

## Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's **Natural Resources and Biodiversity**

### **1. Why this is a Well-being Objective**

- We shall seek across the range of the Council's responsibilities, as appropriate, to maintain and enhance biodiversity, reduce our carbon footprint, and improve our knowledge and understanding of our natural environment, thus benefiting our health and well-being.
- Swansea is one of the most ecologically rich and diverse counties in the UK. Its unique variety of habitats and species and wonderful range of parks, greenspaces, nature reserves, beaches and landscapes needs to be maintained, enhanced and sustainably managed for the benefit of everyone now and into the future.
- Our future survival and quality of life is dependent on a healthy resilient natural environment and the multiple benefits it provides to society.
- Our natural environment and biodiversity is under threat and in decline due to unsustainable human activities. Habitats and species are being lost at an alarming and unsustainable rate.
- We urgently need to tackle climate change by reducing our use of carbon and by maintaining and enhancing resilient ecosystems and a strong green infrastructure network to help us mitigate for and adapt to the pressures of climate change.
- We have a legal duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and under the Well Being of future Generations Act 2015 (Resilient Wales goal) to protect and enhance biodiversity and maintain resilient ecosystems, and to report our progress to Welsh Government.
- Evidence shows that contact with nature has significant benefits for people's physical and mental health.
- Our future prosperity and well -being is dependent on a healthy resilient natural environment.
- We need to work with nature to improve the quality of our air, water and soils.
- We want everyone to understand and appreciate the unique value and fragility of Swansea's outstanding natural environment and to play their part in looking after and enhancing it.
- Our ambition is for everyone in Swansea to have access to and to benefit from an ecologically diverse, attractive, well managed and resilient natural environment.
- We want to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity so that its contribution to Swansea's economic and social well-being is not lost or reduced.
- We aim to create a greener more sustainable, ecologically diverse and resilient county, where its unique natural environment is recognised as one of its most valued and distinctive assets.
- We have a moral responsibility to look after biodiversity for its own intrinsic value.

### **2. The steps we said that we would take to meet this Well-being Objective.**

- Develop, adopt and implement a Corporate Biodiversity (Section 6) Action Plan.
- Work with partners to develop and deliver a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swansea.
- Develop and adopt a Council tree policy.
- Begin to map existing Green Infrastructure assets and ecosystem service provision, and identify areas, which provide the best opportunities for improvement.
- Undertake a preliminary biodiversity audit of Council owned land and where possible manage our corporate assets for the benefit of biodiversity and natural resources.
- Work with partners to develop and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity and improve ecological connectivity.
- Work towards creating a low carbon economy, which promotes renewable energy and takes actions to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Continue to participate in and support the Low Carbon Swansea Initiative.
- Support initiatives that will increase Swansea's urban tree cover.

- Improve awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events.
- Provide opportunities for schoolchildren to access and learn about their natural environment.
- Work towards improving access to and maintaining the quality of our parks and greenspaces.
- Continue to deliver a programme of wildflower planting and management.
- Engage with local communities to encourage volunteering and to support them taking action to enhance and maintain their local greenspaces and wildlife sites.
- Take actions that help to control invasive non-native species
- Undertake (selected or targeted) enhancements to greenspace as part of an environmental works programme to meet our commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- Minimise our use of non-recyclable products and materials, and recycle more waste.

### **3. What success will look like.**

- Swansea's outstanding natural assets are recognised as underpinning the health, well-being and success of its citizens. Knowledge and understanding of our natural environment and how we can maintain and enhance it is improved and applied. This helps citizens benefit from ecosystem services and the opportunities of a low carbon economy. Trees and other habitat are valued and supported. Biodiversity is maintained and enhanced, our carbon footprint is reduced and resources are used less and recycled more.

### **4. Progress taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective – what worked.**

#### A Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan.

- This year has seen the submission of the Council's first Section 6 Monitoring Report to Welsh Government outlining what it has done to comply with the Biodiversity Duty introduced under the provisions of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Since this Act came into force the Council has made significant progress at both a strategic and operational level to maintain and enhance biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems. A three year Action Plan covering 2020 to 2022 is being developed and will include the 17 steps that form part of this well-being objective.
- A corporate Biodiversity Working Group was established in August 2019 to coordinate implement, monitor and review the Action Plan. In order to benefit from greater integration, the Group's remit has been widened to consider climate change and the Council's response to the Climate Emergency. The Group is now known as the corporate Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group. Over the past year, the number of services actively engaged in in this work has significantly increased with representation from strategic as well as operational services.

