP15, the UN Biodiversity Summit, held in Montreal, Canada, from 7 to 19 December 2022, a new global framework was agreed with a suite of measures which aim to address the global loss of biodiversity and restore natural ecosystems. A key target of this framework is the '30x30' target, which looks to protect 30% of terrestrial, inland water and coastal and marine areas by 2030:

Ensure that at least 30 per cent globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes [by 2030]

Convention on Biological Diversity 2021

- 4.8.2. The Welsh Government, along with 100 other countries, has committed to support the 30x30 target and has completed a [Biodiversity Deep Dive](#) to identify recommendations in order to achieve this. The BDP 2023-2026 includes action to determine how NPTC can work towards the 30 x 30 target.



Figure 7. Swift boxes installed on NPTC-owned building in Resolven

4.9. Planning Policy Wales 11

- 4.9.1. In February 2021, Planning Policy Wales 11 came into force. PPW 11 sets out that “planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity”.
- 4.9.2. A letter from Welsh Government dated 23/10/2019 makes it clear that where biodiversity enhancement is not proposed as part of an application, significant weight will be given to its absence, and unless other significant material considerations indicate otherwise, it will be necessary to refuse permission.
- 4.9.3. Planning Policy Wales 11 is incorporated into the BDP 2023-2026 through actions such as Action 2.1.

4.10. The Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy

- 4.10.1. The [Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy](#) sets out how we will lead by example and reduce our carbon footprint when carrying out our operations and functions. It recognises the importance of ecosystems for carbon sequestration. Actions in the strategy commit us to explore green infrastructure and habitat solutions to tackle climate change.

5. Implementation and Monitoring

5.1. Implementation

- 5.1.1. Delivery of the Plan is the responsibility of the Council as a whole. Coordination and reporting is undertaken by the Council's Countryside and Wildlife Team, with a dedicated Ecologist (Plans & Projects) in place to oversee this function.
- 5.1.2. The Biodiversity Duty Actions (as detailed in Section 6) of this BDP 2023-2026 set out specifically what the Authority intends to do to meet its legal requirements of the biodiversity and ecosystem resilience duty. In accordance with Welsh Government guidance on reporting, the actions of the Plan have been drawn up in line with the NRAP objectives. The actions allocated to Local Authorities in the NRAP are also incorporated into this plan.
- 5.1.3. The actions are organised into the most appropriate NRAP Objective. As actions often deliver against more than one objective, the table below each action highlights all objectives relevant to that action. The reporting mechanisms and the next 3 year milestones are also set out against each action.
- 5.1.4. Where there are fundamental changes to terminology, or advancements in our understanding of ecosystems, this plan may be updated to reflect those changes at any time.

5.2. Monitoring and Reporting

- 5.2.1. A report on progress against the plan was produced in 2023, for the period from April 2020 to end of March 2023 (Years 3, 4 and 5). This report, titled the Implementation Report, is available to view on the Council's website.
- 5.2.2. Monitoring of the Plan will continue to be undertaken by the Countryside and Wildlife Team, aligning with financial years and allowing us to monitor actions in line with grant funding. Monitoring will be carried out to the following timetable:
 - Year 6 = April 2023– March 2024
 - Year 7 = April 2024 – March 2025
 - Year 8 = April 2025 - March 2026 etc.
- 5.2.3. Delivery of the Plan will be reported as an Implementation Report every 3 years, in line with the requirements of the Environment Wales Act. The implementation report will be undertaken by early September in any reporting year to allow sufficient time to follow the political reporting process aiming for the report to be taken to Cabinet and Full Council towards the end of the year. Reporting will be for monitoring Years 6-8 at the end of 2026.
- 5.2.4. The Implementation Report, alongside the most up to date Plan, will be submitted to the Welsh Government and made publicly available on the Council's website.
- 5.2.5. The preceding plan will remain in force until the new one is formally agreed.
- 5.2.6. Delivery of the Plan is also integrated into the Council's Corporate Plan, with key outcomes reported as part of the Corporate Plan's monitoring and reporting process. This includes a key performance indicator for the extent of council owned land being managed for biodiversity. Progress reports are published on an annual basis.

