



Report of the Chair of Climate Change and Nature Recovery Service Transformation Committee – Councillor Rebecca Fogarty

**Climate Change & Nature Recovery Service Transformation Committee
- 15 April 2024**

Climate Change and Nature Recovery Corporate Service Transformation Committee Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose:	To summarise the progress made in relation to the work programme for 2023/2024.
Report Author:	Rachel Lewis
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar
For Information	

1. Introduction

This report sets out the progress made on the work programme of the Climate Change & Nature Recovery Service Transformation Committee during the 2023/2024 municipal year.

2. Work Programme 2023/2024

The work of the Committee over the course of the municipal year 2023-24 focused on key aspects of Swansea Council’s approach to achieving net zero by 2030, covering many strands of the ‘Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change’ Corporate Wellbeing Objective.

The three key areas of focus were:

- Nature Recovery
- Sustainable Transport
- Waste

Swansea Council's NZ2030 work is in the context of our support role in the wider Swansea 2050 agenda. The committee also received a presentation from City Science on the work currently underway on the production of a Local Area Energy Plan for Swansea.

Date of meeting	Agenda items
5 June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work Plan 2023-24 Discussion
17 July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (LNRAP) overview presentation Transport for Wales presentation Waste Pilot
4 September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LNRAP – Report endorsement Waste Strategy – collections, Circular Economy elements
16 October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Transport Strategy
11 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swansea 2050 and Local Area Energy Plan
22 January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Transport Strategy – next steps
4 March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 6 Biodiversity Action Plan (Including GI and Tree cover)
15 April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste Strategy – Collections update

3. Nature Recovery

Local Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales

In July 2023, Deb Hill, Nature Conservation Team Leader and Christina Derrick, Local Nature Partnership Co-ordinator presented an overview of the draft Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (LNRAP) for Swansea. Local Nature Recovery Action Plans are non-statutory partnership plans produced by Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) in the relevant Local Authority or National Park in Wales. LNRAPs are aligned with and informed by Welsh national biodiversity policy, which is the Nature Recovery Plan (NRAP).

The NRAP for Wales is the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Wales and sets out how the United Nations Environment Programme's Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (and the associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets for 2011-20 in Wales) is addressed in Wales.

The presentation received by Committee was to raise awareness of the background to the Plan, its purpose and the four content areas: 1) context-setting; 2) action themes; 3) detailed information on nature in Swansea, including priority habitat overviews, priority species audient and species and sites special to Swansea; and 4) resources for public use to raise awareness and give ideas for how everyone can contribute to nature recovery.

The Committee then held an informal workshop for members to discuss the detail of the Plan further before the report was brought back to the meeting in September 2023 for endorsement. Comments received during the workshop were used to revise the plan during its final redraft. In particular, the concept of being 'nature positive' was discussed and a definition included in the plan to the effect:

Nature Positive as defined in the Nature Positive 2030 report means reversing the current declines in biodiversity, so that species and ecosystems begin to recover. This is an essential step to achieve nature recovery. Thus, making nature positive decisions means you actively consider your impact on biodiversity and take steps to support recovery.

The Committee also noted the value of the engaging style and format of the Plan and were supportive of using the public resources within Swansea Council communications to raise awareness of how everyone can contribute to nature recovery.

In considering the final draft of the Plan for endorsement in September 2023, the Committee discussed river pollution, 'run off' into rivers and the reassurances provided within the Local Development Plan (LDP), as well as partnership working with Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

The Committee **resolved** that: -

- 1) The Climate and Nature Recovery Service Transformation Committee (STC) note the importance of the Swansea Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (LNRAP) as an overarching partnership framework to deliver on Nature Recovery.
- 2) The STC endorse the draft LNRAP prior to it being forwarded to Council for approval.

The LNRAP was approved by Cabinet on 19th October. Consideration of the LNRAP significantly raised awareness of the Plan amongst Councillors and allowed Councillors the opportunity to engage with the development of it and to understand its importance and potential impacts.

Section 6 Biodiversity Action Plan for Swansea

While the LNRAP is a partnership plan for the whole Swansea area, the Section 6 Biodiversity Action Plan outlines the actions Swansea Council itself will take to meet the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Part 1) Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty. This requires that: 'A public authority must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.' Swansea Council has a legal duty to report to the Welsh Government every three years outlining actions undertaken to comply with the Statutory Biodiversity Duty.

In February 2024, Paul Meller, Natural Environment Section Manager, presented a report which sought approval of the draft Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Action Plan for Swansea (2023-2025), prior to the report going to Council in March 2024.