#### Green Infrastructure Strategy

- This year we have consulted on our draft Swansea Central Area Green Infrastructure strategy which identifies the benefits and cost-effectiveness of green infrastructure i.e. reduced flood risk, summer cooling, cleaner air and water, reductions in noise, better mental and physical health, gains in biodiversity, reduced CO2 emissions and energy costs and a strengthened economy. The strategy, which is entitled 'Regenerating our City for Wellbeing and Wildlife', sets out a vision for the central area of Swansea to be much greener, creating green spaces which deliver resilience, prosperity, health and well-being. The intention is to double the amount of green infrastructure (with the exception of open water) within 10 years to create a distinctive destination city with a high quality environment which is more liveable, better adapted to climate change and better for people and wildlife.

- The Strategy also includes a Green Space Factor Tool. This practical tool is designed to increase the quantity and quality of green infrastructure and maximise compliance to the Welsh Government's statutory Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Standard 2019. 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.
- This work is already helping to guide developers on how nature can be integrated into their designs including vertical wall gardens, urban allotments and more trees. Two of the city's main housing associations have pledged to take part with Coastal Group planning a green roof on their office block in the city centre and Pobl providing more greenery in its developments.
- A County wide green infrastructure strategy is also being developed. This wider strategy will be appropriate for adoption by adopted by Public Service Board partners. Both strategies will be supported by Supplementary Planning Guidance which will set standards.

### Case Study: Swansea - A National Park City

**The draft 'Regenerating our City for Well-being and Wildlife Strategy' includes the desire to work towards National Park City Status".** These are cities where people and nature are better connected, are rich in wildlife and where every child and young person benefits from exploring, playing and learning outdoors. They have high-quality green spaces and good air quality. Green cover in the city is currently estimated at 13 per cent but the aim is to increase this to 26 per cent by 2030. Rob Stewart, Leader of Swansea Council said: "Swansea is undergoing a once in a generation regeneration and as the city is rebuilt, we will deliver a greener more beautiful natural environment for everyone to enjoy, but more importantly one that keeps us healthy. New 'green lungs' will be created across Swansea as we work with Natural Resources Wales to create what could be Wales's first national park city with new green public areas, woodlands and other nature supporting spaces. We know there is lots of work to do but we are determined Swansea will lead the way in Wales."

### Council Tree Policy

- Trees are managed using nationally and internationally recognised standards and a set of comprehensive guidance is available on the Council's website. The Council aims to fully update and formalise a tree policy, which will 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 and tree groups that contain an estimated 250,000 trees and 38,000 individual trees mapped and surveyed in Parks, Schools, Cemeteries, Housing Land & Highways.
- A recommendation from the Natural Environment Scrutiny Report was agreed this year to 'Develop and adopt a Council tree policy, which encourages planting of native species trees where appropriate'. The consideration of native species where possible is already implemented in practice and will be integrated into the tree policy. It will complement the Draft Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland on Development Sites Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- The Swansea Local Development Plan protects trees and encourages further planting. It explicitly includes the planting of trees in the creation of linkages between existing habitats and in the creation of 'Place' especially where new neighbourhoods are developed. Importantly, in addition to the compliance expected of Council services, the policy also raises awareness of the

rights and responsibilities of the public and encouraging “ownership” of the planting and management of trees.

### Case Study: Penllergaer Tree Felling Prosecution

**Seventy trees, including a giant Redwood, were felled on land at Penllergaer, near to a housing development.** Following a five-month long investigation, the Council issued a court summons to a number of individuals. The housing developer and a number of individuals were fined a total of £420,000 after being found guilty in August 2019 of breaching tree preservation regulations attached to trees next to the building site. Swansea Council welcomed the sentencing those involved in the felling of a large number of protected trees. Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management, said: "The outcome is a reflection of the hard work the Council has undertaken to investigate this environmental crime. In monetary terms, these trees held a significant value but no amount of money or fine can replace the value of the trees in terms of what they mean to the community and Swansea as a whole. I would like to thank all the teams involved including our Tree Officers and our legal team. Hopefully today's outcome will send a strong message out to developers or the public that removing protected trees without permission is something we will follow up strongly and through the courts if necessary." The convictions have been appealed and the case is currently listed for hearing January 2021.

