



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Scrutiny Performance Panel - Natural Environment

At: Remotely via Microsoft Teams

On: Tuesday, 1 September 2020

Time: 10.30 am

Convenor: Councillor Peter K Jones

Membership:

Councillors: E W Fitzgerald, S J Gallagher, M H Jones, I E Mann, H M Morris, C Richards, B J Rowlands, M Sherwood, W G Thomas and L J Tyler-Lloyd

Agenda

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| 2 | Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests. www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests | |
| 3 | Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips. | |
| 4 | Minutes. To receive the minutes of the previous meeting(s) and agree as an accurate record. | 1 - 4 |
| 5 | Public Questions. Questions must be submitted in writing, no later than noon on the working day prior to the meeting. Questions must relate to items on the agenda. Questions will be dealt with in a 10 minute period. | |
| 6 | Discussion on COVID-19 Service Specific Impacts / Environmental Lessons. | 5 - 6 |
| 7 | Follow Up - Implementation of Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry Recommendations. a) Report from Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations. b) Panel to consider progress with implementation of recommendations / action plan and overall impact of the inquiry. | 7 - 94 |
| 8 | Local Flood Risk Management - Annual Update. | 95 - 110 |

9 Letters.

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- a) Panel Meeting 22 October 2019: Letter to/from Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management. (re. Gull Nuisance)
- b) Panel Meeting 16 December 2019: Letter to/from Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management. (re. Weed Management and Air Pollution Control)

Huw Evans

**Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Monday, 24 August 2020**

Contact: Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Officer - Tel (01792) 637257

Agenda Item 4



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel - Natural Environment**

Committee Room 5, Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 16 December 2019 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor P K Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
E W Fitzgerald
C Richards
W G Thomas

Councillor(s)
M H Jones
B J Rowlands

Councillor(s)
I E Mann
M Sherwood

Other Councillor Attendees:

Mark Thomas Cabinet Member – Environment & Infrastructure Management

Officer(s):

Bob Fenwick Group Leader Highways Maintenance
Jeremy Davies Group Leader Parks and Cleansing
Mark Wade Head of Housing & Public Health
Tom Price Team Leader – Pollution Control & Private Sector Housing
Brij Madahar Scrutiny Team Leader

Other Invitees:

Dr Rosemary Mason

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): J A Hale and L J Tyler-Lloyd

14 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

15 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips.

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

16 Minutes.

The minutes of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel meetings, held on 25 September 2019 and 22 October 2019, were agreed as an accurate record.

17 Public Questions.

There were no public questions.

18 Weed Management.

The Panel held a discussion on weed management, in particular on the Council's use of glyphosate, which has been the subject of public debate regarding health & safety.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management, along with relevant officers, reported to the Panel on the Council's approach and activities in relation to weed management and control, use of glyphosate, and challenges in identifying alternatives.

The Panel also heard from an external contributor, Dr. Rosemary Mason, who has campaigned against the use of glyphosate. She shared with the Panel her concerns regarding glyphosate use and dangerous impacts on human health and biodiversity.

Discussion focussed on:

- Highways weed spraying activity, resources and costs
- The Parks Service (including treatment of Japanese knotweed)
- The licensing of glyphosate
- Health concerns
- Welsh Government and APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) guidance
- Public opinion on weed management
- Alternatives to using glyphosate

The Panel considered the information provided, asked questions, and gave views on the way forward. The Chair thanked all for their input.

AGREED that the Panel write to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management with its views and recommendations on the issue of weed management.

19 Air Pollution Control.

The Panel held a discussion on air pollution control, as a serious public health issue, which has previously been the subject of a Scrutiny Working Group and will now be subject of regular monitoring of performance through this Scrutiny Panel.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management, along with relevant officers, reported to the Panel on air pollution monitoring activities in Swansea, and actions to improve air quality.

The Panel also considered the 'Local Air Quality Management In Wales' Welsh Government Policy Guidance (issued June 2017) which provided a reference point for discussion on how the Council is working to improve air quality, human health, and the quality of life in Swansea.

Discussion focussed on:

- Air quality monitoring and compliance with National Air Quality Standards
- Measured levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), including monitoring around schools
- The contribution of traffic congestion on levels of both air and noise pollution
- The issue of contracted vehicles (coaches / taxis etc.) and parents / carers parked outside schools with engines left running and impact on children's health
- The car culture, quality of public transport, and increase in housebuilding
- Electric vehicle usage
- How industry in Swansea and the region contributes to air pollution, and the inspection and monitoring regime in place
- Correlation between air pollution and deprivation / health inequalities
- The importance of green infrastructure in helping to reduce the harmful effects of air and noise pollution
- The Council's Air Quality Action Plan
- Actions taken to improve air quality and reducing exposure to air pollution
- Public engagement and messaging on air quality
- Opportunities arising from the UK Clean Air Day on 18 June 2020, the UK's largest air pollution campaign
- The Welsh Government Active Travel Grant Fund
- The Council's position with regard to the Welsh Government Policy Guidance
- The Welsh Government Clean Air Plan for Wales, and approach to reducing air pollution in Wales, being out for consultation ending on 10 March 2020

The Panel considered the information provided, asked questions, and gave views on the way forward. The Chair thanked all for their input.

AGREED that the Panel write to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management with its views and recommendations on the issue of air pollution control.

20 Letters.

The Panel received the correspondence sent by the Panel and responses received following the meeting of the Panel held on 25 September 2019:

- Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Delivery & Performance.
- Letter to / from Welsh Government Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs
- Correspondence with Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

21 Work Plan 2019/20.

The Panel's work plan for this municipal year was noted. The monitoring items for the next Panel meeting, to be arranged for March 2020, were shown as:

- Follow Up – Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry
- Local Flood Risk Management

22 For Information: Environment (Wales) Act 2016 - First Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Monitoring Report to Welsh Government

The report was noted.

The meeting ended at 12.32 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Convener

Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel – 1 September 2020

Discussion on COVID-19 Service-Specific Impacts / Environmental Lessons

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Purpose | The Panel has planned a discussion on service-specific impacts and environmental lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. |
| Content | This report outlines the objective of the discussion. The Panel will hear from relevant Cabinet Members and officers about the experience and effects on relevant service areas as well as environmental lessons and opportunities. |
| Councillors are being asked to | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask questions and discuss issues around COVID-19 relevant to the natural environment• Make comments and recommendation as necessary |
| Lead Councillor(s) | Councillor Peter Jones (convener) |
| Lead Officer & Report Author | Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Team Leader Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk |

1. Introduction

1.1 The Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel will ask about specific impacts arising from COVID-19 on the natural environment & biodiversity, experiences, and lessons, given things like:

- reduced air pollution from vehicular traffic;
- public reconnection with nature / wildlife;
- more active travel such as walking and cycling;
- increased use of parks and open spaces; and;
- less cutting and weed management in parks and roadside verges etc.

1.2 There is concern that any positives / gains are not lost, and that the experiences help to inform Council actions on climate change.

1.3 Relevant Cabinet Members have been asked to attend to speak to the Panel about the experience and reflections on the last six months, and emerging lessons for the future:

- Councillor Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management, is responsible, amongst other things, for:
 - Community Grass Cutting Services
 - Community / Public Transport
 - Cycleways
 - Highways & Engineering
 - Infrastructure Repairs & Maintenance
 - Litter & Community Cleansing
 - Parks Maintenance
 - Public Protection
- Councillor David Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations, is responsible, amongst other things, for:
 - Planning Policy
 - Sustainable Development (including Biodiversity)

1.4 Relevant officers have also been invited to support the discussion, provide input in relation to service-specific impacts, and contribute their views.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations

Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel – 1 September 2020

Impact Report: Scrutiny Inquiry into Natural Environment

| | |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Purpose: | To help the Scrutiny Panel to assess the impact of the scrutiny inquiry report into Natural Environment |
| Content: | <p>This report deals with three questions related to the impact of the inquiry:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?2. Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?3. What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry? |
| Councillors are being asked to: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the contents of the report• Reach conclusions about the impact of the inquiry |
| Lead Councillor: | Councillor David Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations |
| Lead Officer: | Paul Meller |
| Report Author: | Paul Meller, Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Manager Tel: 07887 055274 E-mail: paul.meller@swansea.gov.uk |
| Legal Officer: | Jonathan Wills |
| Finance Officer: | Aimee Dyer |
| Access to Services Officer: | Rhian Miller |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report was due to be considered at the Panel meeting originally scheduled for 31st March 2020. It focuses on progress over the period 2019/20 and is therefore largely unaffected by recent events. Covid-19 has however delayed the award of certain grants for 20/21. This in turn has affected the implementation of those recommendations set out in the Action Plan which were reliant upon the appointment of specific grant-funded project officers.

- 1.2 The Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook an in-depth inquiry during 2018/19 and presented its final report with conclusions and recommendation to Cabinet on 21 March 2019. The Inquiry looked at what Swansea Council should do to maintain and enhance its natural environment and biodiversity, and, in so doing, promote the resilience of eco-systems? This final scrutiny report is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 1.3 Cabinet made a decision on the Scrutiny recommendations at its meeting on 18 July 2019. The Cabinet Member response and original action plan agreed by Cabinet are attached at **Appendix B**.
- 1.4 The reporting timeline of the inquiry was as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Commenced | 26 Mar 2018 |
| Agreed by the Scrutiny Programme Committee | 11 Feb 2019 |
| Presented to Cabinet | 21 Mar 2019 |
| Cabinet Response agreed | 18 July 2019 |

- 1.5 The final stage of the Scrutiny Inquiry process is the follow up. It is at this point that usually the original Panel reconvenes in order to assess the impact of the work. With the establishment of a Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel following the inquiry, the Panel is now dealing with the follow up.
- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to assist the Panel as it seeks to answer the following three questions, each of which will be dealt with as follows:
- What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?
 - Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?
 - What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?

2. What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?

- 2.1 Since the Inquiry concluded the following changes have taken place (N.B. italics indicate changes as a direct result of the Inquiry):
- The Council's first Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Monitoring Report was submitted to Welsh Government in Dec 2019. It provided an overview of the key biodiversity duty actions and initiatives that the Council has undertaken over the last 2-3 years. Work has now commenced on the Council's Section 6 Action Plan for 2020-22.
 - The biodiversity duty actions listed under the Corporate Objective for Maintaining and Enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity form the basis of the Council's Section 6 Action Plan. *This has been expanded to incorporate the recommendations of the Scrutiny Inquiry*
 - Since the adoption of the new Corporate Objective for Biodiversity, there has been a requirement for the preparation of quarterly and annual progress reports relating to delivery of the steps/actions set out under this Objective, and the associated Performance Indicators as part of the

Council's business planning and monitoring processes. The first annual report was submitted to Council in December 2019.

- *To promote engagement in, and shared responsibility for, delivering the new Corporate Biodiversity Objective, a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group was set up in August 2019 up to help review, monitor and report on progress in delivering the steps /actions listed under the Objective.*
- In June 2019 Swansea Council agreed a Notice of Motion declaring a climate emergency and has committed to a number of actions to work towards reducing the Council's carbon footprint. A Climate Emergency Action Plan is in the process of being drafted and in Feb 2020 the terms of reference of the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group were broadened to include climate change and sustainable development.
- *A Scrutiny Performance Panel for the Natural Environment and Biodiversity was established in Sept 2019 to follow up on the Inquiry, provide ongoing scrutiny of the Council's progress in meeting the requirements of the legislation and its new Corporate Biodiversity Objective.*
- In collaboration with NRW a draft Swansea Central Area Green Infrastructure Strategy and Green Factor Tool has been prepared and consulted upon. The Strategy seeks to create, connect and improve areas of green space making the city more biodiverse and resilient to the impacts of climate change. Key aims are improving the multi-functionality, ecological resilience and connectivity of urban green spaces; helping to improve the health and well-being of both people and wildlife; and also improving prosperity by encouraging visitors to stay longer and enjoy the city centre.
- From April 2020 all Service Plans are required to demonstrate how the respective Service areas are contributing to meeting the Council's Corporate Biodiversity objective.
- *Biodiversity clauses are now included in service level agreement, licences, leases, etc.*

3. Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?

3.1 In responding to the Inquiry an action plan was drawn up showing what steps would be taken to implement all of the scrutiny recommendations agreed by Cabinet.

3.2 The table at **Appendix C** shows an updated action plan showing progress against each recommendation and specifically:

- the Cabinet decision in respect of each recommendation
- the action taken since the Cabinet response on 18 July 2019 / action outstanding and clearly marked as COMPLETE / INCOMPLETE together with any relevant explanatory statements
- the responsible officer(s)
- timescales involved

4. What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?

- 4.1 Many of the recommended actions of the Scrutiny Inquiry were already planned in one form or another in order to meet the Council's Biodiversity Duty. For example, the statutory requirement to produce a Section 6 Action Plan and appointment of specific project officers, whilst activities relating to improving public awareness of biodiversity issues/opportunities, providing training sessions, working with volunteers, etc are embedded in officer duties.
- 4.2 The Inquiry has helped focus on specific tasks/projects that could be carried out in the short/medium term (quick wins). However, a significant number of recommendations relate to tasks that will remain ongoing in the future long after the current time/grant limited projects have been completed. Dealing with natural environment matters is not a task and finish process but a continually evolving lifelong obligation.
- 4.3 Additional actions that have been achieved or are planned to be achieved as a direct result of the Inquiry recommendations include the establishment of a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group to help embed biodiversity duties across the Council, inserting biodiversity clauses in agreements, and the establishment of various monitoring/scrutiny mechanisms.
- 4.4. However, by far the most significant impact of the Scrutiny Inquiry has been the increased profile it has given to natural resources and biodiversity as well as the work of the Natural Environment Section both across the Council and with external stakeholders. The Inquiry's endorsement of the planned and future work of the Section has empowered officers and put them in a much stronger position to deliver projects/improvements and identify finance in support of the biodiversity agenda.
- 4.5 Costs are now increasingly being shared across services; planning ecology work is to be carried out in house subject to resource availability; and contributions to the SEWBREC agreement have been negotiated. Biodiversity matters are now discussed across all service areas from the outset of projects, proposals and events, whereas previously they would have been an after-thought or possibly not considered at all.
- 4.6. Finally, funding from grants and other sources has been used to employ an additional part-time Planning Ecologist for a temporary period of 2 years. They have been in post since December 2019 and extended their hours in April 2020 to take on the part time role of the Local Nature Partnership Officer.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council must comply with the statutory obligations for biodiversity and natural resource management contained in the Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as detailed in this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no specific financial implications raised by this report.

7. Equality & Engagement Implications

7.1 There are no specific equality and engagement implications raised by this report.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry Report:
<https://swansea.gov.uk/scrutinyreportslibrary>

Appendix B – Cabinet Report – Response to Environment Scrutiny Inquiry (18 July 2019)
<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=124&MId=8501&Ver=4&LLL=0>

Appendix C – Updated Action Plan on Implementation of Agreed Scrutiny Recommendation

What should Swansea Council do to maintain and enhance its natural environment and biodiversity, and, in so doing, promote the resilience of eco-systems?



Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry Panel
City and County of Swansea - Dinas a Sir Abertawe



January 2019

Why This Matters by Councillor Peter Jones (Convener)



‘There should be environment in every policy and every policy in environment’ (WLGA Neville Rookes)

When I was elected – to my surprise – in May 2017, I came onto the Council with one overriding ambition: to facilitate and encourage delivery of the biodiversity and eco-system duties and responsibilities for public bodies as set out in the Welsh Government’s Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Before retiring in August 2016, I had previously worked for more than fourteen years as Sustainable Development Officer for RSPB Cymru, latterly involved from 2013 to 2015 with helping to draft what became the Well-Being of Future Generations Act, notably the well-being goal for A Resilient Wales. I also contributed to the thinking behind the Environment (Wales) Act.

I was pleased when the Scrutiny Programme Committee agreed to my suggestion for an Inquiry into ‘what should the Council be doing to maintain and enhance its natural environment and biodiversity and, in so doing, promote the resilience of eco-systems’. I realised from the outset that this would be an extensive undertaking, touching on all areas of the Council’s work – the aim was nothing less than to give to the natural environment and biodiversity the same level of importance and priority already accorded to the economy, welfare, housing, education and so on – a cultural revolution, no less.

Early on, the Inquiry Panel identified as a key priority that biodiversity and the environment should be written into the Council’s Corporate Plan as a sixth well-being objective, and this would have been the Panel’s principal recommendation. However, and much to our delight, this key recommendation was pre-empted by the Council in October 2018 adopting just such an objective, ie ‘Maintaining and enhancing Swansea’s Natural Resources and Biodiversity’; I believe that the work of the Inquiry contributed to its adoption. This, of course, built upon the ‘Working with Nature’ challenge set out in the Public Services Board Local Well-being Plan.

We understand that we are now one of the leading public authorities in Wales in thinking through and exploring how best to deliver on the Welsh Government environmental and sustainability legislation, evidenced by the then Environment Minister choosing Swansea Council as her first port of call in November 2018 to learn about what we are doing. Our task now, of course, is to meet with her expectations and to deliver on and embed the requirements of the legislation, and that is what this report, with its conclusions and recommendations, seeks to do. However, the Panel is clear that delivery will be difficult without financial support to meet, in particular, additional staffing requirements.

We live in dangerous and difficult times; to quote from David Attenborough’s recent statement to the December UN climate change conference in Poland ‘If we don’t take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon’. This is as much true for Swansea as for the rest of the planet, so we must act and do what we can – this report is a contribution. To recall the slogan from many years ago of Friends of the Earth – ‘Think global, act local’. Biodiversity

loss, habitat degradation and climate change impacts are the most serious challenges facing our species, and we must rise above our preoccupations with short-term considerations to address the potentially catastrophic future facing the planet and our children and grandchildren, who will have to live with the consequences of any failure on our part to do now what we know needs to be done.

Biodiversity and the natural environment are of innate importance – we alone as a species have the capacity to drive other species to extinction – but it is also the case that we depend upon the natural world for everything. Agriculture and food production are of fundamental importance, but so too are air and water quality and local flood risk management – the planting of trees and other vegetation plays a key role in this regard; moreover, the sowing of native wild flowers supports bees and other flying insects, so necessary to plant pollination and reproduction. Green infrastructure is rightly recognised by the Council as a necessary part of city centre redevelopment.

This report concentrates on biodiversity loss and how we, as a Council, can and must set about halting and reversing this process, not least to meet the 2020 target set by the Welsh Government which aims to halt the loss of biodiversity and take steps toward recovery. Early on, we decided with regret that we could not adequately address the issue of climate change within the scope of this inquiry, albeit that this process impacts as much upon wildlife as it does upon our species. However, we should not lose sight of this overriding challenge – I commend the work on renewable sources of zero-carbon energy for Swansea being undertaken by the Council but, of course, as we all know, much more needs to be done.

I would like in conclusion to say that the cross party Panel has worked extremely well, and I would like to pay tribute to the ideas and contributions of all members. I would also, of course, pay tribute to and thank both the Council Officers who met with the Panel and responded to its, often, difficult questioning, and to the many representatives of outside ‘green’ and voluntary bodies who attended our meetings and gave evidence. I would especially wish to thank Deb Hill, Team Leader of the Council’s Nature Conservation Team, who was unstinting in her help and advice to the Panel; and to Bethan Hopkins, the Scrutiny Officer responsible for supporting the Inquiry, and for all her enthusiastic hard work, good advice, initiatives and ideas.

There’s much work to be done – let’s get on and do it!

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

Below is a summary of conclusions and recommendations which the Panel reached. Detail can be found in the body of the report.

What should Swansea Council do to maintain and enhance its natural environment and biodiversity, and, in so doing, promote the resilience of eco-systems?

Conclusions

1. Create an environmental corporate priority to embed biodiversity in business and strategic planning to meet requirements.
2. Raise the profile of the Natural Environment and Biodiversity internally and externally.
3. Maintain and increase the specialist and high quality work which is currently delivered.
4. Recognise the benefits of 'nature based' prevention projects, such as to limit air pollution and for flood risk management etc.
5. The need for and costs of providing additional resources to maintain the natural environment should be recognised and shared throughout services
6. The authority should work co-productively with external partners on a strategic scale.
7. Recognise, encourage, maintain and expand commitment from voluntary groups, Community Councils and the public in maintaining and enhancing the Council's green spaces.
8. There should be more cross departmental working, with the shared aim of maintaining and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity, together with their eco-system benefits.
9. There needs to be a commitment to natural environment education in schools.

Recommendations

1. Development and implementation of a Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan.
2. Ensure the Action Plan links with other relevant cross organisational policies at a strategic level, for example, the Local Well-being Plan and Area Statements.
3. Develop a clear and enthusiastic vision and message for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity to ensure a consistent 'buy-in' from each service.
4. Embed the new corporate priority by developing and delivering relevant training.
5. Make information available to the public to encourage participation and understanding, including continuing to develop the Natural Environment web pages.
6. Complete and publicise the ward mapping exercise. This would provide each ward and the Councillor Representatives with information specific to that ward. It would include information about important species, protected sites and other relevant ecological information as well as potential opportunities for improving biodiversity within the ward.
7. Recognise, encourage, maintain and expand commitment from voluntary groups, Community Councils and the public in maintaining and enhancing the Council's green spaces.
8. Insert a relevant biodiversity clause into service level agreements, licences etc which relates to land use and land management and ensure that the importance of these clauses is made clear to the land managers and the implications of not meeting them are highlighted.
9. Assess the verges in Swansea that can stop being mowed and sprayed. Give these over to nature and allow for self-seeding, which will encourage native plants and pollinator species.
10. Where appropriate, plant native wildflowers and trees. Non-native species do not benefit pollinators to the same extent as native species.
11. Encourage green projects for well-being such as gardening projects, outdoor green-space activities and volunteering opportunities for adults and children across all relevant services.
12. Employ a Section 6 Officer to co-ordinate, support and promote the consideration and delivery of a range of environmental projects across Swansea and also ensure the Council are meeting the requirements of the Environment Act (Section 6).
13. Employ an additional Planning Ecologist/Ecological Enforcement Officer to work with Council services with a specific duty to help ensure the environmental conditions and section 106 obligations on planning consents are met, whilst also

contributing to maintaining biodiversity, and meeting the requirements of the new Sustainable Drainage System legislation.

14. Share natural environment and biodiversity costs across services.
15. Renew the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) service level agreement for 2019/20 (with a plan in place to achieve this in subsequent years)
16. Continue to nurture good working relationships with external agencies and encourage other services to do the same.
17. Invite environmental voluntary group and Community Council representatives to regular liaison meetings e.g. Friends of parks and wildlife sites. This would allow them some support and access to some specialist advice from relevant officers.
18. Create environmental link Governors on school governing bodies who can take relevant information and projects to their school.
19. Encourage better use of school grounds and local wildlife sites for biodiversity.
20. Employ a dedicated outdoor learning officer who can provide the tailored support, training and delivery that will enable Swansea schools to fully realise the potential of outdoor learning, to deliver educational and wellbeing benefits, from the varied natural resources which Swansea possesses.

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1. **WHY WE PRODUCED THIS REPORT**

Overview

- 1.1 In examining this topic and producing this report we acknowledge the current work that is being undertaken by Swansea Council to maintain and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity whilst, of course, seeking to identify potential areas for improvement. There are two major pieces of recent legislation: the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. These impose duties and responsibilities on all public bodies to protect and enhance the resilience of ecosystems, and to consider this in all Council activities and projects from their earliest planning and design stages.

Selecting the topic

- 1.2 The topic was chosen for scrutiny because the recent legislation requires adoption and delivery of the biodiversity and eco-system duties by all Welsh public authorities, and there is an appetite in Swansea to ensure that its substantial natural resources are protected and enriched for both the current and future populations of the city.

It is also important to recognise that Swansea is going through a period of substantial change. Major development and regeneration projects in the City Centre, in particular, will see the biggest infrastructure shift in 70 years. This gives us a once in a lifetime opportunity to place green infrastructure at the heart of the development and make radical changes for the benefit of the environment and the people of Swansea.

Intended contribution

- 1.3 As a Panel we believe that we can make a valuable contribution to the sustainable management of the natural environment in Swansea. We recognise, however, that the challenges are deep seated and often complex. We also believe that, while no one has all of the answers, success will only come from a conversation that everyone is able to contribute to. It is in this spirit that our conclusions and recommendations are offered.

Specifically this report aims to contribute to this vital debate by:

- Drawing together some general principles for the maintenance and enhancement of the natural environment.
- Offering proposals for improvement in the short, medium and long term.
- Providing a Councillor perspective on how well services are working.
- Pointing to good practice examples.
- Sharing the views of different people involved in thinking about and working for the natural environment.

We are also happy to recognise the limitations of the Inquiry. Given the complexity of the topic and the time that we had, this report necessarily provides a broad view. We simply did not have the time to go into issues in more depth. Moreover, we have not addressed the challenge of climate change which, of

course, is already impacting significantly on wildlife, and Councils will need to do so with increasing intensity as we go forward.

Finally, many of our conclusions are in line with the Council’s current direction of travel and these are noted in order to provide reassurance. Others may be either additional or contrary to what has already been agreed. These are intended to offer challenge and to stimulate debate. Where we have made recommendations these are intended to help improve the work of the Council.

Equalities and Engagement

1.4 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

When planning this Inquiry, we considered which groups might be particularly affected and how we might engage with them. As a result, we published a blog and survey asking for feedback and ensured that this was available in alternative formats; this was sent to forums that represent people with protected characteristics.