The draft Section 6 action plan provided the actions the Council proposed to take between now and December 2025 to meet its obligations under its Biodiversity Duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and contribute to the Welsh Government's 30x 30 targets for nature recovery. These actions are framed by the six key objectives of the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales and the Swansea Local Nature Recovery Action Plan.

Committee noted the value of having visible, tangible actions included from a range of departments and was pleased to see evidence of positive collaboration between the Nature Conservation team and the rest of the organisation. It was noted that the ongoing actions are dependent upon staff resources and Welsh Government funding which would currently be provided up to 2025.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- The need to include working with schools to support the delivery of biodiversity and green infrastructure enhancements within school grounds and raise awareness of children and young people of their role in supporting nature recovery. This led to the inclusion of a specific action for enhancing nature recovery initiatives in schools.
- Making Community and Town Councils aware of the report. It was noted that a presentation was being made to the Community and Town Councils Forum on 4 March 2024 and that it was the responsibility of each Council to formulate its own plan, but that awareness of Swansea Council's plan could assist them in doing that.
- The Council's legal responsibilities in respect of water, soil and air pollution, how it collaborates with other organisations, e.g. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and how including issues within the plan would hopefully provide more funding towards tackling pollution.
- The positive inclusion of active travel within the plan.
- Providing a more detailed plan linking all the broad actions together which will contribute to achieving Welsh Government's 30 by 30 Target (i.e. 30% of land protected and in positive management by 2030)
- The key importance of nature recovery.
- The importance of its inclusion within the Corporate Plan and collaboration going forward.
- Changing legislation being introduced to strengthen biodiversity regarding the planning process.
- The importance of sustainable drainage.
- The changes being introduced within the replacement Local Development Plan.

The Committee **resolved** that: -

- 1) The Draft Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Action Plan for Swansea Council be approved and forwarded to Council for adoption.

- 2) Adding working with schools to support the delivery of biodiversity and green infrastructure enhancements within school grounds be added to the Plan being reported to Council.

The Section 6 Biodiversity Action Plan was approved by Council in March 2024.

4. Sustainable Transport

Transport for Wales Presentation

In July 2023, the Committee received a presentation from Ben George, Strategic Development Programme Manager, Transport for Wales, relating to the proposals for the Swansea Bay & West Wales Metro. This was to provide regional context for the Committee's work around the Sustainable Transport Strategy for Swansea Council.

Contained within the presentation was information relating to the following areas:

- Rail programme including the South Wales Mainline, West Wales Services & Swansea Bay Area Metro.
- Rail priorities for West Wales and the frequency of services between Port Talbot in the east to Fishguard and Milford in the west on the various different lines;
- Swansea Bay Area Metro rail proposals for stations between Burry Port, Ammanford, Swansea and Neath.
- Bus Programme and reorganisation of routes which aims to reduce duplication and improve service efficiency.
- Aims for better integration with other transport modes by better planning bus services to create a more joined up and co-ordinated network;
- Bus decarbonisation proposals.
- Swansea Bay hydrogen bus project overview and proposed structure.

Draft Sustainable Transport Strategy

The Committee considered the draft Sustainable Transport Strategy in its meeting in October 2023. Matthew Bowyer, Interim Group Leader Traffic and Network Management, presented the report and sought the views and comments of the Committee on the draft Strategy 2020-2030.

The report detailed the background; national, regional and local policies and strategic context; vision, aims and objectives; and how the Council would deliver.

The accompanying Action Plan provides a roadmap for meeting the key objectives outlined in the strategy. It defined the framework for achieving desired net-zero outcomes by identifying measures and principles that can bring about transport behavioural change at three levels:

- Corporate – Measures and principles that apply Council wide; i.e. across all departments and staff.

- Departmental – Measures and principals that each Council department should adopt when developing transport services and infrastructure relevant to their particular function.
- Transport Specific – Particular measures and principles to be used by the two Council departments with direct responsibility for transport planning and delivery (i.e. the Highways and Transportation and Central Transport Unit).

When finalised, the Sustainable Transport Strategy would be embedded within the Council Corporate Plan and budget setting process. It would be communicated to all Council staff via the usual channels, including the Council website, social media and staff briefings. Heads of Department, in conjunction with Team Leaders, have the responsibility to deliver the strategy in their department. An annual Council-wide travel survey would also be undertaken to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the strategy and used to refine or update the strategy as necessary.