- This year the Council has implemented an Ash dieback management strategy to tackle Ash trees affected by Ash Dieback, a fatal disease threatening the entire species. The fungal disease causes trees to become brittle over time with branches breaking away from the main body of the tree. If they are not identified and dealt with, trees are at risk of collapsing, presenting an immediate danger to the surrounding area. A cross cutting Ash Dieback Action Plan is in place, so far, around 3,000 Ash trees have been surveyed on public land, many of which show varying signs of Ash Dieback. All our resources will be focussed on dealing with diseased trees on public land, by acting now, we reduce the risk that diseased trees will fall on people, property, power lines and roads in future.

### Urban Tree Cover Initiatives

- Over the last year, the Council has involved and supported local communities in participating in initiatives that maintain and enhance tree cover. Work has included the Trees for Cities project which included planting over 4000 trees (whips) abutting Mynydd Newydd Playing Fields and tree planting with volunteers at Ravenhill Park and Singleton Park.
- Around the city centre we are creating new parkland, new green areas, planting many more trees and a delivering a huge re-greening programme. The £12 million Kingsway development has resulted in 170 new trees being planted in the adjacent areas. Although around 50 existing trees had to be removed following assessments. By the end of the programme there'll be around 220 trees - an increase of 100%. It will increase biodiversity in the city centre, help combat the Climate Emergency and make Swansea a more pleasant place to live in, work and visit.
- New trees including species such as red maple, London plane, and birch – have been planted close to the Tesco Marina store as part of Wellington Street's development. Unfortunately while it was necessary to remove eight trees to facilitate two way traffic and entranceway trees they have been replaced with 17 semi mature saplings. The Council continues to work closely with partners such as Coeden Fach, a local, not for profit nursery, where volunteers help nurture indigenous trees. It has also supported the planting of trees through partnerships working with

Swansea Community Green Space Project, Swansea Tree Forums, Coed Cymru the Woodland Trust, Trees for Cities and others.

#### Welsh Housing Quality Standard Green Space Improvements

- A significant investment was made in green space improvements for neighbourhoods where Welsh Quality Housing Standard improvements are also being made until December 2021. Site surveys and preparation of plans for environmental enhancements within Council housing estates have been completed and works undertaken. Swansea Council is introducing the greenery as part of a plan to improve the residential environment. In April 2019, 144 new trees for Penlan were planted by the council's tree services unit on behalf of the housing team. The semi-mature trees standing 10-12 feet tall represented a wide variety of native and ornamental species.

#### Mapping Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Opportunities

- High level mapping at a macro level has been completed using a Welsh Government grant obtained for initial ecosystem mapping. This starts to identify areas of poorest environmental quality and prioritise areas for enhancement. Improved monitoring evidence and wider public and corporate understanding of the benefits of ecosystem service provision will help to put sustainable development at the heart of Council policies and ensure Swansea's unique natural environment is valued.
- More detailed mapping of existing Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure assets and ecosystem service provision on a ward by ward basis is being planned. This process will involve 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.
- Mapping technologies also helping flood management resilience planning particularly in relation to adverse weather and flooding. The Council continues to work with Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Water and developers, looking to support green solutions to combat flood risk due to local sources, surface water flooding, watercourses and groundwater. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) training opportunities were identified.
- A new key performance indicator has been developed based on the Bathing Water Quality for Swansea Bay linked to the prediction model and public message display. This found that water quality was 'good'.
- The Council has worked throughout the period to be in a position to submit an application to the International Dark Sky Association to gain Gower Dark Sky Community status. A pre-requisite for this is the review of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) relating to lighting within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This has now been incorporated within the latest version of the AONB Design Guide, which is due to be consulted on and adopted by the end of 2020.

#### Biodiversity Audit of Corporate Assets and Effective Management

- A scheme of work has begun reviewing all council assets in terms of biodiversity. Actions include a review of all Council owned Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), a survey of land identified for disposal, a review of grazing plans and an biodiversity and ecosystem services

audit of all Council owned estates land. We continue to monitor and survey the Council's biodiversity resource to improve our evidence base and understanding of the benefits.

- A Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry recommendation in 2019 was to insert a relevant biodiversity clause into service level agreements, licences, etc. which relates to land use and land management ensuring that the importance of these clauses is made clear to the land managers/occupiers. This clause has been already inserted into service level agreements for community groups managing green space and going forward work will take place so more detailed and relevant biodiversity clauses are inserted into all service level agreements, licences, etc. Other examples include contracts relating to grazing sites and those with external event organisers that require Council consent before certain activities (e.g. clearing land, special events, etc.) are undertaken to prevent loss of biodiversity.