6. Actions

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

| 1.1 | BIODIVERSITY ADVISORY SERVICE |
|---------------------|---|
| Action | The Council currently considers biodiversity in a wide range of functions, including through implementing the policies of the LDP when making decisions through the development management process and as part of the SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) Approving Body. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&WT planning spreadsheet |
| Milestone year 6 | All advice recorded in the spreadsheet followed |
| Milestone year 7 | All advice recorded in the spreadsheet followed |
| Milestone year 8 | All advice recorded in the spreadsheet followed |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,6 |

| 1.2 | SERVICE ASSESSMENT |
|---------------------|--|
| Action | Complete service assessment and provide reports with recommendations to each service. All services to follow recommendations as outlined in their reports. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&W Team to keep a spreadsheet recording action against recommendations. Internal Audit team to assist with collecting this information. |
| Milestone year 6 | Service assessments completed |
| Milestone year 7 | Action against recommendations taking place. |
| Milestone year 8 | Action against recommendations taking place. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1 |

| 1.3 | C&WT EARLY ENGAGEMENT |
|---------------------|---|
| Action | The C&WT are regularly consulted by other service areas and give appropriate advice and services. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&WT Consultancy Spreadsheet /STiR (time recording database) |
| Milestone year 6 | Retain internal consultancy function and continue to provide early advice to service areas throughout the Authority. All advice followed. |
| Milestone year 7 | Retain internal consultancy function and continue to provide early advice to service areas throughout the Authority. All advice followed. |
| Milestone year 8 | Retain internal consultancy function and continue to provide early advice to service areas throughout the Authority. All advice followed. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6, |

| 1.4 | DECISION MAKING PROCESS |
|---------------------|---|
| Action | The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) that accompanies all committee reports includes an appropriately evidenced assessment of the impact on biodiversity in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Where necessary, training for staff and officers is undertaken to support this. |
| Reporting mechanism | Committee reports all containing a report on outcomes of the impact assessment. An annual IIA review is undertaken by C&W Team and reported back to relevant service areas, with follow-up training if necessary. |
| Milestone year 6 | All committee reports to contain an appropriately-evidenced report on outcomes of the impact assessment. |
| Milestone year 7 | All committee reports to contain an appropriately-evidenced report on outcomes of the impact assessment. |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| 1.4 | DECISION MAKING PROCESS |
| Milestone year 8 | All committee reports to contain an appropriately-evidenced report on outcomes of the impact assessment. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1.5 | TRAINING |
| Action | Ensure that staff and Elected Members receive appropriate training and are aware of where to access further guidance. |
| Reporting mechanism | Attendance at training |
| Milestone year 6 | Deliver training |
| Milestone year 7 | Deliver training |
| Milestone year 8 | Deliver training |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1.6 | BIODIVERSITY SPG |
| Action | Implement the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in line with LDP policies and develop a mechanism for habitat banking to ensure we have compensation sites ready to go when needed. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&WT Planning spreadsheet |
| Milestone year 6 | Implement SPG |
| Milestone year 7 | Implement SPG |
| Milestone year 8 | Implement SPG |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1.7 | WELL-BEING PROCESS |
| Action | Deliver and support others to deliver against 'Recover, Reset, Renew', the Council Corporate Plan and the Public Service Board's Well-being Plan 'Well-being Objective 3; To ensure our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations', as well as relevant actions under the other three Well-being Objectives. |
| Reporting mechanism | Via the Corporate Plan and PSB annual reports. |
| Milestone year 6 | As required by the Corporate Plan and PSB reporting mechanisms |
| Milestone year 7 | As required by the Corporate Plan and PSB reporting mechanisms |
| Milestone year 8 | As required by the Corporate Plan and PSB reporting mechanisms |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 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 |
| Milestone year 6 | N/A |
| Milestone year 7 | N/A |
| Milestone year 8 | N/A |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,6 |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1.10 | SUDS (SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS) APPROVAL BODY (SAB) |
| Action | Maximise the biodiversity potential of SuDS in NPT. |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1.10 | SUDS (SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS) APPROVAL BODY (SAB) |
| Reporting mechanism | Through SAB processes |
| Milestone year 6 | Work with SAB team to determine the knowledge gaps and what is required to help maximise the biodiversity potential of SuDS in NPT. |
| Milestone year 7 | TBC |
| Milestone year 8 | TBC |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 5, 6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1.11 | PROCUREMENT |
| Action | Include biodiversity/ sustainability impacts as a consideration in the procurement process, with appropriate weighting in tender evaluation. |
| Reporting mechanism | To be agreed with procurement. |
| Milestone year 6 | Work with Procurement team to determine appropriate considerations for biodiversity/ sustainability to include in the procurement process. |
| Milestone year 7 | Impacts on biodiversity / sustainability considered through the procurement process. |
| Milestone year 8 | Impacts on biodiversity / sustainability considered through the procurement process. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1.11 | CURRENT ISSUES |
| Action | Keep policies and steering statements up to date in light of current issues. |
| Reporting mechanism | Through appropriate council processes |
| Milestone year 6 | Policies and steering statements adopted or updated as necessary |
| Milestone year 7 | Policies and steering statements adopted or updated as necessary |
| Milestone year 8 | Policies and steering statements adopted or updated as necessary |
| NRAP Objectives | 1, 5, 6 |