Use of key words and phrases

1.5 For clarity and benefit of the lay person the report uses a number of terms, which are explained as follows:

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aderyn | The Biodiversity Information and Reporting Database of Local Environmental Records Centres Wales |
| Biodiversity | Biodiversity is defined as: "the variability amongst living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems." |
| Ecosystem | A dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit. An ecosystem includes all of the living things (plants, animals and micro-organisms) in a given area, interacting with each other, and also with their non-living environments (weather, earth, sun, soil, climate, and atmosphere). |

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ecosystem Services | Ecosystem services are the many and varied benefits that humans freely gain from the natural environment and from properly-functioning ecosystems. Ecosystem services are grouped into four broad categories: provisioning, such as the production of food and water; regulating, such as the control of climate and disease; supporting, such as nutrient cycles and oxygen production; and cultural, such as spiritual and recreational benefits. |
| Ecosystem resilience | A resilient ecosystem is one that is healthy and functions in a way that is able to address pressures and demands placed on it, and is able to deliver benefits over the long term to meet current and future social, economic and environmental needs. |
| Ecological Connectivity | Physical links that allow organisms to move between habitats, populations or assemblages that are isolated in space. |
| INNS | Invasive Non Native Species |
| Natural Environment | The natural environment encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally. It includes all plants, animals, micro-organisms, soil, rocks, air, water, and atmosphere. |
| NRW | Natural Resources Wales |
| Pollinator Species | A pollinator is an animal that causes plants to make fruit or seeds. They do this by moving pollen from one part of the flower of a plant to another part. This pollen then fertilizes the plant. Only fertilized plants can make fruit and/or seeds, and without them, the plants cannot reproduce |
| Ramsar | A Ramsar Site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention (an intergovernmental environmental treaty established in 1971 by UNESCO) |
| RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |
| SAC | Special Areas of Conservation. These are strictly protected sites designated under the European Union Habitats Directive |
| SEWBRcC | South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre |
| SDS | Sustainable Drainage System |
| SINC | Site of Importance for Nature Conservation |
| SPA | A Special Protection Area (SPA) is a designation under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds |
| SSSI | Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| WLGA | Welsh Local Government Association |

2. EVIDENCE

Evidence Collected

- 2.1 Evidence was collected between March 2018 and November 2018 in order to gather a range of perspectives on this topic. This included:
- a. Overview – Corporate Performance Manager
 - b. Service Policy Briefing – Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Manager and Nature Conservation Team Leader
 - c. Trallwn and Brynhyfryd Primary School visits to observe RSPB education sessions
 - d. Roundtable Session – External Organisations (NRW, RSPB, SEWBReC, Plant Life, WWT, Swansea Biodiversity Partnership/Swansea Environment Centre, Forest School Swansea Neath Port Talbot)
 - e. Roundtable Session – ‘Friends of’ Volunteer Groups – Swansea Botanical Complex, Swansea Vale, Rosehill Quarry, Pentyla Playing Fields (Ganges), Kilvey Hill and Woodland, Morryston Park
 - f. Meeting with Development Conservation and Design Manager
 - g. Service Overviews – Corporate Building Services and Corporate Property Services
 - h. Legislation Session – NRW, Future Generations Office, WLGA
 - i. Findings Session – Input from Nature Conservation Team Leader
 - j. Cabinet Member Input
 - k. Head of Service Input

For full details of how the evidence was gathered, including details of the findings from each session, please see the findings report. This can be downloaded at <http://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=610&MId=8272&Ver=4&LLL=-1>.

3. GENERAL COMMENTS

- 3.1 The key question for the Inquiry was: ‘What should Swansea Council do to maintain and enhance its natural environment and biodiversity, and, in so doing, promote the resilience of eco-systems?’
- 3.2 The environment is high in the public’s awareness at present locally and globally. From the reduction of single use plastics to the melting of Polar ice, people everywhere are becoming more and more aware of the impact we are having on the natural world and how these impacts are beginning to have a direct effect on people’s lives. This message has filtered all the way down to a local level and from Westminster to Welsh Government to local Councils the

message is clear – the environment matters. Waste and CO2 reduction targets are becoming more stringent. Green infrastructure is developing rapidly, and being more sustainable is at the top of concerns. Swansea Council has a major role to play in delivery and prevention, and in responding to the challenges set.

- 3.3 One of our overriding conclusions is that the breadth and depth of work already being undertaken to protect and enhance Swansea's natural environment is substantial. For many years, committed teams have striven to maintain and enhance the County's biodiversity, and the relationships that have developed and the local knowledge accumulated are outstanding. The Cabinet Member who has overall jurisdiction for this area of work is Councillor Mark Thomas, and it is clear that he is committed and passionate about the issue. This, along with increasing recognition of the importance of Swansea's outstanding natural assets, has driven the natural environment to be a key priority for Swansea Council.
- 3.4 The fact that the Council has a dedicated team to manage nature conservation shows that it is already committed to the issue long term, and this, of course, is in line with the requirements under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. The delivery of the Scrutiny Inquiry also supports the thinking that Swansea is 'ahead of the game' when it comes to the environment, and is looking at how it can take the current good work and build on this to be a leading Council in Wales for the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity.
- 3.5 It is clear that, for the general public, biodiversity is important. The Inquiry 'Call for Evidence' had a number of responses; with public and professionals alike making contact to contribute to the Inquiry and to be part of the effort to improve Swansea's natural environment. The volunteers who came to give evidence were committed, experienced and enthusiastic about the relationship between the public and the Council, and how this needs to be maintained, encouraged and supported to ensure the good work continues.
- 3.6 We were particularly heartened that almost every organisation we contacted was more than happy to contribute to the Inquiry, and provided a range of information to assist the Panel. They were incredibly generous with their time, offering to follow up on any issues and to submit further information if required. It is clear that there is no shortage of organisations willing to work with Swansea Council to achieve the goal of an enhanced environment and a successful green infrastructure approach, and these opportunities for collaboration need to be grasped.
- 3.7 Whilst all of the right foundations are in place for Swansea to have a thriving natural environment, it is now time to ensure this is built in early to all plans and projects and is recognised by all services. This will be essential for Swansea's future success both locally and globally.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These are the Panel's conclusions together with full recommendations on how we feel the issues of complying with Welsh Government legislation and maintaining and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity in Swansea could be addressed.

4.1 Create an environmental corporate priority to embed biodiversity in business and strategic planning to meet requirements

4.1.1 Although a new Corporate Well-being Objective 'Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity' was approved by the Council during the course of the Inquiry, we felt it important to note how much of a positive step this is. The Panel feel that the Scrutiny Inquiry has contributed to this and we welcome its adoption and thank all those who were involved. The difficulties caused by not integrating the natural environment with other Council priorities has been highlighted not just by external providers and the public but also Council service providers themselves.

4.1.2 Throughout the course of the Inquiry, the Panel agreed that there needs to be a strategic approach to the natural environment, in order to ensure that the importance of the issue is highlighted and meets legislative requirements. The natural environment needs a significant commitment from within the organisation at all levels.

4.1.3 Although Welsh Government are wanting adherence to the requirements set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, there is little advice on how exactly these requirements should be implemented. However, guidance for Section 6 of the Environment Act, the 'Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty' states that 'To follow the S6 duty public authorities 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 in their day to day activities.' This requires the environment to be considered at the earliest stages of all Council activities. The Panel agreed unanimously that the only way to achieve this is to include it in the Corporate Plan, as now enacted by Council.

4.1.4 It is not just the Panel who feel that more senior officer commitment is necessary for success. During the roundtable discussion with external environmental providers, it was stated that 'senior management need to be involved and for the issue to be taken seriously at the highest level'.

4.1.5 There is also a feeling that a lack of definition around the importance of the issue is causing conflict. Volunteers echoed this, saying 'Council departments have differing priorities, some financial and some environmental'. They felt that whilst there is much support from particular teams, this dedication was not harmonious throughout the whole organisation.

- 4.1.6 This issue is not limited to external organisations and volunteers. During evidence gathering with Council services, the Panel found that this same lack of consistency causes practical problems. Corporate Property services highlighted that the policy conflict between financial and environmental issues can cause problems, and outcomes had been determined by negotiation rather than from a corporate commitment to delivering our biodiversity responsibilities. Some services also felt that a corporate priority for the environment would allow the good work already happening to be recognised and encouraged. Corporate Building Services stated that they would like to see a top down approach to biodiversity to ‘...ensure that the message is filtered through the organisation in the same way other important messages are’. It is clear that internally, there is a definite commitment from staff to enhance the environment, but there also needs to be a strong and consistent organisational message in order to achieve measurable outcomes.
- 4.1.7 As Neville Rookes from the Welsh Local Government Association advises - ‘There should be environment in every policy and every policy in environment’. This will involve mainstreaming the environment and biodiversity across all Council services, together with raising awareness, a culture shift and appropriate procedural changes.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Development and implementation of a Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan to take this forward (Medium Term)

Recommendation 2: Ensure the Action Plan links with other relevant cross organisational policies at a strategic level, for example, the Local Well-being Plan and Area Statements (Medium Term)

Recommendation 3: Develop a clear and enthusiastic vision and message for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity to ensure a consistent ‘buy-in’ from each service (Quick Win)

4.2 **Raise the profile of the Natural Environment and Biodiversity internally and externally**

- 4.2.1 Notwithstanding the introduction of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, the profile and understanding of the natural environment is not as high as it should be. This applies both to Council staff and to the wider public.
- 4.2.2 This issue is not specific to Swansea. We heard from the Future Generations Commissioner’s Office staff that ‘A Resilient Wales’ well-being goal was regularly misinterpreted in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Instead of championing the importance of biodiversity, resilience was being used to mean economic, community or often social resilience. This misrepresentation reduces the amount of ecological attention and delivery under the goal.

- 4.2.3 Internally, during the Inquiry, each Head of Service was sent a questionnaire asking about the biodiversity duty and how they feel their service contributes to it. Interestingly, of the 11 responses received only 6 were aware there was a biodiversity duty, 2 admitted they were not aware and 3 did not answer the question. This highlights that more knowledge and awareness around the biodiversity duty is needed. This will then make it easier to embed biodiversity and develop projects across other service areas.
- 4.2.4 However, despite a lack of knowledge around the duty, there is definitely an appetite to increase information for the services and to undertake tasks to enhance the natural environment and biodiversity. Heads of Service were asked if they had ideas about how to work differently to enhance biodiversity at work and 7 of them had ideas that they would like to implement, but insufficient budgetary provision was the main constraint to implementing these ideas.
- 4.2.5 Externally, there are some very committed residents and organisations who have an interest in biodiversity, and the large public response and support for the natural environment shows that there is substantial knowledge in the community. However, there is still plenty of scope for awareness raising, with a desire to learn more and integrate biodiversity into the Council's functions. The following recommendations would promote the natural environment in general, thereby promoting ecosystem resilience.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4: Embed the new corporate priority by developing and delivering relevant training. The Nature Conservation Team could roll out training at the appropriate level and could undertake a service appropriate assessment with ideas and input coming from that service to encourage involvement. (Medium Term)

Recommendation 5: Make information available to the public to encourage participation and understanding, including continuing to develop the Natural Environment web pages e.g. explain why some verges are wild or why projects which have a green aspect are taking place. Public promotion is vital. (Quick Win)

4.3 **Maintain and increase the specialist and high quality work which is currently delivered**

- 4.3.1 Swansea Council do a lot of preventative and proactive day to day work, including policy development. The dedicated Nature Conservation Team (FTE 5 staff), along with complimentary teams such as The Countryside Access Team (5 staff), the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Team (AONB) (2 staff) and Strategic Planning Team (7 staff) work together to enhance, maintain and promote awareness and appreciation of Swansea's natural environment. However, it appears these teams are stretched to full capacity.

- 4.3.2 Despite the majority of the county being rural and having some form of environmentally important status, these teams provide the only nature based resource to Swansea Council. They deal with a wide range of work including policy and strategy development, planning ecology, community projects, access improvements, awareness raising, land management and enhancement and partnership working.
- 4.3.3 Other organisations such as Natural Resources Wales, Swansea Environmental Forum and SEWBReC, all praised the work of the Council's Nature Conservation Team, and said that working in collaboration with them has benefited Swansea. The work being delivered by the team directly contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity at both an operational and strategic level. Senior representatives from organisations highlighted that the behind the scenes work of policy development, mitigation recommendations and input into strategic planning is often what stops the Council from breaching its duties under relevant Acts and facing potential legal issues.
- 4.3.4 The members of various voluntary groups in Swansea also said the work currently being done is highly regarded and in demand. Volunteers often request extra time where possible with the team, to benefit from their expertise and make the work carried out by these groups more effective and appropriate.
- 4.3.5 The Local Authority owns a significant amount of land that is of ecological importance including
- Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar Sites, SPAs.
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Nature Reserves
 - Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.

The Authority has a duty to manage its estate in accordance with the relevant biodiversity legislation. A pilot project is underway to map biodiversity assets and opportunities at a ward level to inform place based decision making.

The Nature Conservation Team is responsible for the management of 6 Local Nature Reserves and a number of Council owned SAC's, SSSI's and SINC's. It also provides advice to other Council staff with land management responsibilities. This involves the preparation of management plans and agreements, practical site management and maintenance work, tackling invasive non-native species (INNS), managing contractors and supporting community and volunteer participation in biodiversity delivery.

Recommendations

Recommendation 6: *Complete and publicise the ward mapping exercise. This would provide each ward and the Councillor Representatives with information specific to that ward. It would include information about important species, protected sites and other relevant ecological information as well as potential opportunities for improving biodiversity within the ward. A link to the ward mapping should appear on planning applications when completed. This would help when it comes to planning applications and empower ward councillors and residents to be able to respond to issues which threaten these special features of their ward and encourage maintenance of biodiversity. It would also contribute to the enforcement activity of the Council. (Long Term)*

Recommendation 7: *Maintain support for volunteers, Community Councils and groups managing both Council owned and non-Council owned land. There are important areas of natural environment in Swansea that may be managed by trusts or owned privately. The links to these areas need to be maintained to ensure best practice is shared and any relevant information/policy can be applied across Swansea, improving nature-based connectivity overall. (Long Term)*

4.4 Recognise the benefits of 'nature-based' prevention projects, such as to limit air pollution and for flood risk management etc

4.4.1 One of the recurring messages to come out of the Inquiry was that there is a move to look at nature based solutions to deal with problems which previously would have been rectified with hard engineering solutions. During the evidence gathering process, Neville Rookes a Policy Officer for Environment from WLGA, highlighted that other Councils were starting to implement nature based solutions for issues such as flooding and doing so with great success. A project on the River Taff was given as an example, which aimed to achieve flood defence and prevention through the development of a wildlife pond and a cycle path.

4.4.2 One of the Swansea projects that was referenced by organisations including Plant Life, Swansea Environmental Forum and Natural Resources Wales as a huge success, was the Marram Grass Scheme used in the sand dunes at Swansea Bay. This innovative, nature based project was a collaboration of services including nature conservation, highways, drainage, parks and Natural Resources Wales. A specialist study concluded that the most sustainable way to control windblown sand between the beach and promenade was to construct sand trapping fences, with subsequent marram grass planting to stabilise and increase existing dunes and establish new ones. This has been successful and should set the tone going forward.

- 4.4.3 The Panel heard that there is scope to look to green solutions for many existing and potential problems. The suggestion of not mowing some verges, planting trees to alleviate flooding, planting native wildflowers and using 'green' initiatives to enhance well-being are all realistic and money saving options as far as the Panel is concerned. There is already evidence of community gardening projects having positive effects on users engaged with social services, and there is a raft of evidence produced by various organisations highlighting the benefits to both physical and mental health to being outside and engaged in green projects.
- 4.4.4 The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as climate change. WLGA advise that, as a Council, we must use the 5 ways of working to shape the strategy and policy of everything that we do. Ecological resilience should be incorporated at the start of projects. In the short and medium term, there is a risk of reputational damage and possible legal infractions and failure to meet EU requirements; in the long term, it will be infraction of whatever UK law is in place after Brexit, if the latter goes ahead. The Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales' representative agreed with these points.
- 4.4.5 An easy and cost effective way of achieving results is to include a clause in any service level agreement for land that is owned by the Council but managed on a day to day basis by another group or individual. Up to now, there has not been a biodiversity clause to remind land users of their obligation and to highlight the importance of the issue. Following discussion within this Inquiry, a clause has now been inserted into the service level agreement for community groups managing green spaces. The Panel felt that this was an easy way of highlighting and legally requiring the maintenance and enhancement of the environment of these pieces of land. There should be more detailed clauses in other agreements e.g. those agreements relating to grazing sites, and also in those entered into with external event organisers which require Council consent before certain activities (e.g. clearing land) are undertaken, to prevent loss of biodiversity.

Recommendations

Recommendation 8: *Insert a relevant biodiversity clause into service level agreements, licences etc which relates to land use and land management and land use and ensure that the importance of these clauses is made clear to the land managers/occupiers and the implications of not meeting them are highlighted. (Quick Win)*

Recommendation 9: *Assess the verges in Swansea that can stop being mowed and sprayed. Give these over to nature and allow for self-seeding, which will encourage native plants and pollinator species. This can also save money as less frequent mowing is required. There could be signs erected to highlight the project to help change the culture. (Medium Term)*

Recommendation 10: *Where appropriate, plant native wildflowers and trees. Non-native species do not benefit pollinators to the same extent as native species. (Long Term)*

Recommendation 11: *Encourage green projects for well-being such as gardening projects, outdoor green-space activities and volunteering opportunities for adults and children across all relevant services. This includes linking with Community Councils. Communities can make use of the 'Community Green Space Toolkit' which can be found online at <http://swanseacommunitygreenspaces.weebly.com> (Long Term)*

4.5 **The need for and costs of providing additional resources to maintain the natural environment should be recognised and shared throughout services**

4.5.1 External providers, including NRW and Welsh Government, have commented on the level of expertise and passion in the Council's Nature Conservation Team. However it seems that the people and organisations who know of their activities are those who work most closely with them. There is very little publicity being undertaken around the work of the team, whether internally or externally. The Panel feel that if the work that is being undertaken were to be publicised more, other Council staff and the public would realise both the importance of the issue and the breadth of work currently being delivered. There is an obvious difficulty here, publicising work takes time and resource, which is scarce in this team as it is, and highlighting activity could lead to an influx of demand which the team is not resourced to deal with. This has been an ongoing issue for some time and, although the new corporate priority has not created more work than the team can presently deliver, demand for support is expected to increase as biodiversity becomes embedded. This highlights just how vulnerable they are to resource reduction through loss of grants and unsustainable temporary posts e.g. Temporary Planning Ecologist Post.

4.5.2 This problem is not specific to this team, particularly during such a difficult financial climate; however, the Panel feels there does need to be some rethink over how this service is funded. During the roundtable session with providers, Natural Resources Wales stated that 'The best examples of funding are when the budget comes from each Council department which impacts or benefits from the natural environment and biodiversity'. Echoing this sentiment, RSPB Cymru commented that 'estates, parks, planning and regeneration all need to be on the same page when it comes to biodiversity and nature conservation'. In agreement with both of these comments, the Panel feels that there are many services in the Council which benefit from having a thriving natural environment, not least tourism. However, despite the selling point of Gower and the green spaces in Swansea and the money that is made, for example from car park charges or grazing licences, none of this income is received by the Nature Conservation Team (along with complimentary teams such as Countryside Access and AONB). The Panel feels that this is unreasonable, considering specific services need the environment to be in a good state for them to be as successful as they are. Services that see benefit from a thriving and healthy Swansea should contribute to its upkeep.

The Team has identified and secured some income from charging for its services for example school visits, and tendering for commercial biodiversity contracts (e.g. ecological surveys, management plans, interpretation etc.), but this can only be expanded with additional staff capacity.

- 4.5.3 One of the issues identified during the Inquiry was a lack of knowledge amongst professional officers, who are not ecologists, of the specifics of how environmental conditions attached to planning consents should be implemented, (e.g. how and where to install bat boxes and the most appropriate design, how to create habitats for mitigation, etc.). Despite the legislation there is no statutory requirement to employ an ecological enforcement officer. The Panel question how effective any legislation can be if there are insufficient enforcement resources available – legislation becomes a suggestion rather than a direction. The Planning Ecologists explained that they cannot ensure that the environmental requirements that are conditioned within planning consents are fully delivered/realised due to a lack of staff capacity within the service to monitor and enforce conditions. Therefore, we cannot be sure that we have complied with our legal duties under the Environment Wales Act, and the Planning Act. There is a risk that less responsible and more cynical developers could take advantage of this. There is a substantial need and requirement for an additional ecologist with specific responsibilities for monitoring compliance with environmental conditions attached to planning permissions. Such an officer would benefit and support a range of services including planning, and would promote a zero tolerance message to anyone who was breaching the law and causing Swansea's biodiversity to be damaged.

Recommendations

Recommendation 12: *Employ a Section 6 Officer to co-ordinate, support and promote the consideration and delivery of a range of environmental projects across Swansea and also ensure the Council are meeting the requirements of the Environment Act (Section 6). This includes the development of a Corporate Natural Environment Working Group. This should stop us breaching the legislation and potentially facing fines/restricted grant access/reputational damage. (Quick Win)*

Recommendation 13: *Employ an additional Planning Ecologist/Ecological Enforcement Officer to work with Council services with a specific duty to help ensure the environmental conditions and section 106 obligations on planning consents are met, whilst also contributing to maintaining biodiversity, and meeting the requirements of the new Sustainable Drainage System legislation. (Quick Win)*

Recommendation 14: *Share natural environment and biodiversity costs across services. Much of the work completed in relation to biodiversity is funded by a single team's budget. Considering both the Council as a whole, and certain specific services, benefit from a thriving environment, it seems appropriate that other services should be contributing financially to this work. (Long Term)*

4.6 **The authority should work co-productively with external partners on a strategic scale**

4.6.1 There is an assumption from Welsh Government that public authorities and other agencies will link together on common projects and develop solutions based on their combined knowledge. From strategic decisions to day to day activities, the input from other relevant organisations should help lead to the best outcomes. The Inquiry Panel agrees that this is the best way forward, and the contribution of agencies and the public to the Inquiry strengthened the idea that many heads are better than one. Hearing different perspectives and experiences led the Panel to conclude that more knowledge with shared aims leads to better decision making. This is not a new idea but one which is in the process of being embedded, with work being delivered under the Public Services Board (PSB) with this exact ethos at its heart. The purpose of the PSB is to work collectively to improve the local social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in a local authority area. Working in isolation is no longer an option.

4.6.2 All of the agencies who contributed to the evidence gathering of the Inquiry expressed an interest and discussed the benefits of strategic collaborative working. It is not enough that one or two staff members have good links with an organisation; all of the services which have any involvement in the environment in Swansea need to be developing and regularly contributing to these conversations and actions. Services such as Corporate Property and Highways and Transportation need excellent relationships with organisations like SEWBRc, NRW, Plant Life and the Swansea Environment Forum, so the best decisions can be made for the environment. We already as a Council work closely with the aforementioned organisations, along with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Cymru (RSPB) and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales, and these relationships should be nurtured and expanded.

We spoke to all of the groups that attended and asked what their advice for the Council would be. They said:

- 1. Biodiversity has to be maintained and improved for the future generations in line with the Act.*
- 2. Sign up to the Service Level Agreement with SEWBRc to access important mapping/species data for projects.*
- 3. Stand by the policies it already has.*
- 4. Work in partnership to achieve projects, this will reduce costs and bring in expertise.*
- 5. Improve communication within departments and challenge those (including external organisations) who are not doing what they should be.*
- 6. Develop links with the right staff and consult at the right stage.*
- 7. Do not ignore the lower Lliw Valley.*
- 8. Take responsibility for developing plans and getting departments to work together not against each other.*

9. *Senior management need to be involved and this needs to be taken seriously at the highest level.*
10. *Value volunteers and volunteer co-ordinators – some money and effort has to be put in.*

- 4.6.3 One of the important collaborative projects that the Panel supports is access to biodiversity data via the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) Service Level Agreement. The role of SEWBRc is to collect, verify, digitise and share species and habitat data with public, private and third sector organisations and individuals. These data are gathered by professional ecologists and specially trained volunteers and the public, and can then be accessed to assess the impact of projects which are being proposed. This includes planning applications, development schemes and conservation activities. Swansea Council did not access this information between 2004 and 2017 due to lack of funding and are at a disadvantage without it. So much of Swansea has important species that it is unlikely anyone can undertake a project without having an impact under the provisions of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and/or the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. The SEWBRc information can be used to complete full audits of sites and create buffer zones around projects. Information is sent to officers via Aderyn (The Biodiversity Information and Reporting Database of Local Environmental Records Centres Wales) and ensures that better decisions are made around ecology, land management and development. This is the kind of strategic partnership work which needs to be included in wider departmental activities with funding of the SEWBRc Service Level Agreement being shared between relevant services.
- 4.6.4 Strategic partnership working does not only make sense in terms of delivering the best and practical solutions, it is a requirement that may have financial impacts if not achieved. Not meeting these collaborative requirements under the Acts will have impacts on access to future grants e.g. the Welsh Government Enabling our Natural Resources and Well-being Grant, which has emphasis on joined up, cross sector working. Considering that the current financial outlook for the public sector is bleak, further limiting access to financial aid is not a risk the Panel feels the Council should take.