#### Enhancing Biodiversity and Improving Ecological Connectivity

- The Local Biodiversity Action Plan is currently undergoing a review by the Swansea Biodiversity Partnership. This will update actions and incorporate new species and habitats declared of principal importance in Wales by the Welsh Government since the last update in 2005. This document will become the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Swansea.
- Collaborative working with services areas across the Council and with partner organisations is improving the biodiversity ecological connectivity across sites. We have worked with Highways, Parks, Housing, Education, and Corporate Properties to identify and take forward pilot projects such as developing verge habitats, wildlife corridors and habitats to encourage pollinators.
- Work took place on a Development and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), which has been approved for public consultation. This requires the Council to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems. This duty is embedded as an objective in the Local Well Being Plan, is a Priority in the Council's Corporate Plan and incorporated as policy within the Swansea Local Development Plan. The SPG specifically focusses on how the Council will follow a "stepwise approach" to implementing the biodiversity duty through its own planning decision making process. It will integrate greater obligations around biodiversity with some major developments 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.

#### Case Study: Swift Bricks for all new Council houses

**Thanks to a simple but rather special new initiative, all new council houses being built in Swansea in future will offer swifts the chance to set up their own family homes under the eaves of the buildings.** A special 'swift brick' will be included in the design and build of scores of new-build council houses so that the birds can use them as safe nesting places in the years ahead. Cllr Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Energy, said "Swansea Council will be among the first in the country to fit 'swift bricks' as standard in new council homes to create homes for the birds. She said: "It's a really simple but highly-effective way to make an important contribution to the wildlife communities in our city". For centuries swifts have naturally made their homes in spaces under the roofs of houses, but the modern design of buildings has made it harder for them to find the nooks and corners they need, hence the need for swift bricks. Swift bricks come with the support of the RSPB. They are made of hard plastic and are the size, shape and colour of a standard house brick. A hole allows the swift entry into the space behind the brick so they can nest between the outer wall

and inner-wall of the building without troubling the roof space or the human family they share the house with.

### The Climate Emergency

- Swansea Council has recognised the key role we have to play in tackling climate change and passed a Climate Change Emergency notice of motion in June 2019. The motion calls upon both the UK and Welsh Governments to provide us with the necessary powers and resources to ensure that Swansea becomes carbon neutral in 2030 and to promote a greater awareness of climate change amongst the local population. It also acknowledged the importance of working with expert partners to identify how we can build on these actions moving forward.
- We have for some time recognised our role as both a key provider of services and a major employer in the local area and have undertaken a range of activities to promote renewable energy, support a low carbon local economy and reduce our carbon footprint. However, the Council views it essential that the city as a whole plays its part in tackling the challenges of climate change. Synergies with Public Service Board's Working with Nature Group's local area objective have been identified and relationships with expert organisations established. Swansea Environment Forum has accepted the Council's invitation to assist in developing its climate action plan particularly in relation to supporting and facilitating wider stakeholder engagement.
- A Climate Change Charter has been drafted setting out headline commitments that the Council seeks to adopt and which it encourages all organisations within the local authority area to also commit. An appropriate date was being discussed prior to the coronavirus crisis to launch the Climate Change Charter for Swansea with the aim of as many private, public and third sector partners as possible signing up. The planning of engagement work to reach out to citizens was also well underway with a marketplace style event being scheduled to mark Clean Air Day on 22 June 2020. This accessible event was to be an opportunity for citizens to interact with council services and our partners, ask questions and provide feedback and suggestions for future actions.
- Swansea Council is becoming among the most energy-efficient local authorities in Wales. Over the last 10 years the council has reduced its carbon footprint by 30% but has plans to go even further over the coming years. To enable this we are reviewing governance around climate change as a whole-council approach is essential. The Council's Equalities and Future Generations Future Generations Policy Development Committee (PDC) has been charged with a specific remit to cover the response to Climate Change emergency. At a corporate level, the Biodiversity Working Group has been extended to incorporate Climate Change so both related issues can be tackled in an integrated way. Work had begun reviewing relevant Council policies and looking at how they align with tackling climate change or where gaps may exist.