In an informal workshop in January 2024, the Committee considered how the Action Plan could be best implemented. The Committee provided feedback to:

- Help determine and agree timescales and order of priority/sequencing for the actions;
- Help determine appropriate governance and accountability to ensure this agenda is driven forward at pace;
- Inform plans for the development of both public and staff electric vehicle charging infrastructure;
- Consider ways to reduce tyre particulates and their impact on air quality and health, both through education and monitoring the marketplace and other public body activity;
- Inform communications activity for staff to support behaviour change and modal shift;
- Support schools in efforts to reduce emissions from short distance car journeys, such as engaging in Walk to School week
- Align with the Health Travel Charter and identify travel champions across the Council.

The final Sustainable Travel Strategy will be presented to Cabinet shortly.

5. Waste

The Committee has spent a great deal of time in this municipal year contributing to the Council's approach to reducing waste and improving recycling, as well as considering service improvements.

In July 2023, Chris Howell, Head of Waste, Parks and Cleansing, presented the background to the current recycling provision in Swansea and the options for reusable containers going forward. This would be a move to sealable hessian sacks for paper and card and a plastic box, complete with carrying handle, for glass and cans.

The authority currently uses up to 10million single use bags a year. Moving to reusable containers offers huge potential to cut single use plastic waste.

The financial implications for the potential move away from single use bags and the operational changes needed were both outlined by officers. The Committee were informed that funding from Welsh Government may be available to assist with the switch.

Members discussed the different types of boxes/bags available, and members of the public were invited to give their perspective, particularly from the viewpoint of older people and disabled people. This has informed the final shape and design of the containers being trialled e.g. having a box with a lid for glass waste to reduce risk from broken glass. The Committee were supportive of the possibility of a trial area being run initially and sought reassurances that additional boxes/sacks would be available for free should the public require them.

The Committee **resolved** that: -

- 1) the move away from single use bags be fully supported to a new box/sack.
- 2) further investigations be undertaken by officers on the various options available for the new receptacle and a report be brought back to a future meeting of the STC.

In September 2023 the Committee then considered wider future waste strategies.

Implementations of all service improvement actions contained in the current Strategy had meant that the Council achieved a recycling rate of over 70% in 2022/23, two years earlier than required by legislation. In addition to achieving a high level of recycling, the most recent WLGA financial benchmarking from 2021/22 showed that the Council provided the most cost-effective waste management service in Wales (i.e. the lowest net cost per household).

A future waste strategy is being developed to ensure the Council continues to deliver a highly effective and cost-efficient service and also deliver further carbon reductions.

The Committee considered how carbon reductions could be delivered by reductions in residual waste through increased recycling, changes to the power source and/or deployment of collection vehicles, and reductions in the use of plastic recycling bags.

Reductions in residual waste would be achieved by diverting more waste from thermal treatment (energy from waste) into re-use or recycling through an expansion of the number of recycling streams collected at the kerbside. In line with Welsh Government Strategy, the kerbside collection of additional recycling materials, such as plastic film, cartons, and textiles would be trialled to assess for quantities, quality, recycling markets, and sustainability.

Vehicle emissions could potentially be reduced by: -

- Introducing seasonal garden collections which would lower the mileage travelled.
- Considering switching to alternative low emissions vehicles (e.g. electric or hydrogen).

The Committee discussed the positive move to add additional recycling materials to kerbside collections, and the service improvements achievable through the pilot of seasonal garden waste collection.

In addition, the Committee discussion raised wider points around how fixed recycling bins for recycling 'on the go' were not a good source of recycling due to contamination, and how a Welsh Government deposit return scheme would encourage the public to return products and therefore reduce waste.

The Committee **resolved** that: -

- 1) In principle, the Committee be supportive on the potential for future waste strategies to aim for reductions in residual waste, in turn leading to higher recycling rates and the resulting carbon savings.
- 2) In principle, the Committee supports the options to reduce future fuel usage for waste collection vehicles.
- 3) The Committee supports the use of the Reusable Container provided, subject to larger families being supplied with multiple boxes.

Waste Strategy Update (April 24)

Update yet to be presented.

To note the service team are in discussions over possible participation in a WG led and funded plastic film collection trial planned to start in the Autumn. If chosen as one of the participants in the trial, consideration will also be given to determine whether we could also run trials for the collection of other materials, such as textiles and cartons, at the same time.

6. Financial Implications.

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Any subsequent implications would be set out in individual reports to Cabinet.

7. Legal Implications.

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report. Any subsequent implications would be set out in individual reports to Cabinet.

8. Integrated Assessment Implications.

- 8.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, 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 Acts.
- 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.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

8.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being' goals.

8.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

8.2 This is a for information report. As such an IIA screening is not required.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices: None.