

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 - Section 6

The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

Report 2019

Llanelli Rural Council

Introduction and Context

Llanelli Rural Council provides a range of services to the local community which have an impact on biodiversity.

The council provides thirteen community buildings providing community halls and sports changing facilities. It provides and maintains seven recreational parks where a range of sports such as rugby, football, bowls and cricket are regularly played.

The council also provides and maintains thirteen children's play areas and jointly own a large cemetery facility – Llanelli District Cemetery.

The council is in the process of transferring a large community growing space from Carmarthenshire County Council and is setting up a maintenance lease for land surrounding Swiss Valley Reservoir with Welsh Water.

The council maintains over fifty miles of public footpaths across its geographical area. The use of which reduces reliance of vehicles for essential journeys such as school runs etc and provides access for recreational walks in rural areas across the network of footpaths.

The council provides community support via its dedicated Community Development Officer and awards grants for community projects in the council's area.

The council's geographic area is approximately 26.78 square miles, with a population of 22,800 and surrounds the urban centre of Llanelli. Its boundaries extend from Loughor Estuary in the east to Burry Port in the west and skirts the Gwendraeth Valley in the north. The area is made up of the villages and districts of Bynea, Cwmbach, Cynheidre, Dafen, Felinfoel, Five Roads, Furnace, Llwynhendy, Ponthenri, Pontyates (south of the railway line), Pwll, Sandy and Swiss Valley.

The precept for 2019-20 is £1,041,560.

The council promotes the principle of sustainability and biodiversity by pursuing sustainability goals and sustainable practices whenever possible.

The council has engaged with Carmarthenshire County Council and formed a partnership with Llanelli Town Council embarking on a community asset transfer programme to protect, secure and maintain sporting, leisure and children's play areas.

The council has declared a Climate Emergency and subsequently set up an Environment and Climate Emergency Steering Group as a response to the declaration. The terms of reference of the group are annotated below.

A review of the council's position in relation to IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) reduction of target from 2°C to 1.5°C global temperature rise.

The aim of the review:

To review the council's position in relation to IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and recommend how the council can contribute towards this target in the short, medium and long term.

The Group will consider the potential changes and impacts of global warming across the council's administrative area.

The review will involve gathering information from its own activities in providing local services and consult with other resources such as government advisory bodies, websites, partner organisations, agencies and individuals.

Identify the key areas where the council can impact on the IPCC target whilst carrying out its service delivery functions (direct and indirect) and how the council can also encourage residents to make an impact on:

- a. Reducing carbon emissions
- b. Use energy more efficiently
- c. Switch to low carbon fuels
- d. Prepare for climate change

The recommendations of the group are reported to the council's Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

Stemming from this an Environment and Climate change policy, strategy and action plan will be formulated and reported for further consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Action Report

Action carried out to:		Monitored by:
<p>Embed biodiversity across all levels of decision-making, council policies, planning and working practices.</p>	<p>Declared a Climate Emergency and set up a Climate Emergency and biodiversity task group in relation to IPCC reduction of target from 2°C to 1.5°C global temperature rise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflected the commitment to biodiversity and natural areas in the Council's Annual Report.• Embed consideration for biodiversity and carbon footprint into procurement protocols. Assess suppliers' commitment and policies in relation to the carbon footprint of their products, services or business management.• Purchase energy from Green suppliers.• Reduce energy consumption and improve efficiencies of buildings. Smart controls etc.• Council comments on Planning Applications in support of biodiversity.• Coast Protection consultee.• Responding to sand dredging licences in Carmarthen Bay Estuary.	<p>Commitments made in documents, reports, agendas, policies and protocols.</p> <p>Consideration of biodiversity demonstrated in all decisions.</p>

