

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 - Section 6

The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Report 2022

Blaenhonddan Community Council S6 Report 2022

Introduction and Context

Blaenhonddan Community Council provides a range of services to its local community which have an impact on biodiversity. These include:

- Responsibility for a number of green spaces including 6 parks / playgrounds, 2 playing fields, 8 allotments and 2 other parcels of land, in respect of which it reviews and adapts its management practices where appropriate
- Liaising with and supporting a number of community groups in its area who are involved in environmental matters.
- Helping to raise awareness of biodiversity and environmental matters by supporting or organising relevant events.
- Providing funding where possible for projects in the Council's area which impact on biodiversity.

The Council promotes sustainability and biodiversity by pursuing sustainability goals and sustainable practices whenever possible. It is subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Act and produces an Annual Report which addresses sustainability and biodiversity, with an annual update provided to the Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board on meeting sustainability objectives. The primary reporting responsibility rests with the Clerk to the Council, with policy decisions determined by Council and individual Members contributing to implementation as appropriate

The Council serves approximately 11,000 residents in the communities of Bryncoch, Waunceirch, Caewern, Cadoxton, Cilfrew and Aberdulais. The precept for 2022-2023 is £221,000

Action Report		
Action carried out to:		Monitored by:
-embed biodiversity into decision making & procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council established an Environment Committee with specific responsibility for environment, sustainability and biodiversity • Council published its first Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) as an ongoing document to monitor its role, internal and external activities and engagement with others 	Clerk to the Council
-raise awareness of biodiversity & its importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 Members of Council and 3 staff attended an internal Biodiversity Workshop facilitated by the Local Access to Nature Officer from OVW • 2 Members and 1 staff attended a local biodiversity event facilitated by a third party • 3 Members attended a Community Garden Learning Event • Council has used its website and Facebook page to publicise events and policy considerations • Council agreed to sponsor a “sunflower competition” to highlight the importance of flowers in biodiversity 	Clerk to the Council
-safeguard principal species and habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council facilitated a “Bird Boxes” event attended by 2 Members, 1 staff and 7 members of the public and distributed bird boxes around the community • Council agreed that 2 of its community centres could “house” swift boxes provided by the principal council 	Clerk to the Council
-restore & create habitats and resilient ecological networks		
-tackle negative factors: for e.g. reduce pollution, use nature based solutions, address invasive species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council agreed to become a “Litter Picking Hub” to highlight the damage caused by litter and to promote further litter picking activity within its communities • Council has agreed to explore its current grounds maintenance arrangements in 2023 to establish whether it can use “nature-based solutions” to create wildflower meadows as an alternative to current practice, where feasible to do so 	Clerk to the Council

-use improve and share evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's use of Facebook has allowed progress in engagement and publicity of the Council's initiatives and of the need to promote biodiversity 	Clerk to the Council
-support capacity and/or other organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has engaged with partners to develop its practices and projects and has made approaches to / worked with 3 partners on specific initiatives to date – Friends of Craig Gwladus, Neath Port Talbot CBC and Glynneath Town Council (re mowing collective) 	Clerk to the Council

Review of S6 Duty

- The commitment shown by Members and staff has been commendable to date, but as Council was only able to start engaging with its responsibilities in October 2022, progress has been limited. Many ideas have been generated and their inclusion in a structured context through the Biodiversity Action Plan will help to monitor progress and deliver implementation. Understanding that this is a “duty” that falls on the Community Council and that there are reporting obligations has been a challenge. However, there is an appreciation that officers will manage this process allowing Members to engage with partners and take ownership of project delivery. Embedding these into the current activities of the Environment Committee and the Council will be the priority moving forward.
- The Biodiversity Action Plan has been adopted by Council and will be used to monitor progress. Regular meetings of the Environment Committee will be scheduled from 2023 on and the S6 duty will be monitored at each through the BAP. It is anticipated that the Biodiversity Report will be considered by the Environment Committee in early March and by Council at its meeting on 20 March 2023. It is intended that the Report will, in turn, inform the Council's Annual Report submitted to its Annual Meeting in May 2023, along with its statement to the Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board.