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

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2.1 | 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 6 | Achieve net benefit for biodiversity through the planning process. |
| Milestone year 7 | Achieve net benefit for biodiversity through the planning process. |
| Milestone year 8 | Achieve net benefit for biodiversity through the planning process. |

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2.1 | DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCESS |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2.2 | NPT NATURE PARTNERSHIP |
| Action | The Council will support the NPT Nature Partnership in implementing the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan. The Action Plan is a key mechanism for species and habitat conservation in the County. |
| Reporting mechanism | Action to be recorded and reviewed annually in the first LNP meeting of the new year. |
| Milestone year 6 | Progress against relevant actions as outlined in the NRAP |
| Milestone year 7 | Progress against relevant actions as outlined in the NRAP |
| Milestone year 8 | Progress against relevant actions as outlined in the NRAP |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2.3 | 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 NPTC web pages and NPT Wildlife Facebook page |
| Milestone year 6 | 2 awareness raising projects per year and year on year increase in followers on the Facebook page |
| Milestone year 7 | 2 awareness raising projects per year and year on year increase in followers on the Facebook page |
| Milestone year 8 | 2 awareness raising projects per year and year on year increase in followers on the Facebook page |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,5 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2.4 | 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 priority 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 6 | Assessment ongoing |
| Milestone year 7 | Advice provided as part of assessment followed |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| 2.4 | BIODIVERSITY AUDIT |
| Milestone year 8 | Ongoing communications. Advice followed. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,5 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2.5 | 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 6 | All national/regional guidance to be integrated into the planning system within 3 months of its release |
| Milestone year 7 | All national/regional guidance to be integrated into the planning system within 3 months of its release |
| Milestone year 8 | All national/regional guidance to be integrated into the planning system within 3 months of its release |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 2.6 | FUNDING |
| Action | Apply for funding as opportunities arise to continue to deliver for biodiversity, or as part of strategic, multi-functional projects delivering multiple benefits. |
| Reporting mechanism | As funding requirements |
| Milestone year 6 | As opportunities arise |
| Milestone year 7 | As opportunities arise |
| Milestone year 8 | As opportunities arise |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2.7 | 30x30 |
| Action | Examine the potential to increase the amount of protected or 'other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs)' land in NPT, in line with the 30x30 target and the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations. This can be completed for both NPTC land and for the county of NPT as a whole, working with the LNP. |
| Reporting mechanism | TBC (Welsh Government are yet to define how to measure other effective area based conservation measures (OECMs)) |
| Milestone year 6 | Complete biodiversity audit |
| Milestone year 7 | Use the information from the biodiversity audit to identify the maximum percentage of NPTC land holdings which have the potential to be protected for biodiversity or classified as OECMs i.e. not in other use etc. |
| Milestone year 8 | Feasibility study to determine what would need to happen in order to achieve 30% of council land holdings protected for biodiversity / OECMs |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

6.3. 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 being managed for biodiversity and to ensure their resilience. |
| Reporting mechanism | Extent of area under management reported through the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) within the Corporate Plan. |
| Milestone year 6 | Agree an amended KPI as part of the Corporate Plan. |
| Milestone year 7 | As set by the KPI |
| Milestone year 8 | As set by the KPI |
| 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 6 | Appropriate assessments of ecosystems resilience submitted through the planning process and appropriate measures to deliver improvements taken |
| Milestone year 7 | Appropriate assessments of ecosystems resilience submitted through the planning process and appropriate measures to deliver improvements taken |
| Milestone year 8 | Appropriate assessments of ecosystems resilience submitted through the planning process and appropriate measures to deliver improvements taken |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| 3.3 | AREA STATEMENTS |
|---------------------|---|
| Action | NPTC will assist NRW in implementing Area Statements as required. |
| Reporting mechanism | As required |
| Milestone year 6 | As appropriate |
| Milestone year 7 | As appropriate |
| Milestone year 8 | As appropriate |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| 3.4 | 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. |
| Reporting mechanism | Planning & Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) and Welsh Government approval as part of the evidence base that will underpin the LDP. |
| Milestone year 6 | Engagement, participation and contribution in partnership with the LDP Team to produce a GIA for the Authority. |
| Milestone year 7 | GIA complete but updated as necessary. |
| Milestone year 8 | GIA complete but updated as necessary. |
| NRAP Objectives | 3,4,5 |

