

Natural Environment Inquiry Planning Meeting
10th May 2018

The Panel met to plan the inquiry going forward. The Panel have had service overviews and have a clear idea of the current situation in relation to the Councils approach to the Natural Environment and Biodiversity.

The Panel are now in a position to decide who they want to hear from in an evidence gathering capacity and the direction of the inquiry.

The draft Panel sessions are listed below.

There will also be additional meeting sessions for the Panel

<u>Sessions/Information Gathering</u>	<u>Invited Attendees</u>
Meeting 1 June 18th 9.30am CR1 Civic Roundtable Session	NRW, RSPB, National Trust, Wildlife Trust Wales, Bug Life, Plant Life, Marine Conservation Society, Butterfly Conservation Wales, Wales Environment Link
Information Gathering July Financial Aspect	European Funding Team/ Ben Smith – Head of Finance
Meeting 2 July Roundtable Session	SCVS, Friends of Parks (Ian Beynon?), Swansea Friends of Parks Forum
Meeting 3 August Legislative Aspect	Future Generations Commissioners Office and representative on the Environment Act
Meeting 4 August Panel Session	Planning Phil Holmes – Head of Planning 1. Regeneration/City Planning 2. Domestic Planning Applications
Meeting 5 Panel Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive Phil Roberts • Leader Cllr Rob Stewart • Cabinet Member David Hopkins

The inquiry is focusing on maintaining, enhancing and promoting the natural environment and biodiversity in Swansea.

Much of the discussion took place around how the natural environment and biodiversity are considered not only during day to day decision making processes but also at key moments such as major development project planning and budget setting.

The issue of planning keeps occurring. There was discussion around how the concepts of environmental wellbeing are considered when making decisions around development in Swansea.

The Panel feel that there should be a much stronger stance around protection of green spaces and the biodiversity in them and also the environmental connectivity of sites.

This also raises the question for the Panel over the involvement of the Nature Conservation Team. Are they being involved at the right time in the decision making process? Are they given the opportunity to explore the issue sufficiently (time scales)? Does the team have the resources in the first place to undertake the amount of work required?

It was clear that the Panel are mindful of not only the environmental impacts of these decisions, but the legislative ones.

It has been made clear that there could be a range of consequences flowing from both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 if the stipulations under them are not met. This may include but not be limited to financial, reputational, legal, environmental and political fallout.

This has led the panel to extend an invite both the Future Generations Commissioner and an officer from the Environment Team in Welsh Government to advise on the legislative impacts if the requirements under the acts are not fully met.

The next session will be a roundtable discussion with organisations who contribute to the natural environment and biodiversity in Swansea.