### A Low Carbon Economy

- Our Energy Strategy and the City Deal regeneration are key mechanisms by which the Council works towards a low carbon economy. These projects along with sustainable and active travel measures to combat climate change are detailed within the 'Economy and Infrastructure' (although a low carbon approach increasingly proactively underpins all our well-being objectives). Other highlights include:
- We are continuing to seek opportunities to replace our corporate fleet with Ultra low emission vehicles, which is currently the largest in Wales; Electric Vans (40); Electric car (1) and working

with others nationally to urge Welsh Government to develop electric car charging infrastructure. We are also in the process of developing an infrastructure of Electric Charging Points, which will include 32 charge points and associated recharging bays which will be installed in 12 car parks across Swansea. All the electricity supplying the pillars will be 100% sustainably sourced.

- We are continuing to implement agile working so that our workforce can reduce unnecessary travel and plans are underway to vacate the Civic Centre and establish a Central Public Sector hub. This process was accelerated with lockdown. We have been leading the implementation of the One Public Estate programme within Swansea and the South West Wales region. As a result, significant interest from public sector bodies has been established on the proposal to share office accommodation and associated services within a Central Public Sector Hub. The development is a key component of Swansea Central – Phase 2 and is aligned to support the development of an agile work force.

### Renewable Energy

- We procure our energy using Crown Commercial Services Framework Agreements via the National Procurement Service (NPS); 100% is from renewable energy sources. We are also exploring the development of Solar Farm Projects in collaboration with the Welsh Government Energy Services. We support community owned renewable energy schemes, like SCEES, to deliver clean energy and benefit local schools and community buildings. During 2019, the SCEES Solar PV project (covering 11 schools and 1 care home) generated 356,000 kWh. Additional Solar PV installations at the Guildhall and four schools generated 89,000kwh. The Council is exploring the potential for a solar farm to generate electricity that will either be sold back to the grid.
- While Swansea's Tidal Lagoon did not meet the necessary value-for-money criteria to secure subsidy support in 2018 - despite the publication of the independent Hendy Review 2017 supporting the project in Swansea – we have remained committed to the building the world's first purpose-built tidal energy lagoon. Through the Swansea Bay City Deal region, we established a Tidal Lagoon Task Force which reviewed the proposal. The re-imagined concept of an Integrated Dragon Island incorporates the development of a Tidal Lagoon and a large floating development of commercial and residential accommodation. It is envisaged that the proposal will be facilitated through the procurement of a private sector partner as a joint venture, which will remove the need for a large government subsidy. It includes public sector Power Purchase agreements and a broader scope including solar, wind and data storage.

### Case Study: Earth Hour 2020

#### **The Council was proud to participate in and promote Earth Hour on Saturday 28th March 2020.**

Along with our partners and residents, the Council took part in the specular hour long 'lights out' World Wide Fund for Nature event. Cllr Lewis, Cabinet member for Homes and Energy said: "The lights going out at our Civic Centre, at the council offices in the Guildhall, as well as homes across the city, sends a powerful message about just how much we all care about the environment in Swansea. That's why it has become such a special an important event here each year." The annual event celebrates efforts to reduce carbon made to date and raises awareness of the need to do more in future.

- Swansea Council has built up the biggest public sector-operated electric vehicle fleet in Wales. At a major transport conference staged in the city, Swansea Council was being hailed a 'beacon of excellence' by Green Fleet Cymru. So far we have 41 electric vehicles, the biggest public sector



fleet of its kind in Wales. This will help cut our carbon footprint, save money and help reduce air pollution in our city.

- A focus on Corporate Fleet charge-point infrastructure funding remains a priority. Swansea Council has recently been successful with an award of £89,000 WG funding from the Local Transport Fund for the provision of publically accessible, electric vehicle fast charge points in a number of Council-owned parking interchanges across Swansea.

### Case Study: Electric Vehicle Charging Points

**Swansea Council is bidding for a share of £5 million that has been made available to UK local authorities who are developing electric vehicle charging infrastructure in residential areas.** The money Swansea is bidding for will help fund the installation of 26 charging bays in 13 car parks across the city. Each charging point will enable electric vehicles to travel approximately 30 miles from a one hour charge. The Council is hoping the increase in electric charging infrastructure in Swansea will encourage more motorists to go green and use electric cars. The latest bid for funding will also add to Welsh Government transport grant funding (£89k) which was approved earlier in the year and will help fund the installation of electric charging points at the city's two Park and Ride sites. This additional funding bid is key in our efforts to increase the infrastructure in Swansea that is needed to give motorists confidence they can choose electric powered vehicles in the future. Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy, said: "We have made serious commitments to the residents of Swansea to improve our local environment by reducing our carbon footprint. Along with new charging points in our Park and Ride sites, we will now be looking at rolling out even more charging points in car parks close to residential areas all across the city."