Recommendations

Recommendation 15: *Renew the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) service level agreement for 2019/20 (with a plan in place to achieve this in subsequent years) the approximate cost is between £8,000 and £10,000 per annum. The relevant departments (Development Management, Highways, Corporate Buildings and Corporate Property) should be contributing to the costs of accessing this information, using this resource regularly and, where necessary, asking the Council's ecologists to interpret the data. (Quick Win)*

Recommendation 16: *Continue to nurture good working relationships with external agencies and encourage other services to do the same. This should not be limited to national organisations but should also include local ones such as Swansea Environmental Forum, the Swansea Biodiversity Partnership and the Swansea Environment Centre. (Long Term)*

4.7 **Recognise, encourage, maintain and expand commitment from voluntary groups, Community Councils and the public in maintaining and enhancing the Council's green spaces**

- 4.7.1 Swansea has a significant number of volunteer groups, working unpaid to maintain a range of community spaces: some of these are community centres and some are green spaces such as parks and gardens and wildlife sites. The Panel met with and gathered evidence from these groups to explore the extent and the nature of the work being undertaken. The opportunity to contribute raised considerable interest, with 8 group leaders being invited to give evidence and present information on their work. The message from all of the groups was the same - the support they currently receive from the Nature Conservation Team is excellent, but they need more contact and information and more ways of linking in with the projects of biodiversity relevant to their areas. More support and advice could be provided, but again the limiting factor to this is the lack of capacity within the Nature Conservation Team. The other major recurring issue was the need to make strong links with schools. Children should be enabled to make better use of the spaces around them and have this built into the education curriculum. This also links in with a wider issue around using green spaces to improve and increase well-being.

Some of the main comments made in the voluntary group session are listed below:

- *Groups rely on specialist expertise like the Nature Conservation Team to support their projects.*
- *There should be two main points of contact for the groups;*
 1. *A horticulture/environmental specialist*
 2. *An Education Officer linking schools to the spaces*
- *Records (for example ecology surveys/protected sites) need to be accurate to ensure decisions made are based on correct information.*
- *Neath Port Talbot Council have a scheme where road verges are designated as 'wild' and mown/maintained differently – Swansea should do the same and help change the public perception.*
- *Some people will complain that 'wild' areas are neglected but there needs to be a culture change.*
- *Would like to list the flora and fauna in the park but cannot because the groups do not have the expertise to do this.*
- *The Council departments seem to have differing priorities from each other – some financial, some environmental, these need to be reconciled.*
- *Ecological reports which are submitted for planning applications should be accurate and impartial.*

- *Groups want the Council to recognise the importance of sites to people and the environment.*
- *Having a link to liaise with schools is essential as it encourages learning and involvement in the area.*
- *Public signs advertising the areas would be beneficial so people know the sites are there for visiting.*
- *Groups are desperate for expertise and the planning and identification of existing biodiversity.*
- *Initiatives don't come with maintenance plans or budgets to keep projects sustainable.*
- *Working between departments can be difficult as they have differing agendas.*
- *Groups are able to pull in funding if they apply properly.*

4.7.2 The Panel issued a public survey asking for submissions from interested parties. We had 37 responses from the public along with 3 full submissions. This is an excellent response for a scrutiny call for evidence and shows the substantial interest that the public has in the issue of environmental conservation. However, the public and volunteer interest in the whole issue of biodiversity is not limited to the work of this Inquiry, indeed the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management has recognised that this issue has substantial public support.

There are far too many responses from the public to include in this report and there was a mixture of praise and criticism. Below is a selection of comments from both sides:

Positives

- *'The parks are beautiful and everybody loves the summer flowers'*
- *'The Gower coastline'*
- *'Have a good team in the Council despite being underfunded'*
- *'I love the wildflowers and City parks'*
- *'Planting of wildflowers along the roadways and verges: looks great and is good for bugs'*
- *'Promoting use of rights of way, environment sites etc, small team based efforts e.g. highways staff'*
- *'The team do a good job maintaining nature reserves and running education/awareness raising activities'*
- *'Leaving areas in parks with uncut grass'*
- *'Swansea is becoming better aware of its fabulous natural setting, our hills, the bay and the Gower'*
- *'Nature Conservation Team very knowledgeable and works well stabilising dunes, making paths'*
- *'The Lower Swansea Valley project – that was improving the natural environment at its finest'*

- *‘Wild flowers, having an Environment Centre and Swansea Environment Forum’*

Room for Improvement

- *‘A joined up approach that expects actions from all teams not just those in ‘environmental’ roles’*
- *‘I am a bee keeper in the Uplands and it is detrimental that you are still spraying bee killing stuff. I am aware that to sow summer flowers you actually treat the ground every year with pure poison. Why? Is there not a natural way – just dig it like any other gardener does’*
- *‘Applying policies when taking planning decisions. Shocking lapse when permitting housing development to destroy a site which the Council itself had protected’*
- *‘Car free days. Plant trees, hedges, rooftop gardens on public buildings to counteract pollution and assess effectiveness against pollution levels in urban areas’*
- *‘Don’t cut down mature trees work round them, plant native trees and shrubs, reduce hard surfaces’*
- *‘Look after the shoreline for birds’*
- *‘Raise the profile of the natural environment and biodiversity in Swansea’*
- *‘Reduce pollution, clean local beaches, look at reducing plastic pollution, more nature reserves’*
- *‘I am aware that Singleton Park has done a lot to promote wildflowers STOP SPRAYING then, because honey bees and single bees are killed with the spraying of weeds’*
- *‘Control of invasive non-native plants’*

Recommendations

Recommendation 17: *Invite environmental voluntary group and Community Council representatives to regular liaison meetings e.g. Friends of parks and wildlife sites. This would allow them some support and access to some specialist advice from relevant officers (e.g. Parks Team, Nature Conservation Team, Education Link Officer), whilst allowing them a forum to discuss concerns and success. The loss of these groups would have a severely detrimental impact on the management of Council land and finances, so there needs to be ongoing and meaningful engagement and support from the Council. (Medium Term)*

4.8 **There should be more cross departmental working, with the shared aim of maintaining and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity, together with their eco-system benefits.**

4.8.1 During the evidence gathering, it became clear that the Council has some conflicting policies when it comes to the natural environment. Corporate Property Services referred to the fact that there is a clash in priorities between making money and maintaining the environment.

The public have also alluded to this issue:

- *[The Council needs...] ‘ A joined up approach that expects actions from all teams not just those in ‘Environmental’ roles’*
- *‘The Council departments seem to have differing priorities from each other – some financial, some environmental’*

4.8.2 Whilst the legislation is the same for all of the Council and applies to all services equally, applying the legislation in line with existing internal policies can be problematic. The Panel felt that the battle between these issues can be difficult, especially for staff when they are trying to apply and deliver other corporate priorities. It can be frustrating for staff to have to negotiate internally processes which are required legally, and push for standards that are being frustrated by internal dynamics. The Panel feels that whilst there should always be a balance between economic regeneration and the environment, development should not come at the expense of the environment.

4.8.3 The public have commented that when contacting different services they do not get a consistent response on the Council’s approach to the issue of biodiversity and the environment. Whilst it is reasonable for the Nature Conservation Team to deal with specialist public queries on the environment, the issues which are directed to a different service such as parks, estates or highways for example should have the same response. There needs to be a consistent and Council wide position on the issue of the environment. This can only be achieved if the message and delivery of our legislative duty is the same across the board. The Panel feels that whichever department you contact, the response and approach to an environmental question should be the same: common objectives and a strong and consistent message will achieve this. The establishment of a corporate biodiversity working group, as provided for in the Corporate Plan, will help to address and improve this.

4.9 **There needs to be a commitment to natural environment education in schools**

4.9.1 During the Inquiry, the Panel members visited local primary schools to see how they manage the issue of the natural environment and how this feeds into pupil’s education. Whilst it was generally accepted that most schools do pay particular attention to the natural environment and include it as part of the curriculum, its delivery is patchy and inconsistent from school to school. It is evident that some schools are at an advantage due to their geographical suburban location, whilst others are almost completely urban with very little or even no green space. However, the feedback from those involved in environmental education is that no matter how small the green space is in a school, biodiversity can still be encouraged and learned about. The Panel, many of whom are School Governors, feel that there is an inconsistency in how the natural environment is prioritised, with some schools celebrating achieving ‘Green School’ status whereas for some others the natural environment is only of passing interest in children’s education.

4.9.2 The current curriculum requires pupils to use and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, by investigating how animals and plants are independent yet rely on each other for survival. Panel members observed a very successful scheme run by RSPB Cymru called the 'Schools Outreach Project', delivered by RSPB Project Officer Sarah Reed. This project saw 5849 pupil connections made in the academic year 2017-18; the delivery and impact in Swansea has been substantial and has proved very popular with staff and children alike. During the visits and observation sessions it was clear that the pupils really enjoyed being outside and when asked said they thoroughly enjoyed the activities.

During the school visits, the pupils (primary) were asked questions about nature and their responses were noted. The questions and some of the responses are captured below:

1. Do you like learning about nature? Why?

- *'Yes it is interesting to learn about it in school and is fun to learn about all the animals'*
- *'Yes because it's calm and interesting'*
- *'Helps us help the environment'*
- *'It makes me feel amazed'*
- *'You get to go outside'*
- *'We can learn what the grass is made of'*

2. Do you think Swansea should have more nature?

- *'Yes and no. No because animals can come over and [we would] be in more danger, yes because nature helps you live, like the trees have oxygen and oxygen helps us live'*
- *'Yes!'*
- *'Yes because hedgehogs are becoming extinct'*
- *'Yes because we don't have anything'*
- *'People will appreciate nature more'*
- *'It will help insects and our planet'*
- *'Yes because nature is beautiful and no-one goes outdoors that much anymore so if there was more nature people would want to go out even more'*

3. Why is nature important?

- *'Because it helps the environment'*
- *'Because it helps animals'*
- *'It is part of our circle of life. Plants = medicine'*
- *'It makes the world go round'*
- *'We have an ecosystem, nature gives us oxygen'*
- *'Animals keep us company'*
- *'It helps our earth go on and helps our health and gives us food and life'*

4. How does being around nature make you feel?

- *'It makes us feel happier and healthier. It also makes us feel relaxed, calm. Feels like my own world and satisfying because I hear the birds tweeting'*
- *'Happy, satisfied, calm, interested, relaxed, freedom'*
- *'Happy collecting flowers and seeing baby chicks being born'*
- *'Nature makes me happy when I'm around it and relaxed!'*
- *'Happy, excited, bored, fascinated, mesmerised, relaxed'*
- *'It makes us feel bored because there is no Wi-Fi'*

4.9.3 The Nature Conservation Team supports schools to deliver outdoor learning, including for example at Bishop's Wood Local Nature Reserve, Caswell, where around thirty schools visit each year. Where resources have allowed, officers have also delivered activities on other sites as well as supported schools to carry out activities or biodiversity-enhancement projects within their school grounds.

4.9.4 Evidence shows that schools value and require the support of experienced outdoor learning professionals to help them embed outdoor learning in the curriculum. The Nature Conservation Team are currently working on an NRW-funded project to pilot an approach to support and enable twenty primary schools to deliver outdoor learning in their grounds and using local green infrastructure.

4.9.5 The Panel applauds these examples of excellent good practice, but recognises that they are almost entirely reliant on external funding and are unlikely to be sustained beyond the short-term. For outdoor learning to become embedded throughout all schools there needs to be dedicated resources provided.

Recommendations

Recommendation 18: *Create environmental link Governors on school governing bodies who can take relevant information and projects to their school. They can also report back on a school's activities and this can be used to contribute to the 3 yearly section 6 report to Welsh Government on the Council's performance. (Medium Term)*

Recommendation 19: *Encourage better use of school grounds and local wildlife sites for biodiversity. For example, gardens, growing schemes, tree planting, wildlife ponds and habitat creation. This can be done by linking in with relevant organisations such as RSPB and sharing good practice with schools who are already doing such activities. 'Making the Most of School Grounds' guidance booklet. (Long Term)*

Recommendation 20: *Employ a dedicated outdoor learning officer who can provide the tailored support, training and delivery that will enable Swansea schools to fully realise the potential of outdoor learning, to deliver educational and wellbeing benefits, from the varied natural resources which Swansea possesses. (Medium Term)*

5. RECOMMENDATIONS – SHORT/MEDIUM/LONG TERM

5.1 The Panel recognises that the Authority:

- (a) will need to ensure that any subsequent actions are legal and meet the requirements of any relevant legislation;
- (b) has a responsibility to make the best use of limited resources and that any additional costs will need to be considered carefully as part of the annual budget setting process.

The Panel has kept these principles in mind in the course of its investigations.

The Panel commends Cabinet to consider all issues and ideas raised by this Inquiry and, in particular, the recommendations set out below.

Quick wins (within 6 months)

- Q1. Develop a clear and enthusiastic vision and message for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity to ensure a consistent 'buy-in' from each service.
- Q2. Make information available to the public to encourage participation and understanding, including continuing to develop the Natural Environment web pages.
- Q3. Insert a relevant biodiversity clause into service level agreements, licences etc which relates to land use and land management and ensure that the importance of these clauses is made clear to the land managers and the implications of not meeting them are highlighted.
- Q4. Renew the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) Service Level Agreement for 2019/20 (with a plan in place to achieve this in subsequent years).
- Q5. Employ a Section 6 Officer to co-ordinate, support and promote the consideration and delivery of a range of environmental projects across Swansea and also ensure the Council are meeting the requirements of the Environment Act (Section 6).
- Q6. Employ an additional Planning Ecologist/Ecological Enforcement Officer to work with Council services with a specific duty to help ensure the environmental conditions and section 106 obligations on planning consents are met, whilst also contributing to maintaining biodiversity, and meeting the requirements of the new Sustainable Drainage System legislation.

Medium term improvements (6-12 months)

- M1. Development and implementation of a Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan.
- M2. Ensure the Action Plan links with other relevant cross organisational policies at a strategic level, for example, the Local Well-being Plan and Area Statements.

- M3. Embed the new corporate priority by developing and delivering relevant training.
- M4. Invite environmental voluntary group and Community Council representatives to regular liaison meetings e.g. Friends of parks and wildlife sites. This would allow them some support and access to some specialist advice from relevant officers.
- M5. Create environmental link Governors on school governing bodies who can take relevant information and projects to their school.
- M6. Employ a dedicated outdoor learning officer who can provide the tailored support, training and delivery that will enable Swansea schools to fully realise the potential of outdoor learning, to deliver educational and wellbeing benefits, from the varied natural resources which Swansea possesses.
- M7. Assess the verges in Swansea that can stop being mowed and sprayed. Give these over to nature and allow for self-seeding, which will encourage native plants and pollinator species.

Long term challenges (12 months+)

- L1. Complete and publicise the ward mapping exercise. This would provide each ward and the Councillor Representatives with information specific to that ward. It would include information about important species, protected sites and other relevant ecological information as well as potential opportunities for improving biodiversity within the ward
- L2. Maintain support for volunteers, Community Councils and groups managing both Council owned and non-Council owned land.
- L3. Where appropriate, plant native wildflowers and trees. Non-native species do not benefit pollinators to the same extent as native species
- L4. Encourage green projects for well-being such as gardening projects, outdoor green-space activities and volunteering opportunities for adults and children across all relevant services.
- L5. Share natural environment and biodiversity costs across services.
- L6. Continue to nurture good working relationships with external agencies and encourage other services to do the same.
- L7. Encourage better use of school grounds and local wildlife sites for biodiversity.

6. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Panel is very grateful to everyone who contributed to the Inquiry.

We would like to thank the staff and especially the pupils at Brynhyfryd Primary School and Trallwn Primary School for allowing us to observe their RSPB session and for being welcoming and open to questions and queries.

Special thanks go to everyone who took the time to respond to the public call for evidence. These responses allowed the Panel to understand how the residents of Swansea feel about this important issue and informed the direction of much of the Panel's thinking. Every response was read and considered. The culture change we are trying to achieve would not be possible without such passionate and involved people.

We would also like to recognise the input of the Council staff involved in this inquiry – Paul Meller, Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Manager, and Deb Hill, the Nature Conservation Team Leader, along with their teams, have provided a wealth of information to allow the Panel to understand the current processes and projects. We must also mention the ongoing support of Mark Thomas, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure, who has supported the case for the natural environment for some time.

The Panel would like to record its thanks to the following people who came and gave evidence to us:

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|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Colin Cheeseman | Plant Life |
| Heather Galliford and Chris O'Brien | RSPB Cymru |
| Nigel Ajax-Lewis | South-West Wales Wildlife Trust |
| Adam Rowe | South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) Limited |
| Max Stokes and Kerry Rogers | Natural Resources Wales |
| Steve Bolchover | Swansea Biodiversity Partnership/Swansea Environment Centre |
| Chris Dow | Forest School SNPT |
| Christian Servini | Change Maker, Future Generations Commissioners Office |
| Neville Rookes | Policy Officer – Environment, Welsh Local Government Association |
| Neil Barry | Swansea Community Green Spaces Project Officer |

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| Pamela Morgan | Past Chair of Friends of the City of Swansea Botanical Complex |
| Neil Jones | Swansea Vale/Swansea Friends of the Earth |
| Rosemary Harvard-Jones | Rosehill Quarry/Friends of Ganges |
| Phil Stockton | Pentyllia Playing Fields (Ganges) |
| Linda Summons | Kilvey Hill Woodlands/Friends of the Earth |
| Marian Francis | Kilvey Community Woodland |
| Steffan Phillips | Chair of Friends of Morrision Park |
| Christine Thomas | Coed Bach Pontarddullais |
| Sarah Reed | RSPB Cymru Project Officer |

7. **FURTHER SCRUTINY NEEDED**

As well as our recommendations for Cabinet, we have also identified a number of issues that we believe may require further scrutiny. We propose to the Scrutiny Programme Committee, therefore, that future scrutiny work programmes examine:

- Glyphosate and its use by the Council for spraying – this was initially explored as part of the Inquiry, but the issue was too complex and contentious to include in an already substantial subject area.
- The management of common land
- The management of the marine environment
- Tackling Climate Change
- Management of the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

8. **ABOUT THE INQUIRY PANEL**

The Natural Environment Inquiry Panel is a team of Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. Their role is to examine a strategic issue of concern and to make recommendations about how policies and services can be improved.

Members of the Panel:

- Peter Jones (Convener)
- Wendy Fitzgerald
- Louise Gibbard
- Paxton Hood-Williams
- Yvonne Jardine
- Jeff Jones
- Irene Mann
- Hazel Morris
- Sam Pritchard
- Will Thomas

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Report of the Cabinet Member for Delivery

Cabinet – 18 July 2019

Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry Cabinet Member Response and Action Plan

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| Purpose: | To outline a response to the scrutiny recommendations and to present an action plan for agreement. |
| Policy Framework: | Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015), Environment (Wales) Act (2016). Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) |
| Consultation: | Legal, Finance, Access to Services |
| Recommendation(s): | It is recommended that: 1) The response as outlined in the report and related action plan be agreed. |
| Report Author: | Paul Meller |
| Finance Officer: | Aimee Dyer |
| Legal Officer: | Debbie Smith |
| Access to Services Officer: | Rhian Millar |

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry report was submitted to Cabinet on the 21 March 2019 after the Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry Panel completed a detailed inquiry. The scrutiny report is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 Having considered the contents of the scrutiny report, and specific recommendations made, advice to Cabinet on whether it should agree, or not agree, with each recommendation is detailed in this report.
- 1.3 Cabinet is also asked to consider, for each of the responses, any relevant policy commitments and any other relevant activity.

2.0 Response to Scrutiny Recommendations

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| Recommendation 1 |
| <i>Development and implementation of a Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan to take this forward (Medium Term)</i> |
| Relevant Policy Commitments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protecting Swansea's unique natural and built environment• Ensuring Swansea is an attractive place for investment and development |
| Action already being undertaken: <p>To ensure compliance with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 - Part 1, Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (Section 6 Duty), the Council must prepare and submit to Welsh Government by the end of 2019 a report (Corporate Biodiversity (Section 6) Action Plan) outlining what it has done to comply with the duty and then provide a progress update every three years after this date. A draft Action Plan is currently being prepared.</p> <p>In October 2018 the Council adopted an additional corporate well-being objective "to maintain and enhance Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity."</p> <p>Initial actions/steps have been identified with reference to this objective.</p> |
| New actions following from the recommendation: <p>It is proposed that progress on meeting the corporate biodiversity objective actions could be monitored and reported on a quarterly basis by means of the establishment of a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group. This Group would more effectively support and encourage all Service Areas to take ownership of Section 6 duties.</p> <p>The Group would comprise representatives from all relevant service areas and be chaired by the Director of Place. Proposed terms of reference have been drafted and a first meeting is planned for July 2019.</p> <p>Under the new business planning and reporting regime, all Service Areas will be required to report on progress made and planned future actions to meet the new Corporate priority for the Natural Environment and biodiversity.</p> |
| Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed |
| Recommendation is AGREED |

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| Recommendation 2 |
| <i>Ensure the Biodiversity Action Plan links with other relevant cross organisational policies at a strategic level, for example: the Local Well-being Plan, Area Statements, Local Development Plan, Green Infrastructure Strategy, Open Space Strategy, Nature Recovery Action Plan, Play Strategy, Destination Management Plan, Gower Management Plan, Economic Development Plan, etc (Medium Term)</i> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting Swansea’s unique natural and built environment • Ensuring Swansea is an attractive place for investment and development • A joined up approach to public expenditure and more imaginative community use of public assets • Working in partnership to explore collaborative and innovative ways in which services can be financed and delivered |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>The Action Plan under preparation involves collaboration with other Public Service Board (PSB) partners to deliver actions which contribute to achieving the PSB Well-being Plan Working with Nature priority. It also provides a more integrated approach that will contribute to the delivery of the other corporate wellbeing goals.</p> <p>Inclusion of the Corporate Biodiversity Objective and actions arising within Service/Business Plans.</p> <p>Nature Conservation Team represented on PSB Working with Nature Group and leading on the development of the Local Nature Recovery Plan and supporting the Local Nature Partnership.</p> <p>Working with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and drawing upon Area Statement evidence base, to promote the sustainable management of natural resources at the local level, enabling joined-up collective action and identification of innovative new solutions, for example the City Centre Green Infrastructure Strategy.</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>Establishment of a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group that will explore further opportunities for collaborative cross-service and external partnership initiatives /projects that deliver multiple benefits across the well-being goals.</p> <p>Nature Conservation Team participation in the PSB Working With Nature working group.</p> |
| Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed |
| Recommendation is AGREED |

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| Recommendation 3 |
| <i>Develop a clear and enthusiastic vision and message for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity to ensure a consistent 'buy-in' from each service (Quick Win)</i> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting Swansea's unique natural and built environment • Ensuring Swansea is an attractive place for investment and development • Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>The Council has a duty under the Environment (Wales) Act to embed the consideration of biodiversity into its early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans and projects as well as day to day activities.</p> <p>Each Council function/Service Area should now be considering where and how they can maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote resilience through their service/business plans.</p> <p>The Corporate Biodiversity working group will provide a vehicle for raising awareness and encouraging best practice</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>The Section 6 Plan will become an integral part of any business planning, asset management and/or corporate planning processes, as this will demonstrate how the consideration of biodiversity is being embedded.</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments</p> <p>Needs additional officer advice and support</p> <p>Recommendation is AGREED</p> |

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| Recommendation 4 |
| <i>Embed the new corporate priority by developing and delivering relevant training. The Nature Conservation Team could roll out training at the appropriate level and could undertake a service appropriate assessment with ideas and input coming from that service to encourage involvement. (Medium Term)</i> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in our people |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>Biodiversity training for Members/ a limited number of Service Areas</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> |

- Identify and address biodiversity training needs for all Service Areas
- Identification of opportunities and actions within each relevant Service Area to maintain and enhance biodiversity
- Identify Service Areas where advisory support could be provided by the Nature Conservation Team
- Development of on and offline training packages
- Development and implementation of a Comms Strategy for biodiversity
- Refresh of Nature Conservation/Biodiversity webpages

Cabinet Member Comments: Whilst the recommendation is fully supported it is not able to be delivered within current resources. It therefore accepted in principle but can only be delivered in full if additional resources are made available within future budget provisions or successful grant applications

Recommendation is **AGREED IN PART**

Recommendation 5

Make information available to the public to encourage participation and understanding, including continuing to develop the Natural Environment web pages e.g. explain why some verges are wild or why projects which have a green aspect are taking place. Public promotion is vital. (Quick Win)

Relevant Policy Commitments:

- Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats
- Working with 'friends of parks ' organisations
- Development of Green Infrastructure in our estates

Action already being undertaken:

- Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events taking place around Swansea
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents>
- In August 2018, the Nature Conservation Team was awarded two grants from Natural Resources Wales to fund two temporary (18 month) part-time posts: Our Nature Our Schools project officer and a Wildlife Volunteering co-ordinator
- In April 2019 the Council's Nature Conservation Team were successful in securing grants from Welsh Government in partnership with other agencies. These grants will fund 3 part time posts for 3 years: a Nature Partnership Officer, a Place based Project, and a volunteer Co-ordinator. Job descriptions need to be prepared and evaluated for these posts and approval to advertise and appoint obtained

New actions following from the recommendation:

- Provide opportunities for schoolchildren to access and learn about their natural environment (Our Nature Our Future project).
- Engage with local communities to encourage volunteering and to support them taking action to enhance and maintain their local greenspaces and wildlife sites
- Development and implementation of a Comms Strategy for biodiversity
- Refresh of Nature Conservation/Biodiversity webpages
- Develop and publish Programme of Environmental Events

Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 6

Complete and publicise the ward mapping exercise. This would provide each ward and the Councillor Representatives with information specific to that ward. It would include information about important species, protected sites and other relevant ecological information as well as potential opportunities for improving biodiversity within the ward. A link to the ward mapping should appear on planning applications when completed. This would help when it comes to planning applications and empower ward councillors and residents to be able to respond to issues which threaten these special features of their ward and encourage maintenance of biodiversity. It would also contribute to the enforcement activity of the Council. (Long Term)

Relevant Policy Commitments:

- Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats
- Development of Green Infrastructure (GI) in our estates
- Ensuring development complies with sustainable development principles
- Develop a natural environment that encourages higher levels of physical activity
- Encourage greater use of public access land for informal recreation

