



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: Monday, 22 March 2021

Time: 10.00 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		Page No.
1	Apologies for Absence	
2	Confirmation of Convener	
3	Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests	
4	Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips	
5	Minutes of previous meeting(s) To receive the minutes of the previous meeting(s) and agree as an accurate record.	1 - 4
6	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.	
7	Nature Conservation Project Update <i>Invited to attend:</i> Paul Meller - Natural Environment Section Manager Deborah Hill – Nature Conservation Team Leader	5 - 14
8	Draft Work Plan 2021/22 Panel to agree work plan topics for 2021-22	15
9	Climate Change Action Plan Consultation	

For information only - Climate Change Action Plan consultation ([link](#) to papers)

Next Meeting: Wednesday, 28 April 2021 at 11.00 am



Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
15 March 2021

Contact: Scrutiny Officer - emily-jayne.davies@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 5



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday, 1 September 2020 at 10.30 am

Present: Councillor P K Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
E W Fitzgerald
I E Mann
M Sherwood

Councillor(s)
S J Gallagher
H M Morris
W G Thomas

Councillor(s)
M H Jones
C Richards
L J Tyler-Lloyd

Other Councillor Attendees

Mark Thomas	Cabinet Member – Environment & Infrastructure Management
David Hopkins	Cabinet Member – Delivery & Operations
Paxton Hood-Williams	Minute No. 28 only
Yvonne Jardine	Minute No. 28 only
Jeff Jones	Minute No. 28 only

Officer(s)

Chris Howell	Head of Waste, Cleansing & Parks
Paul Meller	Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Manager
Deb Hill	Team Leader, Nature Conservation
Bob Fenwick	Group Leader, Highways Maintenance
Mike Sweeney	Team Leader, Highways Maintenance
Brij Madahar	Scrutiny Team Leader

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): B J Rowlands

23 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.

24 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.

25 Minutes.

The minutes of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting, held on 16 December 2019, were agreed as an accurate record.

26 Public Questions.

There were no public questions.

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

The Panel held a discussion on the environmental impacts of the pandemic and any issues and environmental lessons that have arisen during the period of lockdown. The Panel heard from lead Cabinet Members and a number of relevant officers on the experience over the last six months.

The numerous side effects of the pandemic included some positive aspects such as reduced air pollution from less travel and activity, increased use of cycle routes and general benefits to biodiversity and enjoyment of local outdoor space.

The Panel also discussed issues around weed management and how, in the absence of cutting grass verges and parks, an increase in wildlife sightings by the public were reported during lockdown.

Discussion focussed on:

- The importance of local green spaces
- General weed spraying activity, resources and possible alternatives to the use of glyphosate
- Less frequent cutting of grass verges and some meadow areas of parks, to enhance the natural environment, habitats, and biodiversity.
- Public engagement on weed and verge management and possible Community Council involvement
- The Council's wildflower planting programme
- Increased use of cycle routes
- General littering and education surrounding this issue

The Panel also took the opportunity to ask about the recent train derailment at Llangennech and extent of diesel spillage into the Loughor Estuary and environmental / ecological impact. The Panel noted that it was too early to tell as assessments were still being carried out by relevant lead agencies.

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 Members with its views and recommendations.

28 Follow Up - Implementation of Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry Recommendations.

The Panel followed up on the implementation of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry recommendations. The Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations provided a report to help the Panel assess the impact of the scrutiny inquiry report and show progress against each of the agreed recommendations, since Cabinet decision in July 2019. The Panel also heard from lead officers, Paul Meller, Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Manager, and Deb Hill, Nature Conservation Team Leader.

The Panel was pleased to note from the Cabinet Member's report specific contributions to change as a direct result of the inquiry, and impact made. For example, there is much sharper focus on the natural environment, resources, and biodiversity and the scrutiny report has been a catalyst for change.

It was noted that the majority of recommendations had been implemented fully and will remain a long-term commitment. Some actions were outstanding and subject to the appointment of specific grant-funded project officers.

Discussion focussed on:

- Progress with the recruitment of a Section 6 Biodiversity Officer and project officers
- The appointment of a part-time temporary Planning Ecologist
- The need for greater collaboration between the Council and Community Councils
- The visibility of the work of the Corporate Biodiversity Working Group
- Our work with schools and training on biodiversity awareness

AGREED that:

1. good progress has been made with the implementation of recommendations, and to conclude formal monitoring of the inquiry report; and
2. the Panel will pick up on any specific issues of concern through the Panel's ongoing monitoring activities.