### Low Carbon Swansea

- We are a founder member of Low Carbon Swansea Bay (LCSB), a network of public, private and voluntary organisations in South West Wales working to reduce our carbon footprint by sharing knowledge, ideas, networks and training opportunities. Low Carbon Swansea Bay is funded through membership subscriptions and sponsorship and is managed by members with support from Swansea Environmental Forum. We are active participants in the Swansea Bay Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle Group; in addition, engagement exploring hydrogen vehicles has taken place with Riversimple and Swansea University. The Council has also supported an annual Clean Air Roadshow and engaged local businesses and partners by hosting the first Green Fleet Wales event in Swansea this year. To achieve an integrated approach, the Council works with others nationally to urge Welsh Government to develop an electric car charging infrastructure.

### Information, Training and Events

- This year has seen the publication of our popular annual Environmental Events programme, which provides details of hundreds of free or low cost environmental events taking place around Swansea. In addition awareness raising talks and training, workshops have taken place at venues across Swansea. This includes guided tours of our specialist parks, nature reserves and supported volunteering days. Interpretation boards help visitors appreciate environmental and cultural features at both community green spaces and key visitor attractions.

### Opportunities for School Children

- The 'Our Nature our Future' Project funded by NRW has helped to embed the value of outdoor learning and has supported 20 local primary schools to make better use of their local wildlife

sites for learning. It has also helped each school to develop and implement plans to improve their school grounds for biodiversity resulting in wildflower gardens, growing schemes, tree planting, wildlife ponds and habitat creation.

- Collaborative working with the RSPB has helped children to access and learn about their natural environment for the benefit of pupils' health and wellbeing. The programme also connects schools to local Wildlife Sites and introduces pupils to the nature in their local area. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this knowledge may have helped during lockdown as families reconnected with local green spaces as part of their daily exercise.
- Low cost training is delivered at Bishops Wood Local Nature Reserve for schools within Swansea and wider afield. We have supported the international Eco Schools programmes, which encourages schools to promote recycling and reduce energy and water consumption and encouraged our Foundation Phase learning pupils to learn outdoors ensuring a respect for nature, biodiversity and eco-systems. For pupils at Key Stage 4, we have worked in partnerships with our Universities to establish STEM workshops including the impact of climate change.

#### Improving Access to and Quality of Parks and Greenspace

- The Council has mapped access to green space, including access points, and identified opportunities for improvements. The aim is to ensure that at least 75% of the local population live within 300m (5 minutes' walk) of their nearest area of natural greenspace. Work has started on a green fairness policy. Green fairness is about ensuring high quality green infrastructure and natural greenspace is available in deprived neighbourhoods to help improve resilience to climate change and reduce health inequalities. Nature is widely acknowledged to have helped many people cope and build resilience during the coronavirus crisis.
- The annual programme of wildflower planting and management saw over 41,000 square metres of wild flowers sown at almost 180 sites across the city including roundabouts, roadside verges and parks. The Council recognises that native species particularly benefit pollinators and so the aim is to include more native species where possible and also explore perennial planting.
- Eighteen of Swansea's favourite beauty spots have been awarded prestigious Green Flag or Green Flag Community Award status. Among the 2019 winners are six Swansea Council parks including Clyne Gardens, Victoria Park, Brynmill Park, Cwmdonkin Park, Parc Llewelyn and the Botanical & Ornamental Gardens at Singleton. The Green Flag Award is an international mark of a quality park or green space. It is delivered in Wales by Keep Wales Tidy, with support from the Welsh Government.

#### Engaging and Supporting Local Community Action

- We have continued to encourage greater community ownership of parks, nature reserves and wildlife sites and have worked with 'friends of parks' organisations to ensure long-term sustainability of parks and public spaces. We currently have more than 30 active Friends of Parks/Open Spaces with several groups undertaking leases and considering a Community Asset Transfer. Financial investment in community centres and parks have been significant over the last two years, due to external funding, Beyond Bricks & Mortar, third party investment and by the groups themselves.