| 3.5 | HABITAT CREATION ON BUILDINGS |
|--------|---|
| Action | NPTC buildings are reviewed to determine where there are to continue the work in relation to habitat creation on council buildings, as appropriate for the use of the building. Opportunities are pursued where possible. |

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 3.5 | HABITAT CREATION ON BUILDINGS |
| Reporting mechanism | Report on opportunities. |
| Milestone year 6 | Building review ongoing |
| Milestone year 7 | Building review ongoing |
| Milestone year 8 | Building review completed |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 3.6 | REVIEW OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATURE IN PUBLIC SPACES AND PUBLIC REALM |
| Action | Review and assess opportunities to change and/or add features to public spaces and the public realm that deliver benefits for nature alongside existing necessary functions/benefits |
| Reporting mechanism | Report on opportunities. |
| Milestone year 6 | Review/assessment started |
| Milestone year 7 | Review/assessment ongoing. |
| Milestone year 8 | Review/assessment ongoing. |
| Recommendation | Adopt as part of the new plan |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,3,4,6 |

6.4. NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 4.1 | INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES (INNS) |
| 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. |
| Milestone year 6 | As appropriate |
| Milestone year 7 | As appropriate |
| Milestone year 8 | As appropriate |
| 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 6 | All development proposals assessed as appropriate |
| Milestone year 7 | All development proposals assessed as appropriate |
| Milestone year 8 | All development proposals assessed as appropriate |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 4.3 | STATE OF NATURE IN NPT |
| Action | Support the Local Nature Partnership to review all of the local information and evidence and review the State of Nature of NPT in 2028. |
| Reporting mechanism | State of Nature in NPT reviewed and updated report on local pressures produced. |
| Milestone year 6 | No milestone until Year 10 |
| Milestone year 7 | No milestone until Year 10 |
| Milestone year 8 | No milestone until Year 10 |
| NRAP Objectives | 4,5 |

6.5. NRAP 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. |
| Reporting mechanism | Metadata from MapMate |
| Milestone year 6 | Maintenance of the MapMate database and Biodiversity GIS layers. |
| Milestone year 7 | Maintenance of the MapMate database and Biodiversity GIS layers. If necessary, change to alternative database system. |
| Milestone year 8 | Maintenance of the MapMate database and Biodiversity GIS layers. If necessary, change to alternative database system. |
| 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. Sites will be reviewed periodically through surveys and the development management process. The GIS layer will be updated and shared with SEWBRc as required. |
| Reporting mechanism | Update GIS layer periodically and report updates to SEWBRc |
| Milestone year 6 | Update periodically through surveys and the development management process |
| Milestone year 7 | Update periodically through surveys and the development management process |
| Milestone year 8 | Update periodically through surveys and the development management process |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| 5.3 | SURVEYS |
|---------------------|--|
| Action | NPTC 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 | Reports of surveys |
| Milestone year 6 | Work with the Local Nature Partnership to take forward specialist surveys where most appropriate |
| Milestone year 7 | Work with the Local Nature Partnership to take forward specialist surveys where most appropriate |
| Milestone year 8 | Work with the Local Nature Partnership to take forward specialist surveys where most appropriate |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| 5.4 | RECORD CENTRE SEARCHES |
|---------------------|--|
| Action | All planning applications containing biodiversity information must be accompanied by a SEWBRc 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 6 | All biodiversity information contained in a planning application must be accompanied by a SEWBRc search, unless agreed otherwise |
| Milestone year 7 | All biodiversity information contained in a planning application must be accompanied by a SEWBRc search, unless agreed otherwise |
| Milestone year 8 | All biodiversity information contained in a planning application must be accompanied by a SEWBRc search, unless agreed otherwise |