29 Local Flood Risk Management - Annual Update.

The Panel held a discussion on local flood risk management, which will now be the subject of regular monitoring through this Scrutiny Panel.

The Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management, along with lead officers, reported to the Panel on the experience over the past year, giving examples of significant flooding occurrences, progress with flood risk management, and challenges.

Discussion focussed on:

- The impact of climate change - prevalence of flooding and increase in frequency and severity
- Flood investigations

- The Council's responsibilities in relation to flooding on non-council owned land
- Gully / drain cleansing and frequency – noted purchase of extra gully machine
- Synergy between highways and cleansing operations
- Whether the Council was spending more on reactive emergency responses rather than preventative maintenance
- Communications / public information about flood risk and flooding
- Resources

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 Enhancement & Infrastructure Management with its views and recommendations on the issue of local flood risk management.

30 Letters.

The Panel received the correspondence sent by the Panel and response received following the meeting of the Panel held on 16 December 2019:

- Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management.

The meeting ended at 12.49 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Chair

Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel – 22 March 2021

Nature Conservation Project Update Report

Purpose	The Panel will receive an update on the current and planned projects of the Nature Conservation Team.
Content	A 'Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Action Log' has been provided to the Panel, showing main project activity and progress.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the project update report (Action Log) and raise any questions relating to the content.
Lead Councillor	Councillor David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations
Lead Officer	Paul Meller – Natural Environment Section Manager Deborah Hill – Nature Conservation Team Leader

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Panel will receive an update on main project work currently identified as actions for delivery by the Council's Nature Conservation Team under the Corporate Plan Natural Resources and Biodiversity Objective and also arising out of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry Recommendations.
- 1.2 The **attached** Action Log has been provided to the Panel and highlights relevant progress since last reported to Panel in September 2020. The Panel should note that this long-term project work is undertaken alongside daily statutory duties.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Action Log (March 2021)

Climate Change Programme Board: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Action Log (March 2021)

Ref	Project	Comment/Update	Target date
1.	Facilitate, co-ordinate, deliver and monitor the steps in the Corporate Plan Objective for Maintaining and Enhancing Swansea's Natural resources and Biodiversity	Steps progressed through Climate Change Programme Board and updated in Feb 21 for 21/22 Corporate Plan Review. Reviewed annually (Part time Section 6 Biodiversity Officer Post approved to support this work)	Feb annually
2.	Prepare Corporate Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First 3 year Section 6 duty monitoring report agreed and submitted to Welsh Government Dec 2019. • Action plan to Dec 2023 in preparation <p>Links with other relevant cross organisational policies at a strategic level being monitored by Climate Change Programme Board, which includes representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Environment • Green Infrastructure • Local Development Plan • Sustainable Development Policy • Sustainable Transport Plan • Energy Strategy • Waste Management • Parks • Housing • Education • Procurement 	<p>Dec 2022</p> <p>Bi-monthly meetings</p>

3.	Preparation of Swansea Local Nature Recovery Action Plan	Not yet commenced. Will involve working with partners to develop and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity, improve ecological connectivity and resilience, and promote the sustainable management of natural resources	March 2022
4.	Adopt Swansea Central Area Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy and Green Space Factor Tool	<p>Approved by Economy and Infrastructure PDC, December 20 and Cabinet Feb 21.</p> <p>The Green Space Factor Tool provides practical guidance to help assess the level of green space required for developments in urban areas. The tool is not mandatory but developers will be encouraged and expected to use it as part of the pre application planning process for the central area.</p>	Complete
5.	Prepare a County wide GI Strategy	Preparation of draft strategy has commenced following adoption of City Centre GI Strategy.	March 2022
6.	Develop and adopt a Council tree policy	<p>Draft under preparation, to be considered by Policy Development Committee prior to wider consultation through 2021.</p> <p>The aim is to fully update and formalise a tree policy to maintain and expand tree cover; raise awareness of the value of trees; ensure risks from trees are adequately managed; conserve trees of value and ensure that the Council meets its biodiversity duties in respect of trees. The Council has 900 woodlands</p>	May 2021

		and woodland groups that contain an estimated 250,000 trees and 38,000 individual trees mapped and surveyed in Parks, Schools, Cemeteries, Housing land & Highways.	
7.	Prepare and adopt Trees and Development SPG	SPG currently being reviewed following comments received on consultation draft. Based on best practice and discussions with Bristol City Council as a result of their experience. Further public consultation to be carried out on revised version.	Summer 2021
8.	Prepare and adopt Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	SPG Adopted by Planning Committee Feb 2021	Completed
9.	Prepare and upload Biodiversity SPG guidance notes onto Council webpages	Notes prepared – waiting for Welsh translation Further development of Council Biodiversity Web pages for training purposes and to awareness and understanding	April 2021 June 2021
10.	Develop and deliver biodiversity training for Council staff, elected Members and PSB Members	Action for biodiversity officer and others. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and address biodiversity training needs • 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 	Dec 2021