**Case Study: Library users are writing their own chapter in environmental activism - by tackling litter on Swansea Beach.**

**Groups of friends, workmates and relatives are borrowing litter-pick equipment from the city's seafront Central Library and caring for the neighbouring sands.** They are also taking the equipment - supplied to the library by charity Keep Wales Tidy - to do litter picks in other areas of the city. The Keep Wales Tidy equipment for adults and children is also available at Townhill and Clydach Libraries. Customers, community groups and businesses can borrow pickers, hoops and high-vis jackets before going out, picking litter and disposing of it responsibly back at the library. In doing so they all play their part in keeping their community a cleaner and safer place to live, play and work. Access to equipment helps new and existing groups become more sustainable and helps them to work independently. Robert Francis-Davies, the Council's Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism, said: "I applaud the efforts of library users who go out and care for the environment. It's a Council priority to maintain and enhance Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity and actions such as these by the public are a big help in us achieving that."

- Many of the groups have been successful in obtaining in excess of £300,000 grants as they are able to apply for funding which the Council cannot. A memorandum of understanding has been produced in partnership with the groups, which will assist with funding applications. Buildings have benefited general refurbishment and parks investment has been substantial with new playground equipment, MUGAs, events and family days and planting of new trees and shrubs. The Parks Operations Teams continue to provide ongoing maintenance of all parks, open spaces, green infrastructure and playgrounds. Six Green Flag Awards have been retained this year.
- Several roles across Council services and partner organisations now include volunteer coordination. This involves liaison with all relevant Service Areas, Ward members and external organisations such as Community Councils to encourage and provide volunteering opportunities for adults and children. Co-ordinators also recruit, train and engage with new volunteers, for example, through social prescribing, corporate social responsibility, etc. The Gower Hedgerow Hub project is in its second year of operation having planted 1,500 trees planted in Gower and maintained more than 2.5km of hedgerows. It provides practical opportunities for people to learn about hedges and help look after this important habitat. The Council's Swansea Wildlife Volunteers Group funded by NRW has provided opportunities for local volunteers to help with practical conservation tasks such as sand dune management, tree and wildflower planting, pond creation and woodland management.

**Case Study: Coed Gwilym Park set for new lease of life**

**A much-loved park in Clydach is set for a new lease of life thanks to proposals that will see it being run by the local community council.** Coed Gwilym Park is the largest open space in the village and home to a heritage centre, cricket, football bowls and other sports clubs and has two community play areas. A leasing arrangement with Clydach Community Council means volunteers will be taking over day-to-day management of the park on behalf of local people, securing the park's future for the next 125 years. Cllr Robert Francis-Davies said "The benefit for the council is that it retains ownership of the park and reduces its overall costs. The benefits for communities are that they get a much bigger say in how the park is operated and it also opens doors to funding opportunities for improvements that are not available to the Council." Working with the existing friends of the park group, the Community Council will take a phased approach to improving the look, feel and facilities on offer at the park, starting with new signage and footpath repairs within the park.

## Controlling Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

- The mapping of Invasive Non Native Species has been completed for the whole of the County and sites treated. Species subject to control included Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, wild parsnip and hogweed. A Japanese Knotweed advice leaflet has been produced and guidance and advice is provided on the Council's website. Commercial Services are supporting the marketing, promotion and sale of services that tackle invasive species such as the Japanese knotweed control service. Advice is provided to landowners in various formats to raise awareness of the problem to help control the spread of INNS.