Action already being undertaken:

- ‘Wild about your ward’ profiles drafted for a few pilot wards highlighting ecological information
- Enhancements to greenspace being undertaken as part of an environmental works programme to meet the Council’s commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard
- GI enhancements undertaken as part of a Welsh Government funded multi-GI project with Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend Councils

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| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>Complete mapping of existing Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure assets and ecosystem service provision on a ward by ward basis working with Members to identify areas which provide the best opportunities for improvement and, where appropriate, maximise match funding opportunities afforded by Members' community fund.</p> <p>In April 2019 the Council was awarded a grant to fund a temporary (3 year) part-time (3 days/week) post to deliver the above project. The post needs to be agreed, advertised and an appointment made.</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments: Members are encouraged to support local GI improvement projects through their community budget.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation is AGREED</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 7</p> |
| <p><i>Maintain support for volunteers, Community Councils and groups managing both Council owned and non-Council owned land. There are important areas of natural environment in Swansea that may be managed by trusts or owned privately. The links to these areas need to be maintained to ensure best practice is shared and any relevant information/policy can be applied across Swansea, improving nature-based connectivity overall. (Long Term)</i></p> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats • Working with 'friends of parks' organisations • Development of Green Infrastructure in our estates |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>The Scrutiny Inquiry identified that there are currently 3 Council officers supporting 40 sites and 27 'Friends of' groups.</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post has been obtained for the next three years. They will assist volunteers, groups and Community Councils to make the work carried out by them more effective and appropriate. They will also recruit, train and engage with new volunteers, for example, through social prescribing, corporate social responsibility, etc</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments: Members are encouraged to support volunteer projects in their wards</p> |
| <p>Recommendation is AGREED</p> |

| Recommendation 8 |
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| <p><i>Insert a relevant biodiversity clause into service level agreements, licences etc which relates to land use and land management and land use and ensure that the importance of these clauses is made clear to the land managers/occupiers and the implications of not meeting them are highlighted.(Quick Win)</i></p> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joined up approach to public expenditure and more imaginative community use of public assets • Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>As a consequence of discussion of this matter during the Scrutiny inquiry a clause has been inserted into the service level agreement for community groups managing green spaces</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>To work with Estates and other relevant Service Areas to ensure that more detailed and relevant biodiversity clauses are inserted into all service level agreements, licences, etc, which relate to land use and land management. For example, those relating to grazing sites and also in those entered into with external event organisers which require Council consent before certain activities (e.g. clearing land, special events, etc) are undertaken to prevent loss of biodiversity.</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed</p> |
| <p>Recommendation is AGREED</p> |

| Recommendation 9 |
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| <p><i>Assess the verges in Swansea that can stop being mowed and sprayed. Give these over to nature and allow for self-seeding, which will encourage native plants and pollinator species. This can also save money as less frequent mowing is required. There could be signs erected to highlight the project to help change the culture. (Medium Term)</i></p> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joined up approach to public expenditure and more imaginative community use of public assets • Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>An annual programme of wildflower planting and management within verges.</p> |

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| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with Parks, Highways and other relevant Service Areas (e.g. Housing , Education) to identify those locations in Council ownership which can be given over to self-seeding, less intensive mowing and/or seeding with perennial species mixes • Develop a Comms plan in relation to proposed biodiversity actions. |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed</p> |
| <p>Recommendation is AGREED</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 10</p> |
| <p><i>Where appropriate, plant native wildflowers and trees. Non-native species do not benefit pollinators to the same extent as native species. (Long Term)</i></p> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joined up approach to public expenditure and more imaginative community use of public assets • Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>An annual programme of wildflower planting and management within verges which includes non-native species.</p> <p>Over 5000 native trees planted by Nature Conservation Team.</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include more native species within wildflower planting programme • Develop and adopt a Council tree policy which encourages planting of native species trees where appropriate. • Plans for new tree planting to include native species • Identification of suitable sites for further woodland planting with support from Trees for Cities • Investigate additional sources of funding for woodland planting e.g. Glastir and Carbon Credits |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed</p> |
| <p>Recommendation is AGREED SUBJECT TO ACTIONS BEING CONTAINED WITHIN CURRENT BUDGETS</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 11</p> |
| <p><i>Encourage green projects for well-being such as gardening projects, outdoor green-space activities and volunteering opportunities for adults and children across all relevant services. This includes linking with</i></p> |

Community Councils. Communities can make use of the 'Community Green Space Toolkit' which can be found online at <http://swanseacommunitygreenspaces.weebly.com> (Long Term)

Relevant Policy Commitments:

- Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats
- Working with 'friends of parks' organisations
- Development of Green Infrastructure in our estates
- Promote greater use of allotment and garden sharing

Action already being undertaken:

Swansea Environmental Forum and Swansea Council for Voluntary Services' Swansea Community Green Spaces project helps people make greater use of green spaces within their communities and become more involved in how they are managed.

Nature Conservation Team Wildlife Volunteer Co-ordinator project.

New actions following from the recommendation:

See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post and a Place based project officer and a Nature Recovery Project Officer has been obtained for the next three years. They will liaise with all relevant Service Areas, Ward members and external organisations such as community councils to encourage and provide volunteering opportunities for adults and children.

Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 12

Employ a Section 6 Officer to co-ordinate, support and promote the consideration and delivery of a range of environmental projects across Swansea and also ensure the Council are meeting the requirements of the Environment Act (Section 6). This includes the development of a Corporate Natural Environment Working Group. This should stop us breaching the legislation and potentially facing fines/restricted grant access/reputational damage. (Quick Win)

Relevant Policy Commitments:

- Working in partnership to explore collaborative and innovative ways in which services can be financed and delivered
- Enhance and sustain our parks and natural habitats
- Protecting Swansea's unique natural and built environment

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| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>The Council does not currently have a Section 6 officer. An officer fulfilling a similar role in a temporary grant funded post left the Council in March 2019 when the grant funding ended. Requests to Welsh Government for further funding for a Section 6 officer post have been declined.</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See recommendation 1 above. A Corporate Biodiversity Working Group is in the process of being set up. Part of the ongoing work of the group would be to identify additional or reallocation of resources to meet the Council's Section 6 duties, although this is expected to be a medium to longer term solution rather than a quick win. • See recommendations 5 and 6 above. Provided appointments are made to these three temporary posts they will fulfil a few, but by no means all, of the duties that a Section 6 officer would be expected to undertake. |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments: The need for a Section 6 officer is recognised and notwithstanding the recommendation response below it is expected that all possible funding streams for creation of this post will continue to be explored.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation is NOT AGREED</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 13</p> |
| <p><i>Employ an additional Planning Ecologist/Ecological Enforcement Officer to work with Council services with a specific duty to help ensure the environmental conditions and section 106 obligations on planning consents are met, whilst also contributing to maintaining biodiversity, and meeting the requirements of the new Sustainable Drainage System (SUDs) legislation. (Quick Win)</i></p> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting Swansea's unique natural and built environment |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>The Council currently has one (0.8) Planning Ecologist post. An additional grant funded (0.5) temporary Planning Ecologist position expired April 2019. Welsh Government/NRW have confirmed that there is no funding to renew this position and that monies cannot be diverted from other grants to fund such a post.</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>There is currently no direct funding available to appoint an additional full/part time Planning Ecologist (Quick win).</p> |

However roles and responsibilities will be reviewed when posts become vacant within the Planning and City Regeneration Service. In addition a review of budget is taking place where current external advice is being sought to see if this can be redirected accordingly on a full cost recovery through charging basis (see recommendations 14 &15 below)

To be effective and have the capacity to ensure the increasing number of environmental conditions on planning applications, etc, plus the requirements of the new SUDs legislation are met the post needs to be a full-time position.

Cabinet Member Comments: The need for an additional Planning Ecologist post is recognised and notwithstanding the recommendation response below it is expected that all possible funding streams for creation of this post will continue to be explored as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation is **NOT AGREED**

Recommendation 14

Share natural environment and biodiversity costs across services. Much of the work completed in relation to biodiversity is funded by a single team's budget with significant external funding/grant aid. Considering both the Council as a whole, and certain specific services, benefit from a thriving environment, it seems appropriate that other services should be contributing financially to this work. (Long Term)

Relevant Policy Commitments:

- Working in partnership to explore collaborative and innovative ways in which services can be financed and delivered

Action already being undertaken:

Some major developments have been approved subject to Section 106 agreements providing financial contributions towards practical on/off site mitigation and/or compensation measures against biodiversity loss and also in support of maintenance agreements.

See also response to recommendation 15 below

New actions following from the recommendation:

It is proposed that the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group carry out a review of how Service Areas have been impacted by the Environment (Wales) Act, Section 6 Biodiversity duty and Well-Being of Future Generations Act Resilient Wales goal and identify the additional demands arising in terms of provision of ecological/biodiversity advice. This should be taken into consideration as part of any Department/Service budget review particularly in regard to externally commissioned advice.

Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed within department/service

Recommendation is **PARTLY AGREED**

Recommendation 15

Renew the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) service level agreement for 2019/20 (with a plan in place to achieve this in subsequent years) the approximate cost is between £8,000 and £10,000 per annum. The relevant departments (Development Management, Highways, Corporate Buildings and Corporate Property) should be contributing to the costs of accessing this information, using this resource regularly and, where necessary, asking the Council's ecologists to interpret the data. (Quick Win)

Relevant Policy Commitments:

- Working in partnership to explore collaborative and innovative ways in which services can be financed and delivered

Action already being undertaken:

The cost of the SEWBRc Service Level Agreement (SLA) is currently taken from the Nature Conservation Team's budget, however there is no budget allocated for this purpose. The SLA has been previously funded through grant aid, but this is no longer available.

Some Service Areas are carrying out projects, asset disposal, etc without reference to SEWBRc/relevant ecological records which has the potential to result in outcomes that are in breach of the Council's Section 6 duty.

New actions following from the recommendation:

It is proposed that the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group carry out a review of which Service Areas benefit from the SEWBRc data and if the arrangement continues to prove value for money review how this agreement is funded in line with the various recommendations above.

Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 16

Continue to nurture good working relationships with external agencies and encourage other services to do the same. This should not be limited to national organisations but should also include local ones such as Swansea Environmental Forum, the Swansea Biodiversity Partnership and the Swansea Environment Centre. (Long Term)

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| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership to explore collaborative and innovative ways in which services can be financed and delivered • Working in partnership with public and private sector partners to develop green infrastructure in our buildings and estates |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>The Council's Nature Conservation Team already has excellent working relationships with all relevant external agencies both national and local, and play a key role in supporting a number of partnerships e.g. Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and Swansea Environmental Forum</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>Existing external working relationships/ networking to be further developed to include other Service Areas through training, shared knowledge /good practice at Corporate Biodiversity Working Group meetings, etc.</p> <p>New Temporary part time LNP officer to be appointed with Welsh Government funding.</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed</p> |
| <p>Recommendation is AGREED</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 17</p> |
| <p><i>Invite environmental voluntary groups and Community Council representatives to regular liaison meetings e.g. Friends of parks and wildlife sites. This would allow them some support and access to specialist advice from relevant officers (e.g. Parks Team, Nature Conservation Team, Education Link Officer), whilst allowing them a forum to discuss concerns and success. The loss of these groups would have a severely detrimental impact on the management of Council land and finances, so there needs to be ongoing and meaningful engagement and support from the Council. (Medium Term)</i></p> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with 'friends of parks' organisations • Working in partnership to explore collaborative and innovative ways in which services can be financed and delivered |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>The Scrutiny Inquiry identified that there are currently 3 Council officers supporting 40 sites and 27 'Friends of' groups.</p> |

New actions following from the recommendation:

See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post has been obtained for the next three years. They will regularly meet with external organisations such as environmental voluntary groups and Community Councils and enable them to access support and specialist advice from various Council services.

Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 18

Create environmental link Councillor Governors on school governing bodies who can take relevant information and projects to their school. They can also report back on a school's activities and this can be used to contribute to the 3 yearly section 6 report to Welsh Government on the Council's performance. (Medium Term)

Relevant Policy Commitments:

- Ensuring schools are accessible and available for community activities
- Encouraging schools to provide a safe and supportive environment

Action already being undertaken:

None

New actions following from the recommendation:

It is proposed that the Nature Conservation Team liaise with the School and Governor Unit to ensure that all governing bodies appoint an environmental link governor. It is expected that these will primarily be local ward Members given the synergy with recommendation 6. The ward mapping exercise will include school grounds within the assessment of opportunities for improvement and it also supports the policy commitment to make schools more accessible and available for community activities.

Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed

Recommendation is **AGREED**

Recommendation 19

Encourage better use of school grounds and local wildlife sites for biodiversity. For example, gardens, growing schemes, tree planting, wildlife ponds and habitat creation. This can be done by linking in with relevant organisations such as RSPB and sharing good practice with schools who are already doing such activities. 'Making the Most of School Grounds' guidance booklet. (Long Term)

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| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring schools are accessible and available for community activities • Promoting schools as a resource for the whole community • Encouraging schools to provide a safe and supportive environment |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events taking place around Swansea https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents</p> <p>Our Nature Our Schools project which runs until December 2019 connecting schools to local Wildlife Sites and supporting school grounds environmental improvements.</p> |
| <p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>As recommendations 5, 6 and 18 above.</p> |
| <p>Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed</p> |
| <p>Recommendation is AGREED</p> |

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| <p>Recommendation 20</p> <p><i>Employ a dedicated outdoor learning officer who can provide the tailored support, training and delivery that will enable Swansea schools to fully realise the potential of outdoor learning, to deliver educational and wellbeing benefits, from the varied natural resources which Swansea possesses. (Medium Term)</i></p> |
| <p>Relevant Policy Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring schools are accessible and available for community activities • Promoting schools as a resource for the whole community • Encouraging schools to provide a safe and supportive environment |
| <p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <p>Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events taking place around Swansea https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents</p> <p>The Nature Conservation Team also employs a part-time project officer at the Bishops Wood Local Nature Reserve who delivers at this location low-cost training for schools within Swansea and wider afield.</p> |

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| Our Nature our Schools project which runs until December 2019 connecting schools to local Wildlife Sites and supporting school grounds environmental improvements. |
| New actions following from the recommendation: See recommendation 5 above. |
| Cabinet Member Comments: Support actions already being undertaken and proposed |
| Recommendation is AGREED |

2.1 An action plan for the agreed recommendations is attached as **Appendix B**.

3.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

3.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

3.2 The Scrutiny Inquiry considered which groups might be particularly affected and how they might be engaged with. As a result a blog and survey was published asking for feedback and ensured that this was available in alternative formats; this was sent to forums that represent people with protected characteristics.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report. All Council departments and service areas have a duty to maintain and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity within the County in order to meet the Council's duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Environment (Wales) Act. Welsh Government guidance recommends that Local Authorities must have sufficient ecological expertise to meet their Biodiversity duties under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with this report as only recommendations that can be supported within existing budgets are recommended for approval. Any further budget amendments linked to

the recommendations or additional grant funding opportunities would be in accordance with the relevant grants and FPR requirements at that time. The three temporary posts identified are 100% externally grant funded and any actions linked to grants would have to be reviewed if those sources of grants were to end.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices

Appendix A – Original Scrutiny Report

<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=124&MId=7946&Ver=4&LLL=0>

Appendix B – Proposed Cabinet Action Plan

Scrutiny Inquiry into the Natural Environment – Cabinet Action Plan

| Recommendation | Action already being undertaken | New Action Proposed | Timescale | Responsible Officer |
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| <p>1. Development and implementation of a Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan to take this forward (Medium Term)</p> | <p>To ensure compliance with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 - Part 1, Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (Section 6 Duty), the Council must prepare and submit to Welsh Government by the end of 2019 a report (Corporate Biodiversity (Section 6) Action Plan) outlining what it has done to comply with the duty and then provide a progress update every three years after this date. A draft Action Plan is currently being prepared.</p> <p>In October 2018 the Council adopted an additional corporate well-being objective “to maintain and enhance Swansea’s Natural Resources and Biodiversity”</p> <p>Initial actions/steps have been identified with reference to this objective</p> | <p>It is proposed that progress on meeting the corporate biodiversity objective actions could be monitored and reported on a quarterly basis by means of the establishment of a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group. This Group would more effectively support and encourage all Service Areas to take ownership of Section 6 duties.</p> <p>The Group would comprise representatives from all relevant service areas and be chaired at a senior level. Proposed terms of reference have been drafted and a first meeting is planned for June 2019.</p> <p>Under the new business planning and reporting regime, all Service Areas will be required to report on progress made and planned future actions to meet the new Corporate priority for the Natural Environment and biodiversity</p> | <p>June 2019 (Corporate Working Group to meet) and quarterly thereafter</p> <p>Dec 2019 Action Plan submission and review every three years</p> | <p>Paul Meller/ Deb Hill</p> |

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| 2. | <p>Ensure the Action Plan links with other relevant cross organisational policies at a strategic level, for example, the Local Well-being Plan and Area Statements (Medium Term)</p> | <p>The Action Plan under preparation involves collaboration with other Public Service Board (PSB) partners to deliver actions which contribute to achieving the PSB Well-being Plan Working with Nature priority. It also provides a more integrated approach that will contribute to the delivery of the other corporate wellbeing goals.</p> <p>Inclusion of the Corporate Biodiversity Objective and actions arising within Service/Business Plans.</p> <p>Nature Conservation Team represented on PSB Working with Nature Group and leading on the development of the Local Nature Recovery Plan and supporting the Local Nature Partnership.</p> <p>Working with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and drawing upon Area Statement evidence base, to promote the sustainable management of natural resources at the local level, enabling joined-up collective action and identification of innovative new solutions, for example the City Centre Green Infrastructure Strategy.</p> | <p>Establishment of a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group that will explore further opportunities for collaborative cross-service and external partnership initiatives /projects that deliver multiple benefits across the well-being goals.</p> <p>Nature Conservation Team participation in the PSB Working With Nature working group.</p> | <p>June 2019 (Corporate Working Group to meet) and quarterly thereafter</p> <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>Paul Meller/ Deb Hill</p> |
| 3. | <p>Develop a clear and enthusiastic vision and message for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity to ensure a consistent 'buy-in' from each service (Quick Win)</p> | <p>The Council has a duty under the Environment (Wales) Act to embed the consideration of biodiversity into its early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans and projects as well as day to day activities.</p> | <p>The Section 6 Plan will become an integral part of any business planning, asset management and/or corporate planning processes, as this will demonstrate how the</p> | <p>March/April annually - Annual Service Plans</p> | <p>Heads of Service</p> |

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| | | <p>Each Council function/Service Area should now be considering where and how they can maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote resilience through their service/business plans.</p> <p>The Corporate Biodiversity working group will provide a vehicle for raising awareness and encouraging best practice</p> | consideration of biodiversity is being embedded. | | |
| 4. | Embed the new corporate priority by developing and delivering relevant training. The Nature Conservation Team could roll out training at the appropriate level and could undertake a service appropriate assessment with ideas and input coming from that service to encourage involvement. (Medium Term) | Biodiversity training for Members/ a limited number of Service Areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and address biodiversity training needs for all Service Areas Identification of opportunities and actions within each relevant Service Area to maintain and enhance biodiversity Identify Service Areas where advisory support could be provided by the Nature Conservation Team Development of on and offline training packages Development and implementation of a Comms Strategy for biodiversity | Ongoing Comms Strategy – Summer 2019 | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |
| 5. | Make information available to the public to encourage participation and understanding, including continuing to develop the Natural Environment web pages e.g. explain why some verges are wild or why projects which have a green aspect are taking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for schoolchildren to access and learn about their natural environment (Our Nature Our Future project). Engage with local communities to encourage | Dec 2019 (Our Nature Our Future) Comms Strategy – Summer 2019 | Deb Hill/ Penny Gruffydd |

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| | <p>place. Public promotion is vital. (Quick Win)</p> | <p>free or low cost environmental events taking place around Swansea https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In August 2018, the Nature Conservation Team was awarded two grants from Natural Resources Wales to fund two temporary (18 month) part-time posts: Our Nature Our Schools project officer and a Wildlife Volunteering co-ordinator • In April 2019 the Council's Nature Conservation Team were successful in securing grants from Welsh Government in partnership with other agencies. These grants will fund 3 part time posts for 3 years: a Nature Partnership Officer, a Place based Project, and a volunteer Co-ordinator. Job descriptions need to be prepared and evaluated for these posts and approval to advertise and appoint obtained | <p>volunteering and to support them taking action to enhance and maintain their local greenspaces and wildlife sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of a Comms Strategy for biodiversity • Refresh of Nature Conservation/Biodiversity webpages • Develop and publish Programme of Environmental Events | <p>Webpages update (Dec 2019)</p> <p>Programme of Events (March annually)</p> <p>March 2022 (3 grant funded projects)</p> | <p>Project Officers (to be appointed)</p> |
| 6. | <p>Complete and publicise the ward mapping exercise. This would provide each ward and the Councillor Representatives with information specific to that ward. It would include information about important species, protected sites and other relevant ecological information as well as potential opportunities for improving biodiversity within the ward. A link to the ward mapping should appear on planning applications when</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Wild about your ward' profiles drafted for a few pilot wards highlighting ecological information • Enhancements to greenspace being undertaken as part of an environmental works programme to meet the Council's commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard | <p>Complete mapping of existing Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure assets and ecosystem service provision on a ward by ward basis working with Members to identify areas which provide the best opportunities for improvement and, where appropriate, maximise match funding opportunities afforded by Members' community fund.</p> | <p>March 2022</p> | <p>Project Officer</p> |

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| | <p>completed. This would help when it comes to planning applications and empower ward councillors and residents to be able to respond to issues which threaten these special features of their ward and encourage maintenance of biodiversity. It would also contribute to the enforcement activity of the Council. (Long Term)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GI enhancements undertaken as part of a Welsh Government funded multi-GI project with Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend Councils | <p>In April 2019 the Council was awarded a grant to fund a temporary (3 year) part-time (3 days/week) post to deliver the above project. The post needs to be agreed, advertised and an appointment made.</p> | | |
| 7. | <p>Maintain support for volunteers, Community Councils and groups managing both Council owned and non-Council owned land. There are important areas of natural environment in Swansea that may be managed by trusts or owned privately. The links to these areas need to be maintained to ensure best practice is shared and any relevant information/policy can be applied across Swansea, improving nature-based connectivity overall. (Long Term)</p> | <p>The Scrutiny Inquiry identified that there are currently 3 Council officers supporting 40 sites and 27 'Friends of' groups.</p> | <p>See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post has been obtained for the next three years. They will assist volunteers, groups and Community Councils to make the work carried out by them more effective and appropriate. They will also recruit, train and engage with new volunteers, for example, through social prescribing, corporate social responsibility, etc.</p> | <p>March 2022</p> | <p>Project Officer</p> |
| 8. | <p>Insert a relevant biodiversity clause into service level agreements, licences etc which relates to land use and land management and land use and ensure that the importance of these clauses is made clear to the land managers/occupiers and the implications of not meeting them are highlighted.(Quick Win)</p> | <p>As a consequence of discussion of this matter during the Scrutiny inquiry a clause has been inserted into the service level agreement for community groups managing green spaces</p> | <p>To work with Estates and other relevant Service Areas to ensure that more detailed and relevant biodiversity clauses are inserted into all service level agreements, licences, etc, which relate to land use and land management. For example, those relating to grazing sites and also in those entered into with external event organisers which require Council consent before certain activities (e.g. clearing land, special events, etc) are</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>Deb Hill/Judith Oakley</p> |

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| | | | undertaken to prevent loss of biodiversity. | | |
| 9. | Assess the verges in Swansea that can stop being mowed and sprayed. Give these over to nature and allow for self-seeding, which will encourage native plants and pollinator species. This can also save money as less frequent mowing is required. There could be signs erected to highlight the project to help change the culture. (Medium Term) | An annual programme of wildflower planting and management within verges. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with Parks, Highways and other relevant Service Areas (e.g. Housing , Education) to identify those locations in Council ownership which can be given over to self-seeding, less intensive mowing and/or seeding with perennial species mixes Develop a Comms plan in relation to proposed biodiversity actions. | March 2020 Comms Strategy – Summer 2019 | Deb Hill/Judith Oakley |
| 10. | Where appropriate, plant native wildflowers and trees. Non-native species do not benefit pollinators to the same extent as native species. (Long Term) | An annual programme of wildflower planting and management within verges which includes non-native species. Over 5000 native trees planted by Nature Conservation Team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include more native species within wildflower planting programme Develop and adopt a Council tree policy which encourages planting of native species trees where appropriate. Plans for new tree planting to include native species Identification of suitable sites for further woodland planting with support from Trees for Cities Investigate additional sources of funding for woodland planting e.g. Glastir and Carbon Credits | Ongoing | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |

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| 11. | <p>Encourage green projects for well-being such as gardening projects, outdoor green-space activities and volunteering opportunities for adults and children across all relevant services. This includes linking with Community Councils. Communities can make use of the 'Community Green Space Toolkit' which can be found online at http://swanseacommunitygreenspaces.weebly.com (Long Term)</p> | <p>Swansea Environmental Forum and Swansea Council for Voluntary Services' Swansea Community Green Spaces project helps people make greater use of green spaces within their communities and become more involved in how they are managed.</p> <p>Nature Conservation Team Wildlife Volunteer Co-ordinator project.</p> | <p>See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post and a Place based project officer and a Nature Recovery Project Officer has been obtained for the next three years. They will liaise with all relevant Service Areas, Ward members and external organisations such as community councils to encourage and provide volunteering opportunities for adults and children.</p> | March 2022 | Project Officer |
| 12. | <p>Employ a Section 6 Officer to coordinate, support and promote the consideration and delivery of a range of environmental projects across Swansea and also ensure the Council are meeting the requirements of the Environment Act (Section 6). This includes the development of a Corporate Natural Environment Working Group. This should stop us breaching the legislation and potentially facing fines/restricted grant access/reputational damage. (Quick Win)</p> | Not Agreed | | | |
| 13. | <p>Employ an additional Planning Ecologist/Ecological Enforcement Officer to work with Council services with a specific duty to help ensure the environmental conditions and section 106 obligations on planning consents are met, whilst also contributing to maintaining biodiversity, and meeting the requirements of the new Sustainable Drainage System legislation. (Quick Win)</p> | Not Agreed | | | |