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 5.4 | RECORD CENTRE SEARCHES |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 5.5 | BIODIVERSITY COMPENSATION SCHEME |
| Action | Implement the compensation scheme as set out in the Biodiversity SPG. |
| Reporting mechanism | C&WT Planning spreadsheet |
| Milestone year 6 | Implement SPG via the development management process |
| Milestone year 7 | Implement SPG via the development management process |
| Milestone year 8 | Implement SPG via the development management process |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 5.6 | 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 6 | Ongoing |
| Milestone year 7 | Ongoing |
| Milestone year 8 | Ongoing |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

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

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 6.1 | COUNTRYSIDE AND WILDLIFE TEAM RESOURCES |
| Action | Maintain enough skills and capacity in the C&WT to co-ordinate the work needed to comply with the legislation and in response to increasing investment by WG and other funders. |
| Reporting mechanism | The duty report |
| Milestone year 6 | Maintain / increase current core staff levels and retain / employ additional project staff to deliver grant funded projects as and when funding becomes available. |
| Milestone year 7 | Maintain / increase current core staff levels and retain / employ additional project staff to deliver grant funded projects as and when funding becomes available. |
| Milestone year 8 | Maintain / increase 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 LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP |
| Action | Continue to support the NPT Local Nature Partnership, providing the secretariat, steering the objectives and collating information on member activities through the C&WT. |
| Reporting mechanism | Partnership minutes |
| Milestone year 6 | Continue to provide secretariat for the NPT Local Nature Partnership |
| Milestone year 7 | Continue to provide secretariat for the NPT Local Nature Partnership |
| Milestone year 8 | Continue to provide secretariat for the NPT Local Nature Partnership |
| NRAP Objectives | 6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 6.3 | BIODIVERSITY CHAMPION |
| Action | A NPTC Councillor is appointed Biodiversity Champion and attends events/meetings as appropriate. |
| Reporting mechanism | Attendance at regular meetings |
| Milestone year 6 | Continued engagement as appropriate |

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6.3 | BIODIVERSITY CHAMPION |
| Milestone year 7 | Continued engagement as appropriate |
| Milestone year 8 | Continued engagement as appropriate |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 6.4 | BIODIVERSITY CONTACT |
| Action | Each service area has a point of contact for biodiversity matters. |
| Reporting mechanism | Key Contacts spreadsheet |
| Milestone year 6 | Engagement as appropriate |
| Milestone year 7 | Engagement as appropriate |
| Milestone year 8 | Engagement as appropriate |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 6.5 | NATURE RECOVERY ACTION PLAN |
| Action | Through the NPT Nature Recovery Action Plan, maximise opportunities to deliver priorities via volunteers and partners. NPTC delivers against any relevant actions in agreement with relevant departments. Please see the list of potential relevant actions in Appendix 4. |
| Reporting mechanism | Delivery against actions to be reported to the LNP in first LNP meeting of the new year. |
| Milestone year 6 | Delivery against actions to be reported to the LNP in first LNP meeting of the new year. |
| Milestone year 7 | Delivery against actions to be reported to the LNP in first LNP meeting of the new year. |
| Milestone year 8 | Delivery against actions to be reported to the LNP in first LNP meeting of the new year. |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,3,4,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 6.6 | NPT BEE FRIENDLY / NATURE CONSERVATION SITES SCHEME |
| Action | Implement the NPT Bee Friendly scheme, increasing sites included in the scheme each year. Review and update the Conservation Sites Scheme to include sites which are not managed under NPTBF. |
| Reporting mechanism | Hectarage of sites or kilometres of linear features reported through Corporate Reporting. |
| Milestone year 6 | Hectarage/ km of sites included in these schemes increases year on year |
| Milestone year 7 | Hectarage / km of sites included in these schemes increases year on year |
| Milestone year 8 | Hectarage/ km of sites included in these schemes increases year on year |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,5,6 |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 6.7 | MOTION FOR THE OCEAN¹ |
| Action | Investigate the Motion for the Ocean and potential deliverables for NPT. |
| Reporting mechanism | TBC |
| Milestone year 6 | Feasibility for Motion for the Ocean |
| Milestone year 7 | Start process of declaring a Motion for the Ocean if considered feasible |
| Milestone year 8 | Motion for the Ocean declared, if feasible |
| NRAP Objectives | 1,2,5,6 |

¹ A model 'Ocean Recovery Declaration' – or 'Motion for the Ocean' – seeks to help local authorities play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring. The world's Ocean is a fundamental part of climate regulation and must be considered as part of an effective climate emergency response.