<p>Raise awareness of biodiversity & its importance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise awareness raising and training sessions for members and staff. • Support The Prince's Trust programme who undertake community biodiversity projects, planting, maintaining etc. • Encourage the community as a whole to volunteer in the context of supporting and promoting biodiversity and reducing carbon footprint. • Developing community growing space gardens with eco/biodiverse initiatives. • Promoting community events on website and social media-wildlife walks, supporting litter picking groups. • Providing natural burial area in cemetery. Encouraging natural burial principles throughout the service, promoting via website, funeral directors and other stakeholders. • Posted details of the actions we have taken to help biodiversity on our website and social media platforms. 	<p>Through feedback from Council members and residents.</p> <p>Numbers of people taking part in activities</p>
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<p>safeguard principal species and habitats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage land to buffer and join neighbouring areas up as part of resilient ecological networks. • Ensured no negative impacts on protected species and the environment. • Manage wooded and hedgerow areas to encourage biodiversity. • Natural pollinators planted wherever possible. • Reduce or remove the use of herbicides. • Maintain historical stone memorials to protect lichen growth. 	<p>Records of sites or species safeguarded.</p>
<p>restore & create habitats and resilient ecological networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant native pollinator friendly flowers and bedding plants. • Only use true annual plants (pollinators) in planting schemes. • Introduce new pollinator opportunities in parks, amenity/sports areas, halls and cemetery. • Manage wooded areas and introduce new tree and hedgerow planting wherever possible. 	<p>Area of habitat increased. Improved biodiversity.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design landscaping at various sites to encourage a diverse wildlife population, especially pollinating insects such as bees and butterflies. • Created biodiverse areas to provide nesting and hibernating areas to encourage a range of species. • Changed mowing and maintenance regimes at all sites by reducing the frequency of cuts to encourage wildflowers and other pollinator friendly plants, also providing cover for small mammals and reptiles. • Increasing areas at all sites to support biodiversity and reduce carbon footprint. 	
<p>tackle negative factors: for e.g. reduce pollution, use nature based solutions, address invasive species.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable procurement policies. • Reduce or remove the use of herbicides to only where absolutely necessary such as to control invasive non-native species such as Japanese Knotweed • The use of more environmentally friendly tools and equipment. Considering battery powered. 	<p>Policy documents, reports, council minutes.</p> <p>Amount of herbicide purchased and applied – application records.</p> <p>Procurement policies</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of cutting regimes saves fuel. Use of machinery, travelling etc. Reducing carbon. • Vehicle use monitoring, reduce bad driving techniques, wasted fuel, unnecessary or poorly planned journeys, reduce journeys. • Considering battery vehicles. • Recycling waste. 	<p>Work schedules, timesheet, vehicle tracking/monitoring.</p>
<p>use improve and share evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with the Biodiversity Officer at Carmarthenshire County Council to ensure use of best practice and to increase knowledge of local issues. • Benchmarking with Welsh cemetery managers forum, other authorities. National benchmarking via ICCM. 	
<p>support capacity and/or other organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community development support considering biodiversity and carbon footprint. • Support of organised litter picks, provision of loan equipment with other partners and volunteer groups. • In the process of transferring Swiss Valley Reservoir, a large and diverse biodiversity. Safeguarding, infrastructure, biodiversity and public access to outdoor activities. • Considering requiring any organisations receiving grant from us to demonstrate how their project will contribute to supporting health and wellbeing, biodiversity and effect on carbon footprint. 	<p>Partnerships formed to deliver biodiversity benefit.</p>

Review of s6 duty

- What has worked well?

The creation of wildflower and plant areas in the cemetery has been a success, especially as it has proved attractive to the public in addition to helping biodiversity. Also, there have been some cost savings through the reduction in mowing. Natural burial areas in the cemetery has also proved popular.

- What have the barriers been?

Technology for battery powered tools and equipment is still in its infancy. Equipment presently available is limited considering the heavy-duty nature of the rural environments we work in. Already have a substantial diesel fleet of vehicles. The public wish to see all areas “tidy”. Educate and inform programme needed.

- What will you change?

Work with the Local Biodiversity Officer to seek advice, more benchmarking, attending seminars etc. More interaction and public information. Continue to seek suitable solutions to support the council initiatives.

How and when will the s6 duty be monitored and the s6 plan reviewed?

The duty will be monitored through the council’s Environment and Climate Emergency Steering Group that will report back to the council on the success or otherwise of the actions taken through the usual management and statutory council reporting protocols.

The s6 plan will be reviewed in light of these reports and any other evidence or information that is made available to the council. At the time of this report’s publication, there is no specific time or date set for the plan to be reviewed, but this will be done within the next six months.