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| 14. | Share natural environment and biodiversity costs across services. Much of the work completed in relation to biodiversity is funded by a single team's budget. Considering both the Council as a whole, and certain specific services, benefit from a thriving environment, it seems appropriate that other services should be contributing financially to this work. (Long Term) | Some major developments have been approved subject to Section 106 agreements providing financial contributions towards practical on/off site mitigation and/or compensation measures against biodiversity loss and also in support of maintenance agreements. See also response to recommendation 15 below | It is proposed that the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group carry out a review of how Service Areas have been impacted by the Environment (Wales) Act, Section 6 Biodiversity duty and Well-Being of Future Generations Act Resilient Wales goal and identify the additional demands arising in terms of provision of ecological/biodiversity advice. This should be taken into consideration as part of any Department/Service budget reappportionment exercise. | March 2020 | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |
| 15. | Renew the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) service level agreement for 2019/20 (with a plan in place to achieve this in subsequent years) the approximate cost is between £8,000 and £10,000 per annum. The relevant departments (Development Management, Highways, Corporate Buildings and Corporate Property) should be contributing to the costs of accessing this information, using this resource regularly and, where necessary, asking the Council's ecologists to interpret the data. (Quick Win) | The cost of the SEWBReC Service Level Agreement (SLA) is currently taken from the Nature Conservation Team's budget, however there is no budget allocated for this purpose. The SLA has been previously funded through grant aid, but this is no longer available. Some Service Areas are carrying out projects, asset disposal, etc without reference to SEWBReC/relevant ecological records which has the potential to result in outcomes that are in breach of the Council's Section 6 duty. | It is proposed that the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group carry out a review of which Service Areas benefit from the SEWBReC data and also those which should be utilising it prior to commencement of any regeneration projects/asset disposal and apportion costs accordingly. | March 2020 | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |
| 16. | <i>Continue to nurture good working relationships with external agencies and encourage other services to do the same. This should not be limited to national organisations but should also include local ones such as Swansea Environmental Forum, the</i> | The Council's Nature Conservation Team already has excellent working relationships with all relevant external agencies both national and local, and play a key role in supporting a number of partnerships e.g. Local Nature | Existing external working relationships/ networking to be further developed to include other Service Areas through training, shared knowledge /good practice at Corporate | Ongoing | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |

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| | Swansea Biodiversity Partnership and the Swansea Environment Centre. (Long Term) | Partnership (LNP) and Swansea Environmental Forum | Biodiversity Working Group meetings, etc. New Temporary part time LNP officer to be appointed with Welsh Government funding. | | |
| 17. | Invite environmental voluntary group and Community Council representatives to regular liaison meetings e.g. Friends of parks and wildlife sites. This would allow them some support and access to some specialist advice from relevant officers (e.g. Parks Team, Nature Conservation Team, Education Link Officer), whilst allowing them a forum to discuss concerns and success. The loss of these groups would have a severely detrimental impact on the management of Council land and finances, so there needs to be ongoing and meaningful engagement and support from the Council. (Medium Term) | The Scrutiny Inquiry identified that there are currently 3 Council officers supporting 40 sites and 27 'Friends of' groups. | See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post has been obtained for the next three years. They will regularly meet with external organisations such as environmental voluntary groups and Community Councils and enable them to access support and specialist advice from various Council services. | March 2022 | Project Officer |
| 18. | Create environmental link Governors on school governing bodies who can take relevant information and projects to their school. They can also report back on a school's activities and this can be used to contribute to the 3 yearly section 6 report to Welsh Government on the Council's performance. (Medium Term) | None | It is proposed that the Nature Conservation Team liaise with the School and Governor Unit to ensure that all governing bodies appoint an environmental link governor. It is expected that these will primarily be local ward Members given the synergy with recommendation 6. The ward mapping exercise will include school grounds within the assessment of opportunities for improvement and it also supports the policy commitment to make schools | Dec 2019 (Governor appointment) March 2022 (Mapping exercise) | Paul Meller/Penny Gruffydd/ Deb Hill Project Officer |

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| | | | more accessible and available for community activities. | | |
| 19. | Encourage better use of school grounds and local wildlife sites for biodiversity. For example, gardens, growing schemes, tree planting, wildlife ponds and habitat creation. This can be done by linking in with relevant organisations such as RSPB and sharing good practice with schools who are already doing such activities. 'Making the Most of School Grounds' guidance booklet. (Long Term) | <p>Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events taking place around Swansea https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents</p> <p>Our Nature Our Schools project which runs until December 2019 connecting schools to local Wildlife Sites and supporting school grounds environmental improvements.</p> | As recommendations 5,6 and 18 above | <p>Dec 2019 (Our Nature Our Schools and Governor appointment)</p> <p>March 2022 (Mapping exercise)</p> | <p>Paul Meller/Penny Gruffydd Deb Hill</p> <p>Project Officer</p> |
| 20. | Employ a dedicated outdoor learning officer who can provide the tailored support, training and delivery that will enable Swansea schools to fully realise the potential of outdoor learning, to deliver educational and wellbeing benefits, from the varied natural resources which Swansea possesses. (Medium Term) | <p>Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events taking place around Swansea https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents</p> <p>The Nature Conservation Team also employs a part-time project officer at the Bishops Wood Local Nature Reserve who delivers at this location low-cost training for schools within Swansea and wider afield.</p> | See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for an Our Nature Our Future school project officer has been obtained for the next three years. They will liaise with Swansea schools within more deprived wards to realise the potential of outdoor learning. | Dec 2019 | Deb Hill/Penny Gruffydd |

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| | | Our Nature Our Schools project which runs until December 2019 connecting schools to local Wildlife Sites and supporting school grounds environmental improvements. | | | |
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Scrutiny Inquiry on Natural Environment – UPDATED Cabinet Action Plan Follow Up/Impact

| Recommendation | Action already being undertaken | New Action Proposed | Timescale | Responsible Officer | |
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| <p>1.</p> | <p>Development and implementation of a Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan to take this forward (Medium Term)</p> | <p>To ensure compliance with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 - Part 1, Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (Section 6 Duty), the Council must prepare and submit to Welsh Government by the end of 2019 a report (Corporate Biodiversity (Section 6) Action Plan) outlining what it has done to comply with the duty and then provide a progress update every three years after this date. A draft Action Plan is currently being prepared.</p> <p>In October 2018 the Council adopted an additional corporate well-being objective “to maintain and enhance Swansea’s Natural Resources and Biodiversity”</p> <p>Initial actions/steps have been identified with reference to this objective</p> | <p>It is proposed that progress on meeting the corporate biodiversity objective actions could be monitored and reported on a quarterly basis by means of the establishment of a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group. This Group would more effectively support and encourage all Service Areas to take ownership of Section 6 duties.</p> <p>The Group would comprise representatives from all relevant service areas and be chaired at a senior level. Proposed terms of reference have been drafted and a first meeting is planned for June 2019.</p> <p>Under the new business planning and reporting regime, all Service Areas will be required to report on progress made and planned future actions to meet the new Corporate priority for the Natural Environment and biodiversity</p> | <p>June 2019 (Corporate Working Group to meet) and quarterly thereafter</p> <p>Dec 2019 Action Plan submission and review every three years</p> | <p>Paul Meller/ Deb Hill</p> |

COMPLETE

Progress: A Corporate Biodiversity (Section 6) Action Plan was submitted to Welsh Government in Dec 2019. The biodiversity actions listed under the Corporate Objective for Maintaining and Enhancing Swansea’s Natural Resources and Biodiversity forms the basis of the Council’s Section 6 Action Plan. This has been expanded to incorporate additional actions to be delivered over the next 3 years including the recommendations of this Scrutiny Inquiry.

The Action Plan aims to reverse the loss of biodiversity, promote healthy resilient ecosystems, strengthen green infrastructure and facilitate adaptation to and mitigation for the impacts of climate change. It seeks to ensure that our natural environment, together with the benefits and services it provides, are protected for the benefit of existing and future generations.

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| 2. | Ensure the Action Plan links with other relevant cross organisational policies at a strategic level, for example, the Local Well-being Plan and Area Statements (Medium Term) | <p>The Action Plan under preparation involves collaboration with other Public Service Board (PSB) partners to deliver actions which contribute to achieving the PSB Well-being Plan Working with Nature priority. It also provides a more integrated approach that will contribute to the delivery of the other corporate wellbeing goals.</p> <p>Inclusion of the Corporate Biodiversity Objective and actions arising within Service/Business Plans.</p> <p>Nature Conservation Team represented on PSB Working with Nature Group and leading on the development of the Local Nature Recovery Plan and supporting the Local Nature Partnership.</p> <p>Working with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and drawing upon Area Statement evidence base, to promote the sustainable</p> | <p>Establishment of a Corporate Biodiversity Working Group that will explore further opportunities for collaborative cross-service and external partnership initiatives /projects that deliver multiple benefits across the well-being goals.</p> <p>Nature Conservation Team participation in the PSB Working With Nature working group.</p> | <p>June 2019 (Corporate Working Group to meet) and quarterly thereafter</p> <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>Paul Meller/ Deb Hill</p> |
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| | | management of natural resources at the local level, enabling joined-up collective action and identification of innovative new solutions, for example the City Centre Green Infrastructure Strategy. | | | |
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COMPLETE (in part):

Progress: This will always remain an ongoing process as policies, plans, strategies, etc are continually reviewed and prepared.

Following on from the Scrutiny Inquiry into how the Council is delivering against the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015, a Scrutiny Panel for the Natural Environment and Biodiversity was established in August 2019 to provide ongoing scrutiny of the Council's progress in meeting the requirements of the legislation and its new Corporate Biodiversity Objective.

To promote engagement in, and shared responsibility for, delivering the new Corporate Biodiversity Objective, the Working Group has been set up to help review, monitor and report on progress in delivering the steps /actions listed under the Corporate Objective. The terms of reference of this group include helping to ensure that biodiversity is integrated into daily business operations and to provide a vehicle for awareness raising and capacity building; cascading information and best practice to all service delivery teams as well as exploring and testing new approaches to delivering the sustainable management of natural resources. It is also responsible for reviewing and monitoring the Council's Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Action Plan and developing the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

Since the adoption of the new Corporate Objective for Biodiversity, there has been a requirement for the preparation of quarterly and annual progress reports relating to delivery of the steps or actions set out under this objective, and the associated Performance Indicators as part of the Council's business planning and monitoring processes. The first annual report was submitted to Council in December 2019.

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| 3. | Develop a clear and enthusiastic vision and message for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity to ensure a consistent 'buy-in' from each service (Quick Win) | <p>The Council has a duty under the Environment (Wales) Act to embed the consideration of biodiversity into its early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans and projects as well as day to day activities.</p> <p>Each Council function/Service Area should now be considering where and how they can maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote resilience through their service/business plans.</p> <p>The Corporate Biodiversity working group will provide a vehicle for raising awareness and encouraging best practice</p> | The Section 6 Plan will become an integral part of any business planning, asset management and/or corporate planning processes, as this will demonstrate how the consideration of biodiversity is being embedded. | March/April annually - Annual Service Plans | Heads of Service |
| <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Progress: Each Service area now required to demonstrate how they are contributing to meeting the Council's Corporate Biodiversity objective within their annual Service Plans from 20/21 onwards.</p> | | | | | |
| 4. | Embed the new corporate priority by developing and delivering relevant training. The Nature Conservation Team could roll out training at the appropriate level and could undertake a service appropriate assessment with ideas and input coming from that service to encourage involvement. (Medium Term) | Biodiversity training for Members/ a limited number of Service Areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and address biodiversity training needs for all Service Areas Identification of opportunities and actions within each relevant Service Area to maintain and enhance biodiversity Identify Service Areas where advisory support could be provided by the Nature Conservation Team | Ongoing Comms Strategy – Summer 2019 | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of on and offline training packages • Development and implementation of a Comms Strategy for biodiversity | | |
| <p>INCOMPLETE (Ongoing):</p> <p>Progress: A number of training events (generic and service specific) have been held for Council officers and Members to raise awareness of the Environment (Wales) Act and the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty. This has been an ongoing process and is linked with wider stakeholder engagement and awareness raising. In-house biodiversity training sessions provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bat awareness and Aderyn (access to local biodiversity records) training sessions for Development Management officers • GI training and engagement sessions for officers and Members • Japanese knotweed training for Members. • Green Infrastructure in the Highway officer seminar • Swansea Central Area GI seminars for Members and officers <p>A task for the Biodiversity Working Group is to identify and seek to address biodiversity training/advisory support needs, opportunities and actions for all service areas.</p> <p>A Comms Strategy for Biodiversity needs to be finalised, including development of on/off line training packages (medium term actions).</p> | | | | | |
| 5. | <p>Make information available to the public to encourage participation and understanding, including continuing to develop the Natural Environment web pages e.g. explain why some verges are wild or why projects which have a green aspect are taking place. Public promotion is vital. (Quick Win)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events taking place around | <p>Provide opportunities for schoolchildren to access and learn about their natural environment (Our Nature Our Future project).</p> <p>Engage with local communities to encourage volunteering and to support them taking</p> | <p>Dec 2019 (Our Nature Our Future)</p> <p>Comms Strategy – Summer 2019</p> <p>Webpages update (Dec</p> | <p>Deb Hill/ Penny Gruffydd</p> |

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| | | <p>Swansea https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In August 2018, the Nature Conservation Team was awarded two grants from Natural Resources Wales to fund two temporary (18 month) part-time posts: Our Nature Our Schools project officer and a Wildlife Volunteering co-ordinator In April 2019 the Council's Nature Conservation Team were successful in securing grants from Welsh Government in partnership with other agencies. These grants will fund 3 part time posts for 3 years: a Nature Partnership Officer, a Place based Project, and a volunteer Co-ordinator. Job descriptions need to be prepared and evaluated for these posts and approval to advertise and appoint obtained | <p>action to enhance and maintain their local greenspaces and wildlife sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and implementation of a Comms Strategy for biodiversity Refresh of Nature Conservation/Biodiversity webpages Develop and publish Programme of Environmental Events | <p>2019)</p> <p>Programme of Events (March annually)</p> <p>March 2022 (3 grant funded projects)</p> | <p>Project Officers (to be appointed)</p> |
| <p>COMPLETE (Ongoing)</p> <p>Progress: This will always remain an ongoing process, as there will be a continual need for improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment.</p> <p>A programme of environmental events is published annually. This provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events in Swansea: https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents . These are also regularly posted on the 'Love Your Countryside' web site. The Nature Conservation Team have also during the past year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part funded a new Clyne Valley Country Park leaflet Produced information leaflets for Carmarthen Bay European Marine Site, and Swansea's Ancient Woodlands. Designed and installed interpretation panels at Bracelet Bay and Swansea Bay providing information to the public on the rich | | | | | |

biodiversity that can be found around the shore.

Guided tours of the County's specialist parks and volunteer days were particularly popular events, together with a series of Summer 'Seashore Safaris' delivered across the shores of Gower, raising awareness of seashore and marine wildlife, conservation and threats.

There has been a well-attended programme of biodiversity identification and ecology training workshops for volunteers and the public. These have included talks on reptiles and amphibians, mammals, water vole and mink, invertebrates, trapping, safe use of tools, conservation grazing, invasive non- native species, Ash die-back, marine and coastal biodiversity, submitting wildlife records, pond dipping, willow basket weaving and ancient woodland survey methodology. Whilst a number of INSET day training courses on outdoor learning have been delivered at local primary schools as part of the Our Nature Our Future project.

Significant public engagement has been carried out as part the preparation of the Council's Central Area GI strategy including workshops, seminars, lectures, face to face meetings, meetings with local interest/residents groups, school children, businesses, RSL's and developers.

Further work needs to be undertaken to update the Council's natural environment web pages

Job descriptions for three additional project officers were agreed but the posts were not advertised as anticipated due to postponement of the Welsh Government grant offer late 2019. However a revised bid has been successful and 3 year appointments will be made as soon as possible following the award of grant in 20/21 (confirmation of the award still awaited July 2020).

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| 6. | Complete and publicise the ward mapping exercise. This would provide each ward and the Councillor Representatives with information specific to that ward. It would include information about important species, protected sites and other relevant ecological information as well as potential opportunities for improving biodiversity within the ward. A link to the ward mapping should appear on planning applications when | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Wild about your ward' profiles drafted for a few pilot wards highlighting ecological information • Enhancements to greenspace being undertaken as part of an environmental works programme to meet the Council's commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard • GI enhancements undertaken | Complete mapping of existing Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure assets and ecosystem service provision on a ward by ward basis working with Members to identify areas which provide the best opportunities for improvement and, where appropriate, maximise match funding opportunities afforded by Members' community fund. | March 2022 | Project Officer |
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| | <p>completed. This would help when it comes to planning applications and empower ward councillors and residents to be able to respond to issues which threaten these special features of their ward and encourage maintenance of biodiversity. It would also contribute to the enforcement activity of the Council. (Long Term)</p> | <p>as part of a Welsh Government funded multi-GI project with Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend Councils</p> | <p>In April 2019 the Council was awarded a grant to fund a temporary (3 year) part-time (3 days/week) post to deliver the above project. The post needs to be agreed, advertised and an appointment made.</p> | | |
| <p>INCOMPLETE</p> <p>Progress: No progress as Project Officer yet to be appointed (see 5 above).</p> | | | | | |
| 7. | <p>Maintain support for volunteers, Community Councils and groups managing both Council owned and non-Council owned land. There are important areas of natural environment in Swansea that may be managed by trusts or owned privately. The links to these areas need to be maintained to ensure best practice is shared and any relevant information/policy can be applied across Swansea, improving nature-based connectivity overall. (Long Term)</p> | <p>The Scrutiny Inquiry identified that there are currently 3 Council officers supporting 40 sites and 27 'Friends of' groups.</p> | <p>See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post has been obtained for the next three years. They will assist volunteers, groups and Community Councils to make the work carried out by them more effective and appropriate. They will also recruit, train and engage with new volunteers, for example, through social prescribing, corporate social responsibility, etc.</p> | March 2022 | Project Officer |
| <p>COMPLETE (in part)</p> <p>Progress: Project officer yet to be appointed (see 5 above). This will always remain an ongoing process as there will be a continual need to maintain support for volunteers, manage land, share best practice, etc.</p> <p>However, as the Inquiry identified the Nature Conservation Team has already built up and supports a strong base of Swansea Wildlife Volunteers with the benefit of grant funding from Welsh Government and NRW to help with practical wildlife site</p> | | | | | |

management and enhancement works. The temporary volunteer co-ordinator post will help to develop and co-ordinate a programme of practical conservation tasks and training workshops for volunteers which, as well as delivering biodiversity benefits, will enable participants to gain skills and confidence.

Over the past year the Team have worked with volunteers and 'Friends of' groups at a number of wildlife sites, including Bishops Wood and Mumbles Hill Local Nature Reserves, four commons, numerous SINC's and nine Rights of Way/cycle routes mainly on Swansea Council land. Work on non-Council land included Horton Community Council Village Green and Betty Church Woods owned by the Wildlife Trusts. Tasks have included litter picking, seed planting, tree planting, fencing removal, step repair, building raised beds, INNS control, dark sky monitoring, species recording and bridge building.

At the Gower Show and the Christmas Green Fayre event at Swansea Museum 86 new volunteers signed up and at the Swansea University annual jobs fair 137 students signed up as volunteers. Two litter pick events for Swansea Council Helping Hands scheme have been held and regular email updates/event details/training information are sent to all volunteer contacts. Through staff taking on additional duties in the absence of a specific project officer there have been 150 practical events held this past year with 685 volunteers helping.

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| 8. | Insert a relevant biodiversity clause into service level agreements, licences etc which relates to land use and land management and land use and ensure that the importance of these clauses is made clear to the land managers/occupiers and the implications of not meeting them are highlighted.(Quick Win) | As a consequence of discussion of this matter during the Scrutiny inquiry a clause has been inserted into the service level agreement for community groups managing green spaces | To work with Estates and other relevant Service Areas to ensure that more detailed and relevant biodiversity clauses are inserted into all service level agreements, licences, etc, which relate to land use and land management. For example, those relating to grazing sites and also in those entered into with external event organisers which require Council consent before certain activities (e.g. clearing land, special events, etc) are undertaken to prevent loss of biodiversity. | Ongoing | Deb Hill/Judith Oakley |
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Progress: This will take some time to roll out to all service level agreement, licences, etc as clauses cannot be inserted into existing arrangements. The principle has been agreed however and they are being included as and when agreements, licences, etc are renewed and for forthcoming events. Specifically:

- Farm and business tenancy agreements are in the process of being updated to ensure the biodiversity value of land is recognised and safeguarded. For example, grazing of marshy grassland at Garth Farm in Glais and grazing of coastal grassland and heath at Pwlldu Cliffs LNR.
- Friends of Parks Agreements /Memoranda of Understanding have been amended to ensure that biodiversity is taken into consideration by the Friends Groups when undertaking management activities or events within their adopted Park or Greenspace.
- Grazing Farm Business Tenancy agreements now include a clause to contact the Nature Conservation Team before any ground work is carried out.
- Estates lease agreements include responsibility to maintain land including Japanese Knotweed.

Additionally discussions are ongoing with Special Events to ensure biodiversity impact assessments form part of future event planning.

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| 9. | Assess the verges in Swansea that can stop being mowed and sprayed. Give these over to nature and allow for self-seeding, which will encourage native plants and pollinator species. This can also save money as less frequent mowing is required. There could be signs erected to highlight the project to help change the culture. (Medium Term) | An annual programme of wildflower planting and management within verges. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with Parks, Highways and other relevant Service Areas (e.g. Housing , Education) to identify those locations in Council ownership which can be given over to self-seeding, less intensive mowing and/or seeding with perennial species mixes • Develop a Comms plan in relation to proposed biodiversity actions. | March 2020 Comms Strategy – Summer 2019 | Deb Hill/Judith Oakley |
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INCOMPLETE (Ongoing):

Progress: A programme of wildflower planting continues to be rolled out and reviewed. The use of Herbicides on all verges across the City and County stopped in early 2019. Council owned grassland currently not being regularly mown throughout the growing season totals 42.5 hectares, whilst the first yearly rural flail cut along the highway has been put back to later in the Spring to enable vegetation to flower.

Assessment of locations to be given over to self-seeding, information signs, etc not yet completed.

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| 10. | <p>Where appropriate, plant native wildflowers and trees. Non-native species do not benefit pollinators to the same extent as native species. (Long Term)</p> | <p>An annual programme of wildflower planting and management within verges which includes non-native species.</p> <p>Over 5000 native trees planted by Nature Conservation Team.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include more native species within wildflower planting programme • Develop and adopt a Council tree policy which encourages planting of native species trees where appropriate. • Plans for new tree planting to include native species • Identification of suitable sites for further woodland planting with support from Trees for Cities • Investigate additional sources of funding for woodland planting e.g. Glastir and Carbon Credits | Ongoing | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |
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COMPLETE

Progress: This will remain an ongoing task. The Council has supported and delivered a number of tree planting projects through partnership working with the Swansea Tree Forum, Coed Cymru, Coeden Fach, the Woodland Trust, Trees for Cities and local community groups. Wherever possible, a robust mix of native trees of local provenance have been used.

A new woodland has been created at Mynydd Newydd Playing Fields in Penlan through the planting of 4000 native trees in

collaboration with Trees for Cities. This planting will improve biodiversity and woodland connectivity, help to reduce flooding, provide shelter from the wind and improve air quality. The Friends of the Ganges Field in Townhill have been supported to plant nearly 1000 native trees to create woodland habitat and improve woodland connectivity. The Friends of Morrision Park have been helped to undertake a community tree planting project; over 700 trees have been planted on Kilvey Hill with Swansea University volunteers and Friends of Kilvey Hill; and over 200 native trees have been planted in Brynmelyn Park. The Council has provided space in Clyne Gardens (subject to planning permission) to accommodate a new native tree nursery run by Coeden Fach - a local tree nursery charity to develop a source of local provenance trees.

A green artery is being created through Swansea City Centre with several green, tree-lined spaces integrated within development plans for the city. The redevelopment of the Kingsway has seen the planting of the first of 170 new trees. They include alder, birch, cherry, lime, maples and flowering pears. Other city centre tree planting projects, such as the Boulevard and Westway, have seen the Council introduce significantly more street trees and other green areas than were previously present. This has created an attractive street scene and will encourage greater biodiversity.

A programme of green space improvements have been carried out within Council housing estates to help meet the Welsh Government's Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) that requires all social landlords to improve the external environment of their housing stock to an acceptable level. Wherever possible native species and biodiversity enhancements have been incorporated. In Penlan over 250 semi-mature trees standing 10 to 12 ft tall have been planted alongside residential streets together with wildflower planting on roadside verges.