7. Conclusion

7.1. In light of the nature emergency declared by the Welsh Government, and the declines in ecosystem resilience noted on a local level in the State of Nature for NPT, it has never been more important for NPT Council to play its part in nature recovery.

7.2. Neath Port Talbot Council will deliver the above actions to meet its legal duties under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.



Figure 8. NPT Bee Friendly site by TATA Steel works

8. Glossary

| Word | Definition |
|----------------------|--|
| Biodiversity | Biodiversity is defined in the Environment (Wales) 2016 Act as: “the diversity of living organisms, whether at the genetic, species or ecosystem level” Biodiversity drives the functioning and resilience of our ecosystems. |
| Habitat | A habitat is a place where an organism makes its home. A habitat meets all the environmental conditions an organism needs to survive. |
| Ecology | The study of relationships between living organisms and their physical environment |
| Ecosystem | The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) defined ecosystems as: “a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organisms and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit” |
| Ecosystem Services | Some sort of benefit to people which is provided by the natural environment. Supporting – underpins all other services and includes nutrient cycling, soil formation and primary production Provisioning – all our food, fresh water, wood and fibre, fuel Regulating – cleaning air and water, flood control, carbon sequestration Cultural – aesthetic, spiritual, educational, recreational |
| Ecosystem resilience | Ecosystem resilience is the capacity of an ecosystem to deal with pressures and demands, either by resisting, recovering or adapting to them whilst retaining their ability to deliver ecosystem services and benefits now and into the future. Usually assessed using the DECCA scale (Diversity, Extend, Condition and Connectivity). |
| Local Records Centre | Centres for the collation, management and dissemination of biodiversity data. The Local Records Centre for NPT is South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) |
| MapMate | Biological Recording Software |
| Natural resources | a) Animals, plants and other organisms. b) Air, water and soil. c) Minerals. d) Geological features and processes. e) Physiographical features. f) Climatic features and processes |

| Word | Definition |
|------------------------------------|--|
| NPT Local Nature Partnership (LNP) | A group of individuals and organisations working collectively to enhance biodiversity in NPT www.naturenpt.cymru/about-us |
| Sustainable development | The process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals. |
| Sustainable development principle | Acting in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. |

9. Appendices

Appendix 1; The Environment (Wales) Act Duties

6 The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

(1) A public authority must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.

(2) In complying with subsection (1), a public authority must take account of the resilience of ecosystems, in particular the following aspects—

- (a) diversity between and within ecosystems;
- (b) the connections between and within ecosystems;
- (c) the scale of ecosystems;
- (d) the condition of ecosystems (including their structure and functioning);
- (e) the adaptability of ecosystems.

(3) Subsection (1) does not apply to—

- (a) the exercise of a function by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, or
- (b) the exercise of a judicial function of a court or tribunal.

(4) In complying with subsection (1)—

- (a) the Welsh Ministers, the First Minister for Wales, the Counsel General to the Welsh Government, a Minister of the Crown and a government department must have regard to the United Nations Environmental Programme Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992, and
- (b) any other public authority must have regard to any guidance given to it by the Welsh Ministers.

(5) In complying with subsection (1), a public authority other than a Minister of the Crown or government department must have regard to—

- (a) the list published under section 7;
- (b) the state of natural resources report published under section 8;
- (c) any area statement published under section 11 for an area that includes all or part of an area in relation to which the authority exercises functions.

(6) A public authority other than a Minister of the Crown or government department must prepare and publish a plan setting out what it proposes to do to comply with subsection (1).

(7) A public authority must, before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year after 2019, publish a report on what it has done to comply with subsection (1).

(8) A public authority that has published a plan under subsection (6)—

- (a) must review the plan in the light of each report that it publishes under subsection (7), and
- (b) may revise the plan at any time.

Appendix 2: The Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales objectives

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

Placing nature at the centre of decision making is essential to address the underlying cause of biodiversity loss. In 2011, the UK National Ecosystems Assessment (UK NEA) identified the underlying cause of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation

'The natural world, its biodiversity and its constituent ecosystems are critically important to our well-being and economic prosperity, but are consistently undervalued in conventional economic analyses and decision making.'