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of pilot training courses for Council staff relating to biodiversity and climate change have been trialled with funding from Welsh Government Local Places for Nature and NRW Grants • PSB Climate and Nature training course planned for 24/3 • Ecological advice and support provided for development management on planning and SUDs applications 	<p>Feb/Mar 2021</p> <p>Mar 2021</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
11.	Develop, promote and deliver a programme of public environmental events and activities	Annual programme of events published to improve awareness and understanding of our natural environment (N.b. This will be a reduced on line version for 2021)	May annually
12.	Appoint new Section 6 Duty Biodiversity Officer	0.5 Post advertised Feb 2021. Candidates shortlisted for interview w/c 29/3	March 2021
13.	Appoint new Planning Ecologist	0.6 Post advertised Feb 2021. Candidates shortlisted for interview w/c 22/3. Partly a fee earning post to provide ecological services across departments	March 2021
14.	Facilitate and support the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) meetings and projects	<p>Meetings held quarterly. Last met 29/1, next meeting April /May 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part time temporary LNP Officer Post appointed <p>Recent training events arranged for LNP partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Marine Wildlife 4/3 • Introduction to Wildlife Recording (SEWBREC)12/3 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Oct 2021</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
15.	Co-ordinate and deliver the Local Places for Nature Grant programme	Grant allocation for 20/21 included:	Until March 2023

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue funding to appoint a temporary part time (3 day/wk) Local Nature Partnership Officer • plus £7000 for events/partner activities • plus £176,533k for LNP Capital projects, which have included tree planting at various parks and other sites, green infrastructure enhancements e.g. Environment Centre Green roof and green walls, support for new tree nursery at Clyne, habitat management and enhancement work e.g. removal of INNS, at Clyne, cutting firebreaks at Kilvey and Fairwood, tackling flooding issues at Bishop's wood LNR, access improvements at Swansea Vale and Swansea Point etc • plus £5000 for pilot project with SEWBREC to map ecological resilience <p>LNP Cymru proposals for 21/22 submitted- awaiting outcome includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional £20K LNP revenue funding allocated for 2021/22 • LNP Capital funding • Two LNP Challenge fund bids submitted for 2021/22-. Awaiting outcome 	
16.	Co-ordinate and deliver the NRW grant programmes	<p>NRW grant programme coordinated by AONB team and split between AONB , Countryside Access and Nature Conservation Teams</p> <p>Nature Conservation element relates to ongoing Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) management. Also</p>	March annually

		<p>biodiversity policy awareness raising and access improvements e.g. at Bishops' Wood and Cwmllywd LNR Claims are submitted quarterly in arrears and bids for 21/22 currently being prepared with provisional approval given for next 3 years of grant funding.</p> <p><i>N.b. Both AONB and Countryside Access Teams obtain funding from other sources for maintenance and enhancement of the natural environment of the Gower AONB – overseen by AONB Steering Group and Local Access Forum</i></p>	
17.	Co-ordinate and deliver the ENRAW Green Infrastructure grant programmes	<p>Awaiting confirmation of grant. Decision expected March 2021. If approved will provided funding for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A part time Green Infrastructure Officer • A part time Coed Cymru Officer • A full time Communities and Nature Officer • A part time wildlife volunteer co-ordinator to develop and support opportunities for environmental volunteering • GI and Biodiversity enhancements through revenue funding 	Until March 2023
18.	Plan, support and deliver new tree / woodland/hedgerow/orchard planting initiatives	<p>Total number of trees planted by Nature Conservation Team in parks and greenspaces since Oct 2020 = 3400 whips and 100 heavy standards. Various funding sources include Coed Cymru, Glastir and Trees for Cities</p> <p>No. of trees planted on Council land is a Corporate Performance Indicator</p>	End of March annually