The Gower Hedgerow Hub works with landowners and partner organisations to celebrate, raise awareness and carry out management of hedgerows across Gower and Swansea. The project provides training, volunteer opportunities, advice and funding support to landowners, as well as public walks and crafts sessions. To date, 18 training sessions, 33 volunteer days and 8 public events have been delivered, and over 3000m of hedgerow has been improved by volunteers, contractors, and landowners. There has been a growth in appreciation of, and interest in, this key habitat as a result of the project.

The Council's tree service have undertaken the following tree planting during 19/20

| Project | No. of trees planted | Size | Location |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| WHQS | 258 | 14/16 to 16/18 | various sites around Penlan |
| Memorial trees | 12 | 14/16 | Various parks |
| Tree Forum trees | 14 | 14/16 | Guildhall and New Cut Road |
| Councillor street trees | 7 | 14/16 | Mynydd Garnllwyd Road, Morrision |
| Tree Forum trees | 60 | 8/10 to 10/12 | Various highways verges |

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| Parks Trees | 10 | 14/16 | Various Parks and Highway Verges |
| Whip/small donations | 40 | Whips | Singleton wind breaks |
| Housing Projects | 10 | 10/12 to14/16 | Tirdeunaw Close |
| Swansea Uni trees | 7 | 14/16 | Foreshore/University carbon offset scheme |
| Highways trees | 6 | 14/16 | Various highways verges |
| Total | 424 | | |

A county-wide survey of suitable locations for tree planting remains an ongoing task.

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| 11. | Encourage green projects for well-being such as gardening projects, outdoor green-space activities and volunteering opportunities for adults and children across all relevant services. This includes linking with Community Councils. Communities can make use of the 'Community Green Space Toolkit' which can be found online at http://swanseacommunitygreenspaces.weebly.com (Long Term) | Swansea Environmental Forum and Swansea Council for Voluntary Services' Swansea Community Green Spaces project helps people make greater use of green spaces within their communities and become more involved in how they are managed. Nature Conservation Team Wildlife Volunteer Co-ordinator project. | See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post and a Place based project officer and a Nature Recovery Project Officer has been obtained for the next three years. They will liaise with all relevant Service Areas, Ward members and external organisations such as community councils to encourage and provide volunteering opportunities for adults and children. | March 2022 | Project Officer |
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COMPLETE (in part)

Progress: This will remain an ongoing task and a dedicated Project Officer is yet to be appointed (see 5 above). Various biodiversity identification and ecology training workshops for volunteers and the public have been held (see 5 above), including, specifically for volunteers, safe use, maintenance and repair of tools and identification of Ash die-back and other tree diseases.

Volunteer tools, equipment, personal protective equipment, etc have been purchases along with commonly used materials such as Chestnut pale fencing, fence posts and rails, wire stock fencing, aggregate, etc in support of volunteer projects (see 7 above).

The following 'Friends of' groups have been involved with green projects: Mayhill Washing Lake and Community Food Garden; Swansea Vale Nature Reserve; Kilvey Community Woodland Volunteers; Rosehill Quarry; Bishops Wood LNR; Swansea Ramblers;

Clydach Community Garden. Activities have also been undertaken with the following groups: Business in the Community BITC; Fforestfach and Glandwr Day Services (Council); Gower College Swansea Land Based courses; Helping Hands (Council); HSBC; Santander; St Gwynour's (Llanyrnewydd & Penclawdd) Church; Mumbles Community Council; Wildlife Trust; National Trust; NRW (corporate events); Swansea Young People Service (Council); Tools for Self Reliance; Fire Service Arson Reduction; Grand Theatre; RSPCA; BASC; Sketty Beavers; Barry Camera Club; Knelston, St Helens and Pentrehafod Schools; Keep Wales Tidy; Swansea University; University Wales Trinity Saint David; Environment Centre; Swansea Museum; Shanghai Landscaping and City Appearance Administrative Bureau; Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust; and Dark Skies.

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| 12. | Employ a Section 6 Officer to co-ordinate, support and promote the consideration and delivery of a range of environmental projects across Swansea and also ensure the Council are meeting the requirements of the Environment Act (Section 6). This includes the development of a Corporate Natural Environment Working Group. This should stop us breaching the legislation and potentially facing fines/restricted grant access/reputational damage. (Quick Win) | Not Agreed | | | |
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COMPLETE / INCOMPLETE – NOT APPLICABLE

However, a Job Description has been prepared in anticipation of funding becoming available at some future date.

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| 13. | Employ an additional Planning Ecologist/Ecological Enforcement Officer to work with Council services with a specific duty to help ensure the environmental conditions and section 106 obligations on planning consents are met, whilst also contributing to maintaining biodiversity, and meeting the requirements of the new Sustainable Drainage System legislation. (Quick | Not Agreed | | | |
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| | Win) | | | | |
| COMPLETE / INCOMPLETE – NOT APPLICABLE | | | | | |
| <p>However sufficient funding has been identified through match funding officer time to grants to free up sufficient salary budget to create a part time (0.5) Planning Ecologist post for a temporary 2 year period. An appointment was made Dec 2019 and ways of making the post permanent are currently under investigation. The duties of this post include providing in–house ecological advice to other services/departments which could potentially enable the post to become self-funding and a permanent position in future.</p> | | | | | |
| 14. | <p>Share natural environment and biodiversity costs across services. Much of the work completed in relation to biodiversity is funded by a single team’s budget. Considering both the Council as a whole, and certain specific services, benefit from a thriving environment, it seems appropriate that other services should be contributing financially to this work. (Long Term)</p> | <p>Some major developments have been approved subject to Section 106 agreements providing financial contributions towards practical on/off site mitigation and/or compensation measures against biodiversity loss and also in support of maintenance agreements.</p> <p>See also response to recommendation 15 below</p> | <p>It is proposed that the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group carry out a review of how Service Areas have been impacted by the Environment (Wales) Act, Section 6 Biodiversity duty and Well-Being of Future Generations Act Resilient Wales goal and identify the additional demands arising in terms of provision of ecological/biodiversity advice. This should be taken into consideration as part of any Department/Service budget reappropriation exercise.</p> | March 2020 | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |
| INCOMPLETE | | | | | |
| <p>Progress: This is an ongoing task. Departments/Service areas have been instructed to seek the advice of the Council’s Planning Ecology team in the first instance to undertake studies in –house wherever feasible before considering seeking external ecological advice. The team have been set an income target of £25k for this work from 20/21.</p> <p>Biodiversity work undertaken by other service areas during 19/20 has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japanese Knotweed Control as part of WHQS environmental improvement programme (Housing) • Tree removal at Swansea Vale to maintain flood capacity of wetland area (Highways) • Swansea Vale maintenance, ecological survey work, boardwalk replacement and Knotweed control (Joint Venture fund – | | | | | |

Swansea Council/Welsh Government)

- Felindre ecological survey work (Joint Venture fund – Swansea Council/Welsh Government)
- White Rock ecological surveys, site clearance and knotweed control (Estates)
- Reuse of felled trees/wood chips for access projects (Parks)

A review of how Service areas have been impacted by the Env (Wales) Act, Section 6 duties, etc is still to be carried out.

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| 15. | <p>Renew the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) service level agreement for 2019/20 (with a plan in place to achieve this in subsequent years) the approximate cost is between £8,000 and £10,000 per annum. The relevant departments (Development Management, Highways, Corporate Buildings and Corporate Property) should be contributing to the costs of accessing this information, using this resource regularly and, where necessary, asking the Council's ecologists to interpret the data. (Quick Win)</p> | <p>The cost of the SEWBRc Service Level Agreement (SLA) is currently taken from the Nature Conservation Team's budget, however there is no budget allocated for this purpose. The SLA has been previously funded through grant aid, but this is no longer available.</p> <p>Some Service Areas are carrying out projects, asset disposal, etc without reference to SEWBRc/relevant ecological records which has the potential to result in outcomes that are in breach of the Council's Section 6 duty.</p> | <p>It is proposed that the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group carry out a review of which Service Areas benefit from the SEWBRc data and also those which should be utilising it prior to commencement of any regeneration projects/asset disposal and apportion costs accordingly.</p> | March 2020 | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |
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COMPLETE

Progress: The Service Level Agreement with SEWBRc has been renewed to enable access to Aderyn and to provide biodiversity information in relation to planning applications received.

In addition SEWBREC have undertaken a review of SINC sites to record those that have already been lost to development. They have also provided a list of priority habitats and species known to be present in Swansea and Gower.

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| 16. | Continue to nurture good working relationships with external agencies and encourage other services to do the same. This should not be limited to national organisations but should also include local ones such as Swansea Environmental Forum, the Swansea Biodiversity Partnership and the Swansea Environment Centre. (Long Term) | The Council's Nature Conservation Team already has excellent working relationships with all relevant external agencies both national and local, and play a key role in supporting a number of partnerships e.g. Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and Swansea Environmental Forum | Existing external working relationships/ networking to be further developed to include other Service Areas through training, shared knowledge /good practice at Corporate Biodiversity Working Group meetings, etc. New Temporary part time LNP officer to be appointed with Welsh Government funding. | Ongoing | Paul Meller/ Deb Hill |
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COMPLETE

Progress: This remains an ongoing task however as new national and local agencies will continually emerge. New/renewed contacts during 19/20 (in addition to existing established relationships with organisations such as Swansea Environmental Forum, Swansea Biodiversity Partnership, Swansea Environment Centre, NRW, Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Keep Wales Tidy, Friends of Groups, etc) include:

- ABP
- Actif Woods
- Clyne Valley Community Project
- Coedenfach Community Tree Nursery
- Cwm Amman Town Council
- Fire Service Arson Reduction Team (Mid & West Wales)
- Focus on Forestry First
- Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Society
- Glamorgan Fungi Grp
- Gower Commoners
- HSBC Bank
- Local Farmers (various)
- Mumbles/Oystermouth Historical Society
- Santander Bank
- Swansea Airport
- Swansea Community Councils (various)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swansea Community Farm • Swansea Primary and Secondary Schools (various) • Swansea Tree Forum • Swansea University Conservation and Ecological Society • Swansea University Discovery Group • The Green Infrastructure Company • The Orchard Group • Trees for Cities • University of Wales Trinity St David • Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) and WBP invasive species group • Welsh Government Marine Plan Decision Makers Group • Whitethorns Independent Day Service | | | | | |
| 17. | <p>Invite environmental voluntary group and Community Council representatives to regular liaison meetings e.g. Friends of parks and wildlife sites. This would allow them some support and access to some specialist advice from relevant officers (e.g. Parks Team, Nature Conservation Team, Education Link Officer), whilst allowing them a forum to discuss concerns and success. The loss of these groups would have a severely detrimental impact on the management of Council land and finances, so there needs to be ongoing and meaningful engagement and support from the Council. (Medium Term)</p> | <p>The Scrutiny Inquiry identified that there are currently 3 Council officers supporting 40 sites and 27 'Friends of' groups.</p> | <p>See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for a temporary volunteer coordinator post has been obtained for the next three years. They will regularly meet with external organisations such as environmental voluntary groups and Community Councils and enable them to access support and specialist advice from various Council services.</p> | <p>March 2022</p> | <p>Project Officer</p> |
| <p>INCOMPLETE</p> <p>Progress: Project officer yet to be appointed (see 5 above). This will remain an ongoing task, however there has been considerable contact with these groups and representatives during the course of the year at various events, training sessions, volunteer days, etc</p> | | | | | |

(see 5, 7,10,11 & 16 above).

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| 18. | Create environmental link Governors on school governing bodies who can take relevant information and projects to their school. They can also report back on a school's activities and this can be used to contribute to the 3 yearly section 6 report to Welsh Government on the Council's performance. (Medium Term) | None | It is proposed that the Nature Conservation Team liaise with the School and Governor Unit to ensure that all governing bodies appoint an environmental link governor. It is expected that these will primarily be local ward Members given the synergy with recommendation 6. The ward mapping exercise will include school grounds within the assessment of opportunities for improvement and it also supports the policy commitment to make schools more accessible and available for community activities. | Dec 2019 (Governor appointment) March 2022 (Mapping exercise) | Paul Meller/Penny Gruffydd/ Deb Hill Project Officer |
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INCOMPLETE

Progress: Link governor positions yet to be agreed. Needs to be timed to coincide with ward mapping exercise (see 6 above) for which a Project Officer has yet to be appointed. However strong links have been established with a number of local Primary Schools through the 'Our Nature Our Future' project (see 19 below).

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| 19. | Encourage better use of school grounds and local wildlife sites for biodiversity. For example, gardens, growing schemes, tree planting, wildlife ponds and habitat creation. This can be done by linking in with relevant organisations such as RSPB and sharing good practice with | Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events | As recommendations 5,6 and 18 above | Dec 2019 (Our Nature Our Schools and Governor appointment) March 2022 (Mapping) | Paul Meller/Penny Gruffydd/ Deb Hill Project Officer |
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| | <p>schools who are already doing such activities. 'Making the Most of School Grounds' guidance booklet. (Long Term)</p> | <p>taking place around Swansea https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents</p> <p>Our Nature Our Schools project which runs until December 2019 connecting schools to local Wildlife Sites and supporting school grounds environmental improvements.</p> | | exercise) | |
| <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Progress: The Council supports Foundation Phase pupils to study and learn outdoors, ensuring a respect for nature, biodiversity and ecosystems. In support of this the Council's Nature Conservation Team have provided opportunities for children and young people to engage with nature via a range of initiatives such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor activities delivered at the Council's Activity Centres in Port Eynon, Rhossili and Bishop's Wood, Caswell • Regular field study visits and numerous public events at Bishops Wood Local Nature Reserve • Delivery of the NRW funded 'Our Nature, Our Future' project, which has enabled children in twenty local primary schools to benefit from advice on how to improve their school grounds for biodiversity. The pupils have also attended field study sessions with outdoor learning experts using wildlife sites that are within walking distance of their school. The project has resulted not only in connecting the schools with the nature on their door step, but has created a significant resource for the schools to use to enrich enjoyment of and embed opportunities for outdoor learning as part of the curriculum. These schools have also benefited from training for their teaching staff so that biodiversity can be embedded within the curriculum • INSET training days have been delivered to build capacity among teachers for working outdoors with pupils. Topics have included: an introduction to outdoor learning; group management and safety; sensory exploration of the outdoors; techniques for investigating biodiversity; environmental art; and using games to explain ecological concepts • Support for the RSPB 'Giving Nature a Home' project, which has provided a biodiversity outdoor learning experience for over 87% of schools across Swansea • Development of the natural environment within six Swansea school grounds has seen vegetable gardens grown, bug hotels opened, raised flower beds sown and literacy trails established. Further school grounds work is planned to be undertaken including the creation of small wooded areas and nature areas to promote outdoor learning <p>This will remain an ongoing task.</p> | | | | | |

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| 20. | <p>Employ a dedicated outdoor learning officer who can provide the tailored support, training and delivery that will enable Swansea schools to fully realise the potential of outdoor learning, to deliver educational and wellbeing benefits, from the varied natural resources which Swansea possesses. (Medium Term)</p> | <p>Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events. An annual Environmental Events programme is published which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events taking place around Swansea https://www.swansea.gov.uk/environmentalevents</p> <p>The Nature Conservation Team also employs a part-time project officer at the Bishops Wood Local Nature Reserve who delivers at this location low-cost training for schools within Swansea and wider afield.</p> <p>Our Nature Our Schools project which runs until December 2019 connecting schools to local Wildlife Sites and supporting school grounds environmental improvements.</p> | <p>See recommendation 5 above. Grant funding for an Our Nature Our Future school project officer has been obtained for the next three years. They will liaise with Swansea schools within more deprived wards to realise the potential of outdoor learning.</p> | Dec 2019 | Deb Hill/Penny Gruffydd |
| <p>INCOMPLETE</p> <p>Progress: Recommendation is incomplete in so far as a dedicated outdoor learning officer has yet to be appointed. However the intended role of the officer is encompassed within the 'Our Nature Our Future' project which has met its objectives over the past year and will continue to be rolled out (see 19 above).</p> | | | | | |

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Convener

Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel – 1 September 2020

Local Flood Risk Management – Annual Update

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|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Purpose | To consider progress with Local Flood Risk Management plans and actions. |
| Content | This report outlines the objective of the discussion. The Panel will hear from relevant Cabinet Member and officers about activities and achievements, and the experience over the past year or so (since the last annual update), issues / challenges, and current assessment. |
| Councillors are being asked to | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask questions and discuss issues around Local Flood Risk Management• Make comments and recommendations as necessary |
| Lead Councillor(s) | Councillor Peter Jones (convener) |
| Lead Officer & Report Author | Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Team Leader Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Work Programme includes an annual discussion on Local Flood Risk Management plans and actions. In previous years, a standalone Working Group has met to discuss this issue of concern. Since the establishment of a dedicated Performance Panel for the Natural Environment this work can now be carried out by this Panel.
- 1.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management, Councillor Mark Thomas, and lead officers (Bob Fenwick, Group Leader Highways Maintenance, and Mike Sweeney, Team Leader Highways) will attend the meeting to provide information and answer questions.
- 1.3 The Panel will be able to ask about activities and achievements, and the experience over the past year or so (since the last annual update to scrutiny), issues / challenges, and current assessment.

- 1.4 The last annual update was provided to scrutiny in April 2019. A Scrutiny Working Group met to consider progress. The report provided to the Working Group meeting is **appended** for background information, as is the correspondence between the Working Group and Cabinet Member following the meeting. As a result of that meeting and correspondence the Cabinet Member confirmed the action that will be taken, including the following:
- Providing opportunity for members to visit the natural flood risk management site in Neath Port Talbot.
 - Updating scrutiny on the Green Infrastructure project.
 - Improving information available by providing general advice on the Council's website to minimize effects of flooding and to promote good practice and prevention.
 - Co-ordinating with national media e.g. Wales Online, so that live updates on flooding can be made available, in addition to Council's own social media, particularly when incidents are out of usual working hours.
 - Amending flooding advice pages to reflect that Swansea Council Advice is given priority.
 - Commitment to providing scrutiny with a comprehensive annual update on progress with both the Sustainable Drainage and Flood Risk Management Plan.
- 1.5 The Panel can follow up on any issues arising from the previous update.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management – 4 April 2019 (Update On Flood Risk Management In The City And County Of Swansea)

Appendix 2 – Letter to Cabinet Member dated 24 April 2019

Appendix 3 – Cabinet Member Response Letter dated 16 May 2019



Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management

Local Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Working Group 4th April 2019

UPDATE ON FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Purpose | To provide an update on the policy/ service area |
| Content | To provide an update on progress since the working group meeting on the 8 th October 2018 |
| Councillors are being asked to | To consider doing further work on this issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give their views... • Consider doing further work on this issue Make recommendations to Cabinet Member / Council |
| Lead Councillor(s) | Councillor Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management |
| Lead Officer(s) | Stuart Davies, Head of Service Highways and Transportation |
| Report Author | Mike Sweeney, Principal Engineer |

1.0 General Description

The Drainage team is part of the Highways and Transportation service. It covers a wide range of services within Flood Risk Management with the main role for overseeing compliance to the Statutory Duties and National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy.

2.0 Why We Do This

2.1 There are a number of statutory requirements and policies relating directly to this service area. The main ones are:

Flood and Water Management Act 2010 - to assert and protect

the rights of the public for the use and enjoyment of any highway

Flood Risk Regulations 2009 - Selecting and reviewing Flood Risk Areas

Land Drainage Act 1991 – Ordinary water course consents and permissive powers to ensure flows in watercourses are maintained

Coastal Protection Act 1949 – To manage coastal flood and erosion risks

Highways Act 1980 - To assert and protect the rights of the public for the use and enjoyment of any highway

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Strategy to reduce risk of flooding with Swansea

Shoreline Management Plan 2 – Policies to manage the threat of Coastal change

2.2 Three of the five corporate priorities are particularly relevant:-.

Safeguarding people from harm

Transforming and Future Council development - Building sustainable communities

Transforming our economy and infrastructure – sustainable maintenance of council owned Drainage and Coastal assets.

2.3 The consequences of the council not fulfilling its statutory duties may lead to :

- Damage to property or injury to people
- Claims for personal and property injury/loss
- Negative impact on the quality of life for residents
- Detrimental effect on the reputation and prosperity of Swansea

The functions and activities of the service have an impact on quality of life issues, perceptions of the city centre and the areas people live in. These have both social and economic consequences.

3.0 Management and Support

3.1 Flood risk management is delivered by 3 members of office staff in the Authority's Drainage team. The team works closely with the

Authority's Highway operational team who are responsible for operation duties.

4.0 Stakeholders

4.1 The main key stakeholders for flood risk management include Welsh Government, WLGA, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Water who have a shared interest in complying with the FAWMA 2010 and the National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales and the flood affected communities in Swansea.

5.0 Finance

5.1 The Budget for Drainage staff is £181k to cover the costs for 3 FTEs

5.2 Drainage Capital Budget 400K circa.

5.3 The Authority will be awarded 20k to support the setting up of the SAB role

6.0 Current Performance and Trends

6.1 Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act which underpins the introduction of the Sustainable Drainage Body will come into force on January 7th 2019. This will be a new statutory duty placed on the Authority with resources identified to undertake the function.

6.2 The SAB, as an independent body within the Local Authority will deal with a technical statutory approval process and will be able to charge for services within this process. Charges have been set on a National level. Examples of chargeable aspects are:-

- SAB pre-applications – It is a key function of the SAB to engage with developers for technical pre-application discussions. This will steer developments to comply with the National Standards. When schedule 3 of the FMWA is implemented the SAB will be able to charge for pre-application comments. The charges proposed for pre-application comments will start from £250 (minimum) depending on the size of the development plus there would be similar charges for commercial properties which would be based on squared metres.
- Outline/Full applications – Under the current proposal by Welsh Government one property or above (or development above 100sq.m or with drainage implications) would require SAB approval. This process is chargeable at rates set by Welsh Government. Application costs start from £350 (minimum) with an

additional amount up to £7,500 (maximum) calculated by reference to the size of the construction area.

- Inspection of assets – SuDs schemes will need to be inspected by the SAB during construction, to ensure they are built to an appropriate standard. The SAB may charge an inspection fee based on cost recovery of £168.

- Adoption arrangement – SuDs which meet the specified adoption criteria can be offered for adoption to the SAB. Adoption by the SAB will be via a bespoke legal agreement and commuted sums or maintenance charges which reflect the maintenance /replacement plan required for the lifetime of the development

6.3 Exemptions from the need for SAB approval include:

- Single dwellings and developments of less than 100 square metres will be exempt from the need for SAB approval and
- work requiring development consent as a nationally significant infrastructure project

6.4 Initial staffing structure has been approved to accommodate for 1 Senior SAB Engineer, 1 Assistant Engineer, 1 Site Inspector and 1 Planning Admin support officer. Whilst there is one senior Engineer currently in place, further staffing appointments will be made in the new financial year.

6.5 To support this structure on a cost neutral basis it would require approximately 100 applications per year with assumptions as below. Figures assumed with 60% small, 30% medium and 10% large with 60% of applications requiring a pre-app. 1 inspection per small site is assumed with 2 per medium and 3 per large.

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| SAB pre – applications 60@£250 | £18000 |
| SAB full applications small site 60@£350 | £25200 |
| SAB full applications medium site 30@£1000 | £36000 |
| SAB full applications large site 10@£5000 | £60000 |
| Small site inspections 60@£168 | £10080 |
| Medium site inspections 30*2 @£168 | £10080 |
| Large site inspections 10*3 @£168 | £5040 |
| Total | £164,400 |

There will be a risk that the amount of income received may not be able to achieve the total amount to cover the costs for the initial SAB set up in the first year.

- 6.6 Input will be required from the Biodiversity Sections, to ensure that multiple benefits are achieved in enhancing biodiversity and amenity opportunities by creating multi-functional spaces on new developments which will create additional workloads in these sections as well as within Highways Development Control.
- 6.7 Developments which have a planning approval or for which an application has been received by the planning authority before 7th January 2019 will not need to obtain approval from the SuDS Approval Body (SAB),but there is the need to have the reserve matters if part of a condition of that permission to be made before 7th January 2020.
- 6.8 Building control have confirmed that the Authority has no legislation to enforce on the use of non-permeable materials. However, the implementation of Schedule 3 Legislation will ensure that permeable paving is used whenever appropriate, as this will be compliant to the National standards by allowing infiltration to ground as opposed to creating additional surface water run-off.
- 6.9 In terms of a consistent approach to the maintenance of watercourses, I can confirm that it is evident that the situation with regard to maintenance of watercourse varies across the Authority. The following departments have been contacted to collate current practices.

Highways – The Highways department has a policy in place on watercourse inspection procedures. Watercourses are checked at the frequencies below depending in weather conditions and level of flood risk. During dry periods inspections will not be carried out if deemed unnecessary.

| | Sept to March | April to August |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Blackpill & Birchtree Close | Daily | Weekly |
| Red List | Weekly | Monthly |
| High Priority | Fortnightly | Monthly |
| Low Priority | Monthly | Bi-Monthly |

Red List to be checked following notification of a severe weather warning to wet weather . Red list to be rechecked following severe wet weather.

All inspections including out of hours visits are to be recorded on watercourses inspection sheets which must be signed and dated as proof of visit in case of claims arising from flooding incidents.

Parks Dept – Parks have their own maintenance schedules for particular hotspots for maintaining watercourses on a regular basis and although the schedule is proactive in reducing flood risk the system employed is different to the programme of inspection carried out by Highways. Future work entails evaluation of the watercourses owned by Parks in terms of level of evaluating floodrisk and they will consider implementing a programme of inspection which aligns with the Highway’s watercourse inspection regime.