A lack of awareness, and subsequent valuation of the critical contribution that our nature makes to our well-being and livelihoods, means we often do not account for that contribution in decision making, at all levels of society, from individuals through local authorities, to businesses. This can lead to damage or overexploitation of our nature. There is also a lack of mechanisms to support this accounting. For example, 'income foregone' does not adequately account for the value of ecosystem services provided by a farm habitat.

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

Species and habitats are wonderful and awe-inspiring and we have a moral obligation to protect them and their genetic variety for future generations. They are the building blocks of our ecosystems and their functioning from which we derive many services and benefits, and we need to ensure we have resilient populations of species to support these.

Sites designated for nature conservation play an important role: they are a key mechanism for maintaining natural diversity required for resilience, and disproportionately contribute to a wide range of ecosystem services and benefits.

Sites are designated for nature conservation purposes to protect and enhance our rarest habitats and species, and the best examples of our natural biodiversity and geo-diversity in Wales. These environments are complex, often ancient, systems with great richness and genetic reserves of plants and animals.

The traditional approaches to nature conservation based on designated sites and the protection of species and habitats have notable successes and we will continue to use these approaches. Our protected sites and species are a core resource, but they can become isolated, and outside pressures on sites can make management challenging.

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

Degraded habitats are ones which no longer support the full potential of our native wildlife. In order to safeguard our protected species and to improve the resilience of more widespread species and habitats, we need to restore networks of habitats to a healthy condition across Wales, both on land and in the sea.

Restoration of degraded habitats and habitat creation will build the resilience of our natural environment through taking action on the four attributes of resilience

Increasing diversity

Increasing ecosystem extent through reducing fragmentation

Increasing connectivity within and between ecosystems

Improving habitat condition

This resilience will also increase the ability of species and habitats to adapt to other pressures including climate change.

Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

The UK NEA identified changing land management practices, through agriculture and urbanisation, pollution and invasive non-native species as key pressures leading to habitat and species loss and fragmentation. This, together with acidification and eutrophication, has changed the quantity and quality of habitats and the species they can support.

In the marine environment key pressures include unsustainable human activity, climate change leading to the warming and acidification of the world's seas and oceans, and the introduction of invasive non-native species.

It is vital to anticipate, prevent and mitigate the causes of biodiversity loss at source, using both our legislation, and innovative and holistic nature-based solutions.

Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

To help nature to recover we need to inform the delivery of action by a better understanding of the ecology and science of our habitats and species, their status and trends, and the pressures and drivers leading to changes.

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

Underpinning our action, we also need a governance structure that is fit for purpose to support and deliver action on the ground. We need to ensure we have the skills, expertise, personnel and functions in place to deliver.

Appendix 3; Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

Well-being Goals

There are 7 well-being goals that have been identified by the WCFG Act. The table below sets out how the Plan contributes to the goals of the WCFG Act

| Goal | Description of the Goal | NPTC Contribution to the Well-being Goals |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| A Prosperous Wales | An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work | Building environmental resilience underpins future economic growth, especially in the context of climate change. Natural resources provide opportunities for employment and economic activity. For example, wildlife and outdoor activity, tourism is very popular in NPT, bringing in revenue for a variety of businesses. |
| A Resilient Wales | A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change). | NPT's biodiversity, mountains, moorlands and heaths, semi-natural grasslands, woodlands, urban greenspaces, rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands, coastline and marine ecosystems all contribute to supporting Wales' ability to adapt to climate change. |
| A Healthier Wales | A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances) | Natural resources make a significant contribution to the physical health and mental well-being of people in Wales. Access to nature and greenspace through NPT's many parks and coastline has positive impacts on physical and mental health. NPT's <u>Working With Nature Project</u> provides that link. |

| Goal | Description of the Goal | NPTC Contribution to the Well-being Goals |
|---|--|--|
| An Equal Wales | A society in which people’s physical and mental wellbeing is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood | Equal access to ecosystems providing cultural services contributes to equality in Wales. By managing areas of our estate for biodiversity, and supporting delivery of community focused activities, we are providing better access. |
| A Wales of Cohesive Communities | Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities | Involving communities in the management of their local parks and woodlands has been shown to improve community cohesion and reduce antisocial behaviour. NPTC are supporting community and friends groups to access the biodiversity of their local sites. |
| A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language | A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language | A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation |
| A Globally Responsible Wales | A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being | The environment supplies all our material resources. By looking after our natural resources, we are contributing to global wellbeing and taking a responsible approach to global challenges e.g. climate change and biodiversity loss. |