		County wide survey to identify sites suitable for tree planting to be undertaken	Nov 2021
19.	Deliver new wildflower meadow planting and management initiatives	<p>Extent of wildflower planting is an annual Performance Indicator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the verges in Swansea that can stop being mowed and sprayed to be undertaken by Parks • Mumbles to Margam pollinator corridor being developed funded through LNP capital. • 10 sites totalling approx. 1 hectare have been planted with native wildflowers. • Nature Conservation Team and Parks are purchasing cut and collect machinery to support the ecological management of wildflower meadows/verges etc (£125k Green Recovery Grant plus £8.5K LNP grant) 	<p>End of March annually</p> <p>Mar 2021</p>
20.	Undertake a preliminary biodiversity audit of Council owned land and where possible manage our corporate assets for the benefit of biodiversity and natural resources	<p>Task group to be set up to deliver project and report to Climate Change Programme Board</p> <p>Will include preparation of management plans identifying actions that help maintain and enhance priority habitats and species and control invasive non-native species. Will also include a review of SINC sites and boundaries</p>	March 2022

		Initial work in hand to undertake a desktop audit of all More Homes sites	
21.	Promote and support community biodiversity projects /initiatives, green projects for well-being , facilitate environmental voluntary groups, etc	<p>Despite the impact of the pandemic, considerable support for, and collaboration with, community groups and other partners has been maintained and increased over the past year. This includes support for the Swansea Local Nature Partnership, Clyne Community Volunteers, Rosehill Quarry, various Friends of Parks Groups, the Environment Centre, etc.</p> <p>There will be capacity to increase this work if and when the ENRAW GI grant is confirmed. This will enable greater engagement with local communities to encourage volunteering and to support them taking action to enhance and maintain and enjoy their local greenspaces and wildlife sites</p>	Ongoing
22.	Develop a set of 'Wild about your Ward ' maps and packs	<p>Action for project officer once ENRAW GI grant confirmed. Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping existing Green Infrastructure assets and ecosystem service provision, and identifying areas, which provide the best opportunities for improvement and, where appropriate, maximise match funding opportunities afforded by Member's community fund • Improving access to and maintaining the quality of our parks and greenspaces. • Mapping of ecosystem services 	Until March 2023

23.	Deliver and provide support for school biodiversity awareness activities and practical initiatives and opportunities for schoolchildren to access and learn about their natural environment	We've previously reported the Our Nature Our Future Project as a completed task for 20 schools. However we are continuing to support such work under the LNP grant funds and this work will increase if the ENRAW GI grant is approved> All school governing bodies to identify an Environmental link officer – task for project officer once ENRAW grant confirmed	Until March 2023 Sept 2021
24.	Investigate and secure grant funding for tackling biodiversity and climate emergencies	Action for biodiversity officer. Amount of funding secured and schemes delivered to be reported annually(See ref to funding above)	March annually
25.	Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) funding of GI projects	Swansea was successful with the following bids - Coastal Office High Street - green roof, Dragon Hotel - green walls, Potter's Wheel - green roof, plus green roof bin shelters around the city centre	March 2021
26.	City Centre GI improvements	Wind St: Public realm improvements include additional tree planting and large planting beds along whole length of street with a mixture of trees shrubs and pollinator attracting herbaceous species Environment Centre Pier St – Green Roof and wall	Oct 2021 March 2021
27.	External Environment Enhancement on Council owned Housing land	Enhancements to greenspace as part of an environmental works programme to meet the Council's commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and to address deficiencies in access to natural greenspace	March 2022

Agenda Item 8

Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel

Work Plan 2021-22

Meeting 1 22 nd March 2021 10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirmation of Convener• Nature Conservation – Project updates <i>Invited to attend:</i> Deborah Hill – Nature Conservation Team Leader Paul Meller – Natural Environment Section Manager Cllr David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Delivery and Operations• Draft Work Plan 2021-22• For information only - Climate Change Action Plan consultation (link to papers)
Meeting 2 28 th April 2021 11.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate Change Action Plan consultation feedback• Climate Emergency Declaration – Council Action Plan Progress <i>TBC:</i> Suzy Richards – Sustainable Policy Officer Martin Nicholls – Director of Place Rachel Lewis – Directorate Project Manager Cllr Andrea Lewis - Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy and Service Transformation
Meeting 3 TBC June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Air Quality Management
Meeting 4 TBC August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Flood Risk Management• Ash Die Back update• (TBC) Monitoring Delivery of Corporate Priority – Maintaining & Enhancing Swansea’s Natural Resources & Biodiversity – Progress
Meeting 5 TBC October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water Pollution (including marine biodiversity)
Meeting 6 TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (TBC) Management of Green Space / Weed & Verge Management

Future topics to schedule:

- **Environmental Tourism**