Housing Dept – Housing tend to act on a reactive basis to flooding problems with no set maintenance programme in place, apart from the high risk watercourse in Garnswllt which is on an annual inspection schedule where there is the requirement to assess the condition of the bank stabilisation feature which protects the properties located on Lon y Felin. However, the number of watercourses in their ownership is low but there is a need to evaluate these in terms of flood risk. This work will be undertaken in a collaborative approach between Housing and the Drainage team to quantify the number of watercourses which need maintenance in order to reduce flood risk which could emanate from their land. Should funds be made available then there is scope to implement a similar maintenance regime to Highways. Works will need to progress in this area to provide a consistency of approach.

Education Dept – There is no Corporate Property maintenance schedule in place at present as the responsibility rests with the individual schools to maintain watercourses and ditches across education land. However, work is to progress in order to identify those schools most at risk of flooding by using flood map data so that the information can be given to the school’s caretaker to maintain as part of his/her duties/workplan

In summary, work is ongoing to assess floodrisk on land maintained by other departments by using flood map data in order to understand the level of flood risk. It is apparent that some depts. are unclear on the level of flood risk which needs to be examined further so that the relevant department can assign maintenance schedules proportionate to the degree of flood risk and available budget.

- 6.10 The Authority’s website has good information on how to prepare for flooding which contains information if a home is threatened by floodwater or in an event of a flood.
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/floodadvice>

This information has been provided by the Authority’s emergency management team which can be amended should it be considered

beneficial by the working group.

- 6.11 In terms of planning and the potential impacts of new developments there is close and good collaborative work being undertaken between internal departments and external risk management Authorities to ensure that flood risk is not exacerbated as the result of new development proposals. Historical or known flooding risk will be reported to the Planning Department by the Authority's Drainage section when considering applications.
- 6.12 The Authority has continued its investigation on five critical sites as prioritised in the plan to undertake hydrology studies to ascertain options to reduce flood risk at these locations. Studies have been completed for 3 sites which include :-
- 330 Birchgrove Road
 - Killay Square
 - Waun Gron/Pentre Road
- Ongoing studies are progressing for :-
- 400 Birchgrove Road
 - Swansea Road Pontlliw.
- 6.13 Close working practices between operational and client staff has resulted in a number of interventions being implemented this year to critical watercourses which have included works to provide new safer access and grid arrangements to facilitate maintenance activities.
- Schemes have been completed for 4 no. sites namely:-
- Furzeland Drive Sketty
 - Clydach Road, Craig Cefn Parc
 - Libanus Road Gorseinon
 - Garrod Avenue Gowerton
- 6.14 Asset Data Collection – The Authority continues to undertake asset surveys involving CCTV work, with the data held on a GIS Mapping database.

7.0 Future Challenges & Opportunities

- 7.1 From January 7th 2019, all new developments of at least 2 properties or over 100m² of construction area will require sustainable drainage to manage on-site surface water. The Surface water drainage systems must be designed and built in

accordance with standards for sustainable drainage published by Welsh Ministers.

These systems must be approved by the local authority acting in its SuDS Approving Body (SAB) role before construction work begins.

8. Risks

- 8.1 Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Swansea Council became a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and was given a series of new responsibilities to co-ordinate the management of local flood risk for surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. Failure to fulfil this statutory duty will result in increased flood risk within the administrative boundary of Swansea Council and non-compliance to the expectations of Welsh Government.
- 8.2 This may lead to increased risk to life and property and critical infrastructure with the Authority being subjected to claims and public criticism

9. Assessment

- 9.1 The Authority has continued to deliver Flood Risk Management duties to ensure that compliance to the expectations of Welsh Government and statutory duties are met. The service will be delivered in accordance to best practice with continued collaboration with other Flood Risk Management Authorities to ensure that opportunities for joint working are explored through regional working groups.

Background Papers:

Schedule 3 - Flood and Water Management Act 2010

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/pdfs/ukpga_20100029_en.pdf

Contact: Mike Sweeney

Date: 04/03/19



To:
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment and
Infrastructure Management

Please ask for: Scrutiny
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Date 24 April 2019
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Local Flood Risk Management Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management following the meeting of the Working Group on 4 April 2019. It is about progress on the recommendations made at the last meeting in October 2018.

Dear Cllr Thomas

The Local Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Working Group met on 4 April to receive an update on progress made on the recommendations from the Working Group's last meeting on 8 October 2018. This letter provides you with feedback from that meeting.

We would like to thank you and Mike Sweeney for attending to present the update and to answer our questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

Whilst the Working Group found the meeting informative and interesting, it did have some concerns and we would like to make the following comments.

- We were informed that all new developments will have to have strategic planting and enhance biodiversity in future, with the introduction of the new statutory duty requiring Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). The nature conservation team are aware that they will need to be involved in SuDS to give advice when applications are received.
- We heard that Green Infrastructure projects are going to be undertaken by the Authority and Natural Resources Wales in partnership and that one project is currently being consulted on which is for the city centre only.

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SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

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- We agreed to provide you with contact details for Sion Brackenbury to arrange to visit a nature based flood risk scheme in NPT. When a visit is arranged working group members are interested in attending.
- You informed us that you recently went to the opening of a flood defence scheme in Mawr and was very impressed.
- We received confirmation that the Authority cannot legislate on use of non-permeable materials in domestic gardens but the Authority could give advice. The introduction of SuDS will require that any contractors or developers will have to manage run off in the future. Permeable materials would achieve this, so it is likely they will be used by default anyway.
- We were pleased to hear that approval has been given to the initial staffing structure to undertake the delivery of SuDS. This is for 4 members of staff. One senior engineer is in place, an assistant engineer and administrative support officer will be appointed shortly and a site inspector will be employed at a later date, when sites begin to be developed.
- We were informed that the Council's Flood Advice pages on the website do not currently contain a section on 'Help us prevent flooding'. We feel the Authority needs to be proactive to help prevent flooding in domestic properties. It would be useful to have a link from the Flood Advice pages on the website to a 'Prevention' section, with wording like, 'What can I do to minimise the effect of flooding in my own property/local area?' And giving examples, such as, planting of trees, use of permeable materials for drives/patios, retaining grassed areas in the garden. We would like to see this written in straightforward language that everyone can understand. We also feel that on the Flood Advice pages, Swansea Council's advice and guidance should appear first, followed by the contact information for NRW.
- We heard that the Authority does not currently show 'live' local flooding information on its webpages as a 'live banner' or advertise it on Twitter. You agreed to explore if this can be done and if not if we can have a link to third parties live information.
- We were pleased to hear that work is ongoing to establish existing maintenance regimes for water courses and gullies across the Authority and that Highways, Parks and Housing do have maintenance regimes in place. We also heard however, that some departments are unclear about the levels of flood risk to their assets and therefore the maintenance schedules that need to be put in place and that approaches are not consistent across the Authority. We were pleased to hear that the department will continue to look into the development of a consistent approach. However you feel, and we agree, that prevention is far better than cure.

- We informed you that under section 2.2 of the briefing report (page 7), reference to the new corporate wellbeing objective for the maintenance and enhancement of natural resources and biodiversity has been omitted. You informed us that this was an oversight.
- We informed you that under section 6.12 (page 12), it would be have been useful for the report to state what is currently happening - that work is progressing, ward members have been contacted etc. You agreed with this suggestion.

The Working Group discussed progress and agreed the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. We are pleased to hear the Authority is keen to visit other local authorities that have used nature based solutions to flood risk, to explore further the opportunities for Swansea. We will provide the appropriate contact details to enable a visit to be arranged to a scheme in Neath Port Talbot. Working Group members are also interested in attending the visit and would like to be informed of the date once arranged.
2. We are pleased with the update that 4 members of staff are being employed for the delivery of SuDS. We will want to monitor progress on the delivery of SuDS at future meetings.
3. We are interested to hear more about Green Infrastructure projects and would like to have an update, on the project that is currently out to consultation, at our next meeting.
4. The Working Group feels the Authority needs to move away from a legislative basis to a more advisory role for flood risk management, for example, in respect of use of non-permeable materials. We think this is a better way to engage the public and take best practice forward.
5. We would like to see the Authority better promote prevention of flood risk and feel the Authority should look into having a link to a 'Prevention' section from the Flood Advice pages on the website.
6. We feel the Authority should explore having 'live' information on local flooding on its website, or having it provided by a third party.
7. The Working Group feels the information on the Flood Advice pages should be changed around so that Swansea Council advice and guidance appears first followed by contact details for NRW.
8. We would like to see the Authority explore ways to advertise the work that it has carried out to reduce flood risks locally, in order to get positive messages out. Ward members can be used more to get messages out to the public by distributing this information in their wards.
9. We would like an update at our next meeting on the Local Flood Risk Management plan and progress made.
10. We will recommend to Scrutiny Programme Committee that the LFRM Working Group meets on a twice-yearly basis in future in order to monitor progress, especially on delivery of SuDS, and more generally on delivery of nature based solutions to flood risk.

Your Response

We hope that you find this letter useful and informative. We are interested in hearing your thoughts about the issues raised and would ask that you respond to our conclusions and recommendations by Wednesday 15 May 2019.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR SAM PRITCHARD
ACTING CONVENER, LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP
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**Councillor Peter Jones Convener – Local
Flood Risk Management
Scrutiny Working Group**

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Thomas
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Our Ref: MT/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 16th May 2019

Dear Councillor Jones

Thank you for your letter from the Scrutiny working Group held on 4th April 2019.

Firstly, I am pleased to hear that the working group is keen to visit the example of a Natural Flood Risk Management site in Neath Port Talbot. To increase our awareness into the opportunities which can arise in using nature based solutions will allow the Authority to consider where appropriate similar flood mitigation measures in Swansea. I will confirm a date for a site visit and will seek interest from the working group on who wishes to attend.

With regard to the setting up of new staff structure to support the Sustainable Drainage Approval Body, you were informed that whilst there is staff in place to deal with current number of SAB enquiries, staff numbers will increase throughout the year as the demand for resources is needed. I hope the working group were satisfied to hear that the new legislation will not only help in reducing flood risk but also will ensure that all new developments over a 100m² will be able to provide benefits for our Environment and provide better Well Being for our residents in Swansea.

I agree that an update about the Green Infrastructure project and I will seek assurances that an update can be made to the group at the next working group meeting.

In terms for the Authority providing a more advisory role and moving away from legislative basis. I do appreciate your comments regarding more of an advisory role and whilst this does go on between officers and members of public during site visits, the advice can somewhat be limited as to ensure that the Authority is not accountable for any liability. Consequently, the current obligation is to fulfil the statutory requirements but I agree that there is scope to improve the information available by providing general advice on our website to minimize the effects of flooding and to promote best practice and prevention.

I refer to the point raised to having 'live' information on local flooding on the website. I wish to confirm that the Authority currently uses social media such as twitter and facebook as a mechanism to inform the residents of Swansea should major issues be encountered. Consequently, I wish to confirm that if appropriate, significant flooding

events, which cause disruption, will be communicated in the same way, but within normal working hours. Outside of normal working hours the use of live information becomes more difficult to convey, and will rely on the out of hours emergency teams to deliver messages to the local areas affected by flooding. Noting reference to third party updates, I understand that National Media e.g. Wales Online, has the capacity to deal with live updates on flooding and I will enquire if appropriate links to these pages can be set up. Web links to severe weather warnings are currently shown on the flooding advice pages on the council's website to allow residents to prepare for flooding. I would also like to confirm that Natural Resources Wales are equipped to provide advanced flood warnings to areas which are considered to be susceptible to high flood risk from main rivers and sea with residents being encouraged sign up to this free 24hr a day service via their website.

I agree that the flooding advice pages should be amended to reflect that Swansea Council Advice is given priority.

I support your recommendation on using ward members to assist in advertising and disseminating information on work related to reducing flood risk in order to get positive messages out in the ward. I would expect that members are contacted as a matter of course on any potential scheme, which will have a positive impact in their ward.

I will ask for an update at the next meeting on the local Flood Risk Management Plan.

To conclude, I would suggest that the next meeting should be arranged on an annual as opposed to a twice- yearly basis due to limited resources. I also consider that the working group would be provided with a more comprehensive update session into both how the Suds and Flood Risk Management Plan are progressing at the end of a 12month period.

Hope that I have responded to the points you have raised and look forward to meeting up again for the annual update.

Yours sincerely



**COUNCILLOR MARK THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT SERVICES**

Agenda Item 9



**To/
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment &
Infrastructure Management**

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Scrutiny

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NE/2019-20/3

27 November 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member following the meeting of the Panel on 22 October 2019. It is regarding public concerns about gull nuisance.

Dear Councillor Thomas,

Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel – 22 October: Gull Nuisance

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting on 22 October 2019 to contribute to the debate about gull nuisance, which was brought to our attention by local residents. We appreciate you setting out the Council's position on this matter and relevant activities. We are writing to you, as relevant Cabinet Member, to reflect on the discussion and present our recommendations to you.

The meeting was convened following a public request for scrutiny, and whilst we heard specific issues raised relating to the area of Mayals we approached the topic as one that has potential impact across Swansea given the nature of the problem outlined to us. As such, the Panel has considered what solutions may be appropriate that will address the problem and have wider benefit for Swansea that protects both the natural environment and health and well-being of citizens.

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I dderbyn yr wybodaeth hon mewn fformat arall neu yn Gymraeg, cysylltwch â'r person uchod
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We thank the contributions of Mr & Mrs Slater (attending on behalf of Mayals Friends and Residents Group) who made the public request for scrutiny, the Head of Housing & Public Health, Mark Wade, the Team Leader for Pollution Control & Private Sector Housing, Tom Price, and Mr John Roach, representing the local RSPB Group. We also heard from Councillor Peter Jones, who vacated the Chair and withdrew from the Panel, as a member of the RSPB.

The meeting therefore enabled the Panel to listen to different perspectives on the issue, ask questions, and consider a way forward. The main points are summarised below:

The reported problem

- Persistent nuisance to residents from gulls, behaviour of people feeding the gulls within communities and urban areas, and impact on residents' well-being, health and safety, including:
 - Residents and pets being attacked by gulls
 - Noise from screeching gulls affecting sleep
 - Residents (including children) being unable to enjoy their gardens / outdoors in relative peace
 - Damage to property from defecation
 - Affordability of 'gull-proofing' homes
 - Increase in rat sighting

Key findings from discussion

- This is not only a Swansea problem, but a difficult problem facing many coastal towns and cities, as well as inland towns, and Councils have limited powers at their disposal to solve the problem, particularly where the issue may affect private property.
- There has been a long standing issue in Mayals (since August 2018) with various contact between residents and the Council which to date has not resolved the problem. The Council has previously given advice to residents to investigate 'gull-proofing' their homes.
- The Council has campaigned in the past, and continues to promote the message of 'feed the bins, not the birds' in the City Centre. However, it is not illegal for people to feed birds.
- The issue of urban gulls has been raised at Welsh Government level by the Dr Dai Lloyd, AM for South Wales West, to ensure there is a consistent approach across Wales by local councils, citing stricter approaches to those found to be feeding gulls in other Welsh Councils. The relevant Assembly Minister undertook to look at the different approaches that local authorities are taking to address this issue.
- The avian expert and urban gull specialist, Peter Rock, advises that the only way to control the number of urban gulls and their invasions of the urban environment is to control their food source.

- A poster citing 'Ten Reasons Not to Feed Seagulls' has been prepared by Mayals Friends and Residents Group and has been promoted by Mumbles Community Council (*see attached*) - this provides information about the harm that can be done to both people and gulls by feeding them inappropriately. This also highlights the link between feeding and rodent activity.
- All species of gull are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, so it is illegal to intentionally injure or kill any gull or damage / destroy an active nest or its contents. However, Natural Resources Wales has the authority to grant licenses for actions for certain species if a public health issue can be shown. That would not include concern about noise nuisance, damage to property, or droppings etc. Lesser black-backed gulls and herring gulls are both red listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, due to declining population. The Government licenses allow the killing of urban gulls only as a last resort, where a significant risk to public health or safety has been identified.
- Statutory nuisance provisions within the Environmental Protection Act 1990 cannot be applied to this issue i.e. in respect of the activities of gulls. However, the behaviour of those feeding gulls, only if found, with clear evidence beyond doubt, to be excessive and deemed unreasonable, could be subject to provisions and powers to serve abatement notices etc.
- The Council has the power to issue Community Protection Notices (a non-statutory power) if there are reasonable grounds to believe the conduct of an individual, business or organisation is:
 - having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality
 - is unreasonable, and
 - is persistent or continuing in nature
- Public Space Protection Orders have been used by some Councils in seaside locations concerning littering and feeding of birds on promenades, but cannot apply to private properties.
- The introduction of caddy bins for food waste collection has contributed to the removal of food source for birds that residents would previously place in black bags at the kerbside.
- Enforcement officers are able to issue fixed penalty notices for littering offences, which can also deter and remove potential food source for gulls. This is currently restricted to the City Centre.
- The actions taken by other Welsh Councils suggest similar approaches to Swansea, which includes provision of advice that may help minimise nuisance, and where appropriate by sending bird feeding advisory leaflets to residents. Denbighshire Council reportedly have focussed on raising awareness, publicity and trying to reduce food waste in the area. Their approach has been to send an information / informal letter residents, providing advice and guidance to encourage them to stop feeding the gulls if they are having a detrimental effect on their neighbours. Excessive feeding could result in the use of a Community Protection Notice.

- The RSPB get many calls on gull nuisance from the public – with cities becoming perfect habitats for gulls with nesting rooftops / ledges and plentiful food, combined with the decline of natural food sources at sea. Urban gulls have learned to associate humans with food, either from people directly feeding them or through the food waste not properly disposed of. Problem behaviour is linked to the modern way we manage our food waste, and its accessibility to gulls, and need to avoid putting food waste in easily opened plastic bags. They have advice for people to both understand and protect themselves from any attack from aggressive gulls. The RSPB would advise local authorities to reduce the organic waste taken to landfill sites, prevent street littering, and making public waste bins, domestic and business waste containers and collection arrangements ‘gull-proof’. However, the behaviour of private individuals is very important. We need to learn how to live with gulls, and behave appropriately.
- Gulls mostly rely on ground source food and scavenge opportunistically. People wishing to feed birds without attracting gulls would be advised to use hanging ‘bird-feeders’. Feeding bread to gulls (or other birds) is unhealthy for them and does not help them.

Recommended action:

- 1) **Waste Storage** - minimising the potential for gulls to get access to food waste left out for collections. In particular consider whether waste storage / disposal at properties such as flats or HMOs may be attracting gulls and need to be improved e.g. there may be insufficient number of plastic food waste caddies available for the waste generated, where either food waste bags may left outside or food waste may continue to be disposed of in black bags. Also, consider the replacement of any existing open top public waste bins that may be attracting gulls.
- 2) **Changing Behaviour / Early Engagement with Residents** - an education programme for all residents about the nuisance of urban gulls and actions that will prevent nuisance. We would suggest a general advisory letter / information pack is prepared which, amongst other things, would:
 - strongly discourage the feeding of gulls, making use of the ‘10 reasons not to feed seagulls’ poster which has been promoted by Mumbles Community Council at the request of Mayals Friends & Residents Group
 - highlight the issue of ground-feeding and promote the use of ‘bird-feeders’
 - highlight the importance of proper disposal of food waste, and food containers

(consider whether such packs could be passed to local councillors for circulation in their community, to avoid postage costs, and perhaps enable them to determine how best to distribute e.g. targeting problem areas, circulation more widely in addition to residents, e.g. schools, parks, community centres, other businesses etc.)

- 3) **Public Notices** - Widen the existing 'feed the bins, not the birds' promotion beyond the city centre, with public signage / notices displayed at parks, beaches (and takeaway food shops in the vicinity), and other known or reported hot-spots.
- 4) **Enforcement Action** - Consider taking stronger action (e.g. warning letter around anti-social behaviour or other powers available such as CPNs) in respect of any person found to be responsible for excessive feeding of gulls, and ignoring advice.
- 5) **Co-production** - To work with the Mayals Friends & Residents Group (or other complainants), RSPB, and other relevant people or organisations in preparing any advice information for residents and useful content, or other action / practical measures either proposed as a result of this scrutiny activity or identified by yourself, to minimise the problem. This should also consider learning from the experience of other Councils.
- 6) **Monitoring** - To monitor future complaints about nuisance gulls and feeding to help inform the type and location of deterrent activities.

Your Response

In your response we would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter. We would be grateful, however, if you could specifically respond to the recommended actions contained in this letter.

Please provide the response to this and any other comments about our letter by 18 December. We will then include both letters in the agenda of the next available Panel meeting.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Acting Convener, Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel

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TEN REASONS NOT TO FEED SEAGULLS



Here is some information about the harm that can be done to both people and gulls by feeding them inappropriately. Please remember though – while some species of gull are prevalent, others are in decline and are more highly protected. It is illegal to harm any wild bird, damage their nests or destroy their eggs. We live by the sea so must expect there to be seagulls, but stopping feeding them will encourage them to remain in their natural habitat and have a natural diet which will make life more pleasant for both people and gulls.

1. **RATS.** Feeding gulls will lead to an increase in the number of rats. **In 2017, Swansea was ranked the 6th most rat infested area in Britain** (with 3,121 call-outs, 13.06 per 1,000 people) and pest control experts warn that they see rat populations explode near to where people leave out a lot of bird food, especially if it is left on the ground. **FEED GULLS >>> FEED RATS.**
2. **HEALTH.** Gulls are *"the new public health risk"* (the BBC, 2004). The rise in the urban gull population is increasing the risks of e-coli, salmonella and botulism. And *"..gulls could soon be more of a pest in urban Britain than rats"* – a warning given at the 2003 National Conference on problems caused by urban gulls.
3. **NUMBERS.** Gulls can live for 40 years, can breed for 25 years and they and their offspring will return to the same nesting site. In South Wales, the urban gull population is increasing at a staggering 16% annually and is set to increase four-fold over the next decade. Peter Rock (an avian expert involved in international gull research since 1980 and the author of several scientific papers on the subject) warns that once a pair gains a foothold others follow and problems will grow rapidly. **There is already a growing gull colony in Mayals – please don't be mistaken to think that you won't be affected if you are not already.**
4. **NOISE.** Noise is by far the greatest nuisance factor cited by Peter Rock. He advises that gulls' raucous calls typically begin at 4 o'clock in the morning and are impossible to sleep through. When regularly fed they also become tamed and will start to repeatedly call for food during the day too.
5. **MESS.** Mess is the second most unpleasant nuisance cited by Peter Rock. In a 2011 Commons debate, it was recognised that gulls can expel significant quantities of runny faeces on the wing, which makes it difficult for residents to enjoy their gardens. Their washing, windows, cars and property are also continually being fouled. Fouling on roofs can also increase the rate of moss growth, which can be unsightly and block drainage outlets.
6. **DAMAGE.** Damage to property is the third biggest problem cited by Peter Rock. He advises that gulls will destroy insulation, air conditioning, will pull up exposed roofing felt and will even pull away lead flashing. Other damage includes blockages to rain water gutters, down pipes and even gas flues.
7. **PROPERTY PRICE.** Gulls nesting near or on your property could affect the value and/or the saleability of your home and the cost to gull-proof your property can be significant.
8. **ATTACKS.** The Guardian reported in 2013 that *"pensioners have been hospitalised, knocked to the ground, breaking bones. Small dogs have bled to death, children's lips been sliced open, and an elderly man died of a heart attack following a particularly vicious assault in his back garden."* There have been many other reported attacks on adults, children, pets and livestock. Urban gulls also attack and will feed on garden birds; so when gulls move in, the small garden birds are driven out.
9. **FINES.** If someone refuses to stop feeding the gulls to the detriment of the quality of life of other residents, then Local Authorities have the power to issue a Community Protection Notice - Conwy Council exercised this power in 2015 and fined one resident £1,100 after they ignored an anti-social behaviour warning.
10. **HARM TO GULLS THEMSELVES.** Both the RSPB and RSPCA warn that feeding gulls will not only lead to attacks but feeding the birds an un-natural, high calorific, low nutritional diet is detrimental to their health as it can lead to long-term health problems and incurable syndromes such as "Angel Wing".

Peter Rock advises that the only way to control the number of gulls is to control their food source. So for the sake of the safety, health and well-being of our community, we must not encourage them by feeding them and please make your local Councillors or Ward Councillor aware of any cases.



Councillor Mary Jones
Acting Convener – Natural Environment
Scrutiny Performance Panel

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Thomas
Direct Line: 01792 63 6141
E-Mail: cllr.mark.thomas@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: MT/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 17 December 2019

Dear Councillor Jones

Re: Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel – 22 October: Gull Nuisance

Thank you for your letter, dated 27th November 2019, regarding officers attendance at the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel. Please find the responses to the issues you raised below: -

1. **Waste Storage:** *minimising the potential for gulls to get access to food waste left out for collections. In particular consider whether waste storage / disposal at properties such as flats or HMOs may be attracting gulls and need to be improved e.g. there may be insufficient number of plastic food waste caddies available for the waste generated, where either food waste bags may left outside or food waste may continue to be disposed of in black bags. Also, consider the replacement of any existing open top public waste bins that may be attracting gulls.*

The Council provides food waste bins and 'kitchen caddies' to residential properties across its area. Both the waste Enforcement Team and the Private Sector Housing Team carry out proactive work and respond to complaints to address areas of concern relating to the disposal of food waste and black bag waste.

2. **Changing Behaviour/Early Engagement with Residents:** *an education programme for all residents about the nuisance of urban gulls and actions that will prevent nuisance. We would suggest a general advisory letter / information pack is prepared which, amongst other things, would:*
 - *strongly discourage the feeding of gulls, making use of the '10 reasons not to feed seagulls' poster which has been promoted by Mumbles Community Council at the request of Mayals Friends & Residents Group*
 - *highlight the issue of ground-feeding and promote the use of 'bird- feeders'*
 - *highlight the importance of proper disposal of food waste, and food containers**(consider whether such packs could be passed to local councillors for circulation in their community, to avoid postage costs, and perhaps enable them to determine how best to distribute e.g. targeting problem areas, circulation more*

widely in addition to residents, e.g. schools, parks, community centres, other businesses etc.)