The Sustainable Development Principle

(1) In this Act, any reference to a public body doing something “in accordance with the sustainable development principle” means that the body must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

(2) In order to act in that manner, a public body must take account of the following things—

(a) the importance of balancing short term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to meet long term needs, especially where things done to meet short term needs may have detrimental long term effect;

(b) the need to take an integrated approach, by considering how—

- (i) the body’s well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals;
- (ii) the body’s well-being objectives impact upon each other or upon other public bodies’ objectives, in particular where steps taken by the body may contribute to meeting one objective but may be detrimental to meeting another;

(c) the importance of involving other persons with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals and of ensuring those persons reflect the diversity of the population of—

- (i) Wales (where the body exercises functions in relation to the whole of Wales), or
- (ii) the part of Wales in relation to which the body exercises functions;

(d) how acting in collaboration with any other person (or how different parts of the body acting together) could assist the body to meet its well-being objectives, or assist another body to meet its objectives;

(e) how deploying resources to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may contribute to meeting the body’s well-being objectives, or another body’s objectives.

| | NPTC BDP; Applying the sustainable development principle |
|----------------------|---|
| Long Term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through this plan the identification of areas for long term management and changes to policy and working practices will allow the safeguarding of long term needs of the people of NPT. The Development Management process allows us to ensure long term management of sites with mechanisms for enhancement. This plan is the starting point for identifying further improvements to the way we manage our land and resources which will have a long term benefit. |
| Integration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPTC have set and published our well-being objectives. Delivery of this plan will continue to form a key part of the delivery of these objectives, and in maximising the Authority's contribution to the Well-being Goals. |
| Involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through supporting the NPT Local Nature Partnership, this plan allows engagement with residents of NPT in making decisions on the nature conservation priorities of the county borough. This plan has allowed better integration of biodiversity into other service areas priorities. |
| Collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By assessing the policies and working practices of different service areas of NPTC we are identifying further ways of working together. Through the Area Statements we will work with NRW and other partners to deliver action on the ground. Supporting the NPT Local Nature Partnership allows us to work in collaboration with a wide range of partners, particularly non-government organisations and community groups. |
| Prevention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early collaboration between service areas helps to identify potential issues and allows them to be addressed at an early stage. Working with the NPT Nature Partnership provides an opportunity for us to benefit from expertise outside the Authority, to allow us to identify issues at an early stage before they escalate. National and local data is being compiled to identify local pressures. |

Appendix 4; Potential actions relevant to NPTC, from NPT LNP Nature Recovery Action Plan

| Action Name | Description |
|---|--|
| Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) | Investigate where ALAN is an issue in the county and determine where improvements could be made |
| Nature Networks | Improve the condition, connectivity and resilience of protected sites. |
| Tree Planting | Prevent inappropriate tree planting in the county e.g. on important grassland habitats. Encourage natural regeneration in place of tree planting where possible |
| Invasive non-native species | Prevent the encroachment of INNS on important habitats in NPT |
| Prevent the encroachment of INNS on important habitats in NPT | Education programme to raise awareness of the damage caused by dumping garden waste and within NPTC teams to enable them to recognise INNS in fly-tipped material and deal with them appropriately. |
| NPT Bee Friendly | Continue to increase the area and extent of land managed as wildflower grassland, including roadside verge, on land managed by members of the partnership. Encourage similar management to take place on others' land |
| Burial grounds for nature | Engage with churches and cemeteries to change mowing regimes to increase the extent and area of wildflower and waxcap grasslands |
| Parks, Amenity Grassland and Cemeteries | Undertake an assessment of the biodiversity value of parks and amenity grassland in NPT and identify opportunities to enhance habitat, for example, through grassland management or pursuing pollinator-friendly planting in landscaping |
| Green Infrastructure | Increase the installation of green infrastructure e.g. green roofs, living wall |

| Action Name | Description |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Natural Flood Management | Undertake natural flood management projects in high flood risk areas where appropriate |
| Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems | Encourage the use of SuDS such as swales and rain gardens, particularly in new developments and urban centres to create habitat, reduce pollution and alleviate flood risk |

This Biodiversity Duty Plan is Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's plan required under section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

This Plan and the report on the previous plan are available on the Council's website www.npt.gov.uk

In order to promote sustainability this plan is available in electronic format only.

This Plan is also available in Welsh.