The Council's response to this point must be proportionate. Our enforcement teams in have a limited amount of resource to deal with a high volume of complaint work, all of which must be prioritised. Whilst I understand the concerns around individuals behaviour and the possible outcomes, given the content of the 'Ten Reasons Not to Feed Seagulls' document, that has been produced by the Mayals Friends and Residents Group', I do not feel that the Council is in a position to promote the publication. For example, the reference put forward stating that 'Swansea was ranked the 6th most rat infested area in Britain' is misleading. The high level of calls in Swansea is linked to the fact that the Council, in recognition of the potential public health risk, carries out domestic rat visits for free whereas as other authorities charge for the visit; charging for visits can lead to a 50% reduction in complaints received.

As an outcome of the discussions that took place, it is felt that an appropriate and manageable method for providing information to the public would be to create an 'Informational Webpage' by Spring 2020 linked to the current Pest Control webpage. The webpage could be referred to in appropriate correspondence and would provide impartial information to advise residents about the potential issues with feeding birds in general and the powers available to the Council to help manage this

- 3. Public Notices:** *Widen the existing 'feed the bins, not the birds' promotion beyond the city centre, with public signage / notices displayed at parks, beaches (and takeaway food shops in the vicinity), and other known or reported hot-spots.*

The Council currently provides signage in areas regarding the 'Feed the Bins, Not the Birds' initiative as well as littering offences. The proposal to increase the number of signs and the area is not deliverable within current resources.

- 4. Enforcement Action:** *Consider taking stronger action (e.g. warning letter around anti-social behaviour or other powers available such as CPNs) in respect of any person found to be responsible for excessive feeding of gulls, and ignoring advice.*

The Pollution Control and Private Sector Housing Team already considers the enforcement actions available when investigating complaints of this nature. In this particular instance, the options were assessed and the evidence to support formal action was not obtained.

The Council will continue to investigate complaints received and act accordingly in-line with the appropriate legislation. I can assure you appropriate enforcement action will be taken where circumstances warrant formal intervention.

- 5. Co-Production:** *To work with the Mayals Friends & Residents Group (or other complainants), RSPB, and other relevant people or organisations in preparing any advice information for residents and useful content, or other action / practical measures either proposed as a result of this scrutiny activity or identified by yourself, to minimise the problem. This should also consider learning from the experience of other Councils.*

In complaints of this nature, the Council is required to remain impartial in its role as the regulator. Whilst obtaining information from bodies such as the RSPB can assist in

ensuring appropriate advice to the public; the Council must ensure that its publications are factually correct and remain impartial as formal proceedings may occur. Officers are part of a variety of expert groups nationally and these are used to share best practice between Councils.

The Council will of course consider all the information it has researched and received in preparation of the 'Informational Webpage' to be published in Spring 2020.

6. **Monitoring:** *To monitor future complaints about nuisance gulls and feeding to help inform the type and location of deterrent activities.*

The Pollution Control and Private Sector Housing Team monitors all types of complaints received as part of the process in developing their work plan and associated targets; this is a process that will continue to take place.

Yours sincerely



Y Cyngorydd / Councillor Mark Thomas
Aelod Y Cabinet Dros Wasanaethau'r Amgylchedd
Cabinet Member for Environment Services



**To/
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment &
Infrastructure Management**

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Scrutiny

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NE/2019-20/4

07 February 2020

Summary: This is a letter from the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member following the meeting of the Panel on 16 December 2019. It is regarding Weed Management and Air Pollution Control.

Dear Councillor Thomas,

Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel – 16 December

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting on 16 December 2019 to discuss activities in relation to weed management and air pollution control and contribute to the debate. We also thank lead officers for provision of written material to the Panel, answering questions, and supporting the session.

We are writing to you, as relevant Cabinet Member, to reflect on the discussion, share the views of the Committee, and highlight any outstanding issues / actions for your response.

Weed Management

Our discussion specifically focussed on the Council's use of glyphosate for weed management, which you know has been the subject of public debate regarding health & safety. It is an issue of concern that I, and other councillors, have raised in other scrutiny meetings and forum. I am glad that we now have a dedicated Scrutiny Performance Panel for Natural Environment that has provided the opportunity to discuss this matter in some depth and keep under watch.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU
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The Panel was keen to have an overview of the Council's approach and activities in relation to weed management and control. We were interested to know the levels (whether it was being used sparingly) and locations of glyphosate use as well as plans for reduction in use, and whether alternatives to glyphosate have been, or are being, looked e.g. more organic / natural / integrated / mechanical methods to manage weeds.

The meeting also benefited from the contribution of Dr. Rosemary Mason, who has campaigned against the use of glyphosate, and she shared with the Panel her concerns regarding glyphosate use and dangerous impacts on human health and biodiversity. She referred to impacts experienced over the last ten years on a local nature reserve in Ilston, following the spraying of glyphosate-based herbicides on Japanese Knotweed in the valley below, and various efforts taken to prove that poisoning was taking place to insects, birds, mammals and its link to human ill health (including personal ill health experienced). She questioned government assertions about the safety of glyphosate, arguing that herbicides have turned weeds into invasive weeds, becoming resistant to chemicals, and that spaying on agricultural land has meant people are consuming residues of pesticides in their food. She felt that the public remains unaware of the dangers of glyphosate use.

We heard from you and officers:

- Why weed removal was necessary.
- About weed spraying activity (both Highways, Parks and other Council land) to limit weeds and scale of glyphosate use.
- That the Highways Service uses tendered contractors to carry out a limited spraying regime due to current resources, along approximately 5000km of public highway at a cost of around £10-12 per km (spend of £65,000 per year).
- That the Parks Service limits use to preparation prior to sowing wildflower sites, and to the treatment of Japanese Knotweed, and we noted the importance of a Council service for Japanese Knotweed, which complies with very strict licensing conditions.
- Glyphosate remains an approved active substance on the EU Pesticides database for weed management – with use beyond December 2022 subject to further decision.
- There are recognised health concerns with successful legal cases and claims in the USA that glyphosate has caused cancers.

Your report to the Panel concluded that all current practices follow Welsh Government and APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) guidance and that the use of glyphosate needed to be balanced between cost, public demand and concerns over safety of chemicals uses and the effect of weeds on the public realm. You stated that currently there is no other cost effective treatment to meet public demand in terms of a weed free environment, however the Authority will continue to review other options as they become commercially available. You stressed that this was a very difficult issue to resolve, and recalled numerous public complaints a few years back, when

there was a gap in spraying due to contract renewal, which caused reputational damage to the Council. However, you were open to solutions that may help us in the future, that can work on a large scale. For example, whilst you accepted that manual / mechanical means of weed removal were best, it would not be cost effective given the area that needs to be covered in Swansea. You approximated that the Council would be looking at a ten-fold increase in current budget for mechanical clearing.

Main points from our discussion:

- We agree that this is a very difficult issue, but it is clear that the Council needs to be cautious about glyphosate use.
- Given global public health concerns surrounding the use of glyphosate, there may be a need for the public to accept higher levels of weeds. The impact on nature and biodiversity should be considered as equally important as concerns about public health.
- We note from the APSE briefing (Glyphosate – Where do local authorities stand?) that a number of local authorities have taken their own steps to impose restrictions on the use of glyphosate-based products and other pesticides and herbicides. It references Croydon, Lewes, Glastonbury, Wadebridge and the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham as reportedly banning the use of glyphosate-based products in public areas.
- We heard that the current highway weed treatment programme is limited to three sprays per season, with the exception of the primary gateway routes, which receive four sprays, primarily to clear kerb channels and central reservations. We noted that the quadbike vehicles only spray where overgrowth is detected, and that spraying is directed low to the ground.
- We heard that there was potential, in principle, for areas to opt out of the highway weed treatment programme, but you advised that because of the nature of the contract this would have to be clearly defined zones (e.g. whole ward) as opposed to street-by-street opt out. Furthermore, there may be potential for Councillors to use their Member Environmental Budget to deliver alternative weed treatment in their ward (including parks), but any such activity would need to be carefully thought through and planned.
- We discussed how trends have changed over the years in relation to weed management, the rise of chemical spraying and reliance on the Council to tackle weeds, which in the past were most likely cleared by individuals within their own community. We noted that any future community / volunteer activity would need to have clear point of contact / co-ordination.
- We were told that the Parks Service used glyphosate prior to sowing wildflower sites, though I am not sure the Panel entirely understood why this was necessary.

- We were aware of a pilot project carried out in Swansea a number of years ago for a new treatment for Japanese Knotweed that involved a tiny bug being released, which can devour knotweed and help control its spread, as a sustainable, natural approach to tackle knotweed. However, we were not aware of any information about the success of the pilot and current position.

Air Pollution Control

This topic has been the subject of a Scrutiny Working Group (meeting held in November 2018) and will be subject of regular monitoring of performance through this new Panel.

Picking up from where the Working Group left off the Panel asked you about current air pollution monitoring, in particular the measured levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) where available (including around schools), and measures in hand / planned to reduce levels further. We also discussed the issue of contracted vehicles (coaches / taxis etc.) parked outside schools with engines left running and impact on children's health, not to mention the numbers of parents / carers doing likewise in their cars. This has been previously raised by the Scrutiny Programme Committee with the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills,

We are grateful for the detailed information provided on the air quality monitoring around a number of schools and discussed that at some length e.g. recorded levels, times and locations are these measures taken; whether they were mean averages through the whole 24-hour period, and what levels above the ground the measures were taken. We noted that 2019 data for the measure of NO₂ levels has indicated compliance with National Air Quality Standards - no exceedances of the NO₂ annual mean objective concentration of 40µgm⁻³ (micrograms per metre cubed) returned.

We heard from you and officers that:

- Swansea Council is required monitor and review air quality and submits an annual progress report to Welsh Government with assessment of ambient air quality in accordance with EU objective concentrations.
- The Authority currently monitors for levels of sulphur dioxide, ozone, heavy metals (e.g. nickel). All monitoring sites remain compliant with both the annual mean and daily mean exceedance for particulate matter (less than 10 microns).
- The main pollutant of interest, for exceeding the National Air Quality objective concentration in Swansea is NO₂, for the annual mean objective of 40µgm⁻³. There has been a downward trend over the last five years and there are currently no monitoring locations in excess of the annual mean NO₂ National Air Quality objective.

- The Council is updating its Air Quality Action Plan, submitted to Welsh Government in 2018, with a view to going out to public consultation in Spring 2020, to maintain compliance and further reduce public health exposure to pollutants.
- The assessment of locations for NO₂ diffusion tube monitoring will continue and sites running low concentrations will be closed down in order to allow new sites to be created to enhance the quantitative data available.

We heard about various actions taken to improve air quality, for example:

- The opening of the Morfa Distributor Road and implementation of the Nowcaster system with the Hafod area leading to reductions in NO₂ being recorded along Neath Road in 2017 and 2018, as expected. We noted that the Nowcaster system has been in process of upgrade and tests have shown that it is running well.
- Junction improvement works on Gower Road, Sketty, though monitoring will be necessary for a number of years before removing any air quality management plan for this area.
- Testing of Green Infrastructure works.
- Research into behaviour change messages at busy road junctions and potential effects of engine idling at junctions on local air quality. We noted that this was not a straightforward matter as the switching on of an engine had the potential to release more concentration of pollutant. We heard that the Council was working with Swansea University over an engine idling study carried out at Sketty, which they were analysing.
- Clause in contracts for vehicles, such as school buses, requiring vehicles parked on any public highway to turn off their engines where the layover time exceeds ten minutes.
- NO₂ monitoring near a number of schools – all showing compliance with the annual mean objective of 40µgm⁻³ (we appreciated the detailed maps and data provided).

Furthermore, you told us about the approval of a £2.75m Active Travel Fund Welsh Government Grant to bring about increase in cycling and walking, and being able to secure £190k to facilitate the introduction of publically accessible electric vehicle charging points. Both are welcome developments.

The Panel also benefitted from the 'Local Air Quality Management In Wales' Policy Guidance (issued June 2017) which provided a good reference point for our discussion on how the Council is working to improve air quality, human health, and the quality of life in Swansea. It advises Councils to adopt the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 while carrying out local air quality management. This means looking to the long term; taking an integrated approach; involving a diversity of the population in decisions; collaborating with others to find shared solutions; and acting to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse.

You acknowledged the issues and challenges with air quality management, accepting that whilst objectives were being met, in truth, there were no safe thresholds for NO₂ and the focus was on reducing exposure and taking steps that will make a difference. You felt that in relation to schools and vulnerability of children being at greater risk of suffering ill health as a result of exposure, you felt that Welsh Government legislation may be the only way forward as local efforts around, for example, behaviour change in those transporting children to school were having limited success. At the same time, we recognised the need to understand the pressures facing parents/carers and parental choice around school places has contributed to greater car usage due to distances travelled. Perhaps some form of vehicle restriction around schools needs exploring.

We also discussed how industry in Swansea and the region contributes to air pollution, and the inspection and monitoring regime in place.

We noted that the UK Clean Air Day on 18 June 2020, the UK's largest air pollution campaign, had the potential to enable good data capture of pollution e.g. around schools, to see the difference in levels, and back up future action. Much of this campaign was around increasing awareness and encouraging behaviour change.

Main points from our discussion:

- Air quality is rightly recognised as a serious public health issue and it must be high on the agenda of the Council to tackle air pollution. We acknowledge air pollution is not an easy problem to solve and one that cannot be fixed overnight. However, there will be incremental solutions to reduce air pollution where possible, looking at air quality management as a public health issue, not one primarily focussed on traffic management.
- The Welsh Government Policy Guidance recognises that traffic congestion can result in high levels of both air and noise pollution, which is an issue that, we suspect, may be overlooked when developments are considered.
- The Guidance refers to the contribution of trees, hedgerows and green infrastructure in helping to reduce the harmful effects of air and noise pollution in a number of ways. Yet, these are being cut down for housing and roads and therefore poses concern about the future.
- The mainstreaming of electric cars in UK households appears to be a long way off in to the future, and public transport is still not an attractive or viable option, for many people. We need to reduce road traffic yet housebuilding is increasing road use.
- The challenge is to encourage people to avoid main roads and help direct road users to the safest best routes, and engagement with the public needs to be increased.
- Electric bikes are becoming more and more popular, yet other electric vehicles such as scooters remain banned from public roads.

- News of the Active Travel Fund Grant is welcome and hopefully this can help to improve the infrastructure e.g. bike storage facilities that for example may encourage cycling to school.
- The Policy Guidance states that the Council should work with health and public health professionals to integrate local air quality management effectively with other local initiatives aiming to reduce health risks and inequalities in affected communities
- We noted that the Council web pages, although containing the Air Quality Index, needed to be revamped and clearer, and that the Council was working in collaboration with Swansea University around how we provide messaging to the public on air quality.
- The Welsh Government Clean Air Plan for Wales, with the approach to reducing air pollution in Wales, is out for consultation, which ends on 10 March 2020. A member of the public, a member of Friends of the Earth, was present and was concerned about the Council's response citing Council resistance to measures in the previous Plan, and need for clear holistic long-term Council strategy, integrated with health and others, to address air pollution.
- With increasing electric vehicle use predicted, this issue of battery decommissioning is going to be a concern for the future.
- The Welsh Government Policy Guidance contains numerous recommendations to Local Authorities that we should be implementing.

Your Response

In your response, we would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter. We would be grateful, however, if you could specifically address the following recommendations:

Weed Management

- a) Until affordable and effective alternatives can be found glyphosate products should be used as sparingly as possible and away from high public footfall areas;
- b) The Council should undertake public awareness / education around health and biodiversity (including the effect of glyphosate on pollinators) and public consultation on the issue of weed spraying e.g. view on the Council changing approaches to weed management, stopping or reducing weed treatment and view on alternatives etc. Introducing this topic at established consultation events such as the Big Conversation would also be useful to gauge the response of children and young people;
- c) The Council should investigate what alternatives other Councils are looking at. Perhaps the Council could trial different approaches in certain areas to assess effectiveness, whereby a cost comparison could also be identified versus current method, and could be replicated elsewhere;
- d) The Panel would like to know about the planned highway weed treatment programme and when sprays are taking place;

- e) The Council should look to increasing community responsibility for weed management, without the use of glyphosate spraying, and explore ways that this could be achieved e.g. Friends of Parks Groups, other community groups etc.;
- f) The Panel would ask you to consider not using glyphosate at the next occasion of wildflower sowing to see the difference and consider whether it can therefore be avoided in the future, perhaps with manual intervention if necessary. A discussion on wildflower / meadow management would be useful at a future meeting; and
- g) The Panel would appreciate some information about the Japanese knotweed pilot in terms of success and current position.

Air Pollution Control

- a) Please share with us the output from the engine idling study carried out in Sketty;
- b) We would like to know more about green infrastructure works in the pipeline;
- c) Can you confirm whether the provision of bike storage facilities around schools is something that could be delivered within the Active Travel Fund Grant and report back to us on this?;
- d) We were interested in which parts of Swansea had the highest rates of correlation between air pollution and deprivation / health inequalities, and what is being done to communicate important air quality information and advice to the public to encourage behaviour change?;
- e) The Panel is interested to know the Authority's response to the Welsh Government's draft Clean Air Plan for Wales, which we presume you will lead on;
- f) Could you tell us what work is being done regarding the decommissioning of electric vehicle batteries?; and
- g) The Panel would like a statement regarding Council activity and progress in relation to the each of the recommendations in the Welsh Government Policy Guidance.

Please provide the response to these and any other comments about our letter by 28 February. We will then include both letters in the agenda of the next available Panel meeting. We will arrange to follow up on both issues and invite you to a future Panel meeting in due course.

Yours sincerely,

COUNCILLOR PETER JONES

Convener, Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel

✉ cllr.peter.jones@swansea.gov.uk

Councillor Peter Jones
Convener – Natural Environment Scrutiny
Performance Panel

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Thomas
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Our Ref: MT/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 28 February 2020

Dear Councillor Jones

Thank you for your letter dated 7 February 2020 please find the responses to the issues you raised below.

Weed Management

- a) Until affordable and effective alternatives can be found glyphosate products should be used as sparingly as possible and away from high public footfall areas**

I agree that Glyphosate based herbicides (GBHs) should be used as sparingly as possible in all areas. The equipment used by Highways contractors supports this approach and the Parks department have significantly altered their practices to reduce usage.

- b) The Council should undertake public awareness / education around health and biodiversity (including the effect of glyphosate on pollinators) and public consultation on the issue of weed spraying e.g. view on the Council changing approaches to weed management, stopping or reducing weed treatment and view on alternatives etc. Introducing this topic at established consultation events such as the Big Conversation would also be useful to gauge the response of children and young people**

There is publicly available information available on the Council website (<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/herbicides>) relating to GBHs which also refers to European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Health & Safety Executive and the EU's Glyphosate task force. Highways, Parks & Cleansing are prepared to produce an online questionnaire which Ward members may share with their constituents to gather views on accepted increased weed growth Vs use of GBHs.

- c) The Council should investigate what alternatives other Councils are looking at. Perhaps the Council could trial different approaches in certain areas to assess effectiveness, whereby a cost comparison could also be identified versus current method, and could be replicated elsewhere**

The Highways department will investigate alternative practices claimed to have been used by other authorities within the APSE report. The Parks Department are about to commence a trial on an alternative method of eradication. Realistic comparison of effectiveness will take up to 3 years for results to be available. It should be noted this is for specific localised treatments such as Japanese Knotweed.

d) The Panel would like to know about the planned highway weed treatment programme and when sprays are taking place

Information is available on www.swansea.gov.uk/weeds regularity is weather dependent.

e) The Council should look to increasing community responsibility for weed management, without the use of glyphosate spraying, and explore ways that this could be achieved e.g. Friends of Parks Groups, other community groups etc.

The Council will always look to encourage community engagement in supporting local initiatives and where local community groups show interest in such activities they will be supported.

f) The Panel would ask you to consider not using glyphosate at the next occasion of wildflower sowing to see the difference and consider whether it can therefore be avoided in the future, perhaps with manual intervention if necessary. A discussion on wildflower / meadow management would be useful at a future meeting

The Parks Department is willing to carry this out in a designated area on a trial basis. The costs associated with the purchase of wildflower seeds and the manpower that would be involved to apply this wholesale across the authority represents a financial risk. It should be noted that the practice of spraying prior to sowing is to ensure there is no competition for nutrients and allow the wildflower the best opportunity to flourish. The alternative is to manual turnover the areas and remove all current growth prior to sowing however the department does not have the necessary resource to deliver the scheme in this very labour intensive way.

g) The Panel would appreciate some information about the Japanese knotweed pilot in terms of success and current position.

There are two publicised studies/pilots in Wales relating to the tackling of Japanese Knotweed. Information about the first study led by Swansea University is available on their website (and link below). The second Welsh Assembly Government sponsored project is to introduce an insect (aphalara itadori) to control the weed. That project is ongoing and information may be found on link below.

<https://www.swansea.ac.uk/press-office/news-archive/2018/swanseauniversityscientistsleadthewayintacklingjapaneseknotweed.php>

Air Pollution Control

- a) **Please share with us the output from the engine idling study carried out in Sketty**

The engine idling study took place between Wednesday 13th February 2019 and Friday 15th February 2019 on Vivian Road, Sketty. The study looked at the use of behavioural message signs and whether or not drivers turned their engines off whilst stationary at the traffic lights. During the study period an air quality analyser was present to record 1min concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter (PM). The study was carried out in collaboration with Swansea University, the initial analysis has shown a statistically significant increase in the number of engines switched off in the afternoon sessions when the messaging signs were present. Swansea University is in the process of analysing the complete dataset with a view to submitting for publication in a peer reviewed journal.

- b) **We would like to know more about green infrastructure works in the pipeline**

Installation works for the Green Screen in St. Thomas (at the junction of Fabian Way and Port Tennant Road) commenced on Tuesday 25th February 2020. The screen covers a distance of 33m along the inside of the existing pedestrian railings. This scheme has been facilitated through Green Infrastructure funding secured by the Conservation Team from Welsh Government. There is an air quality monitoring station already sited at this location monitoring PM2.5 and NOx and recording 1min sound pressure readings. The intention is carry out statistical analysis of the pollutant data and the traffic data to inform future policy interventions within the Air Quality Action Plan.

- c) **Can you confirm whether the provision of bike storage facilities around schools is something that could be delivered within the Active Travel Fund Grant and report back to us on this?**

Officers have confirmed that the provision of bike storage facilities around schools could be considered as part of the Welsh Government annual funding cycles. Discussions will take place to look at the feasibility of incorporating the possible provision within future funding applications.

- d) **We were interested in which parts of Swansea had the highest rates of correlation between air pollution and deprivation / health inequalities, and what is being done to communicate important air quality information and a dvice to the public to encourage behaviour change**

Public Health Wales has carried out research into this topic and is the appropriate body to look into these statistics. An invitation has been received for Council officers to attend the first draft air quality surveillance dashboard session at the

end of March 2020 and a further update will be provided in writing by the end of April 2020.

- e) **The Panel is interested to know the Authority's response to the Welsh Government's draft Clean Air Plan for Wales, which we presume you will lead on**

The Council's response to the Clean Air Plan for Wales consultation is being prepared and officers are attending a workshop being held in Cardiff on 5th March 2020. The submission date is 10th March 2020 and so a complete copy of the written submission will be forwarded to the Panel after that date.

- f) **Could you tell us what work is being done regarding the decommissioning of electric vehicle batteries**

Further enquiries will be made with 3rd party companies to establish the works being carried out in this field. Currently the Council utilises 3rd party end of life vehicle/recycling companies when disposing of vehicle batteries collected at the civic amenity sites.

- g) **The Panel would like a statement regarding Council activity and progress in relation to each of the recommendations in the Welsh Government Policy Guidance.**

Welsh Government's Local air quality management (LAQM) in Wales policy guidance, June 2017, includes several recommendations. The work surrounding the previous responses (a-f) also takes consideration of the recommendations within the decision making approach.

The Council implements the requirements of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act 2015 (WFG) when carrying out its LAQM functions. This includes the long-term assessment of the areas of concerns and the collection of datasets, collaborative works with partners such as Swansea University and will be implemented throughout the draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to be produced for consultation with communities shortly.

The Council applies the 'long-term' goal as part of the LAQM function. The Annual Progress Report (APR) is submitted to Welsh Government for appraisal and data for 2018 has indicated compliance across the Council's area. Exposure reduction is considered when assessing planning applications of all scales, is considered as part of the AQAP process and is the driver behind the application to install a 'Green Screen' in the St. Thomas area.

The Council provides comments and imposes conditions at the planning stage of developments to look at the implications for soundscape in line with Welsh Government Policy. As part of the 'Green Screen' installation, in St Thomas, a sound level meter is also present to assess the effect upon soundscape for future policy interventions.

'Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity' is one of the Council's six corporate priorities. Welsh Government's recommendations are considered when undertaking works supporting the

priority. The Council has formed a Climate Change Working Group to ensure that all plans and policies are aligned and integrated where appropriate.

The Council has been involved in collaborative research works with third parties to look at the possibility of grant funding applications to create networks of relevant organisations, for example, the Council, Swansea University and Public Health Wales. The aim is to set up networks of professionals to work towards understanding and evidencing long-term risks to vulnerable groups to air pollution in many environments.

Yours sincerely



Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Mark Thomas
Aelod Y Cabinet Dros Wasanaethau'r Amgylchedd
Cabinet Member for Environment Services