## Reducing Waste and Increasing Recycling

- The latest data prior to the Coronavirus disruption suggested that Swansea was meeting its reuse and recycling target of 64% for 2019/20. In quarter 3, 67% of waste collected was reused or recycled (67.82%), which was a 5% increase above that achieved the same time the previous year. This was an improvement of the 62% being recycled at the start of the year. Residual waste tonnages at the kerbside reduced by circa 15% in the first 6 months this year which equates to about 3,000 tonnes less waste going to landfill every year. This success can be attributed to intensive communications with the public appealing for their help. Campaigns used PR, social media, online platforms, letter drops and radio coverage to increase public support.
- Swansea Council introduced its 'Keep it out' initiative in February in a bid to get non-recyclers on board with other households already doing their bit by using kerbside recycling services. The campaign involved Council recycling officers carrying out on-street surveys of black bag waste to see if recyclable materials were being placed in them. Residents not recycling were then issued with a letter advising they could be at risk of being issued with a fixed penalty notice if they continued not to recycle. The initiative has led to a reduction of around 100 tonnes of black bag waste collected every fortnight and has led to an increase in the amount of recyclable waste collected. The Council is aiming to achieve a 2,600T reduction of the annual amount of black bag (non-recyclable) waste collected from homes in the city and is expected to save more than a quarter of a million pounds in landfill disposal costs as a result.
- This year steps have been taken to increase food recycling by commercial properties with visits carried out to businesses. The focus has also been on promoting recycling in Flats where recycling is often harder due to lack of space and facilities. Seasonal campaigns have included a Halloween reminder to recycle pumpkins as food waste. At the start of the academic year, hundreds of recycling information packs were sent to students explaining how students can help keep their communities clean and free of litter during their stay.
- Swansea Council is working with Welsh Government across Wales on an Absorbent Hygiene Product (AHP) collection and recycling project. The regional Long Term Food Waste Contract (including Bridgend) continues to work well and provide a very cost effective disposal option. To prevent future issues in the long term, responses to new planning applications now encourage better recycling access and amenities.
- We have continued the roll out of reusable pink bags across the city, calling on residents to only put out loose bottles, pots, tubs and trays in the bags. The work undertaken to ensure the quality of plastic improves has led to the Council receiving an income from recycling processors for each tonne collected, rather than having to pay for it to be recycled. The efforts of residents have led to a huge step forward in terms of the quality of plastic we have collected. Our aim is to

ensure that the plastic we collect from the kerb is a high enough quality to be of interest to plastic recycling processors in the UK.

- We have continued to prioritise cleanliness in our communities. Our dedicated fly tipping taskforce provides a responsive and targeted service to fly tipping. We have delivered enforcement training to a number of frontline staff to discourage fly tipping and facilitate an improved response. We have also started to provide training to some of our partners such as Coastal Housing to deter fly tipping at sites they manage.
- The Council is also keen to encourage reuse rather than recycling where possible. As a result our services avoid sourcing virgin materials where possible, reuse parts and offer surplus materials at cost to the public or our partners. Collaborative work has focused on seeking long term recycling improvements and improving the circular economy potential.

## **5. How this Well-being Objective is contributing to the achievement of the national well-being goals.**

- *A Prosperous Wales* - The unique natural environment in Swansea and its Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty supports thousands of jobs in the tourism sector worth £440 million per annum to the local economy.
- *A Resilient Wales* - The resilience of our natural environment is improved by restoring degraded habitats and through habitat creation and improving connectivity.
- *A Healthier Wales* – Trees play an important role in relation to filtering air of harmful particulates reducing respiratory conditions, while natural spaces have a documented beneficial impact on mental health
- *A More Equal Wales* - Involvement in environmental training and volunteering builds skills that are accessible to all.
- *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* – The social benefits that accompany improving the percentage of tree cover and natural open space within Swansea create welcoming communities where people are proud to belong and experience an improved quality of life.
- *A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language* – Accessible, managed green and beach space offers sport and recreational opportunities while Swansea’s physical geography and maritime location have inspired a rich local cultural identity.
- *A Globally Responsible Wales* – Reduces our impact on the planet, moving towards a ‘one planet’ Wales that does not use more than its fair share of resources.

## **6. Lessons learnt and areas for development**

### A Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan

- Implementation of the Action Plan will be overseen by the new Scrutiny Panel for Natural Environment and Biodiversity. It provides a more integrated approach that will contribute to the delivery of the other corporate wellbeing goals. The Action Plan also 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.

### Green Infrastructure Strategy for the City Centre

- The Regeneration Team plan to use the Strategy to advise current and future phases of the Swansea Central Area regeneration programme. The Strategy has been aligned to the Swansea Central Area Regeneration Framework (SCARF) to reflect this. The Green Space Factor tool is

being piloted on the Digital Village Scheme. Partners and developers will be encouraged to use the strategy and tool as a simple and effective means of demonstrating compliance with legislation. Following the adoption of the Strategy an action plan will be drawn up and governance and performance measures agreed.

#### Tree policy

- A Corporate Tree Policy has been drafted with the next step being consultation at the appropriate time in line with other linked activity. However resource issues are and are likely to continue to be challenging due to the onerous demands of the Ash die back situation on internal and external capacity relating to this specialist area.

#### Urban Tree Cover Initiatives

- In addition to providing a register of tree loss/gain on Council owned land, future work involves the mapping of suitable areas for tree planting on council land and the setting of targets for planting.

#### Welsh Quality Housing Standard Green space improvements

- Beyond the December 2020 WQHS deadline, a programme of work will continue to improve green spaces on housing estates. While anti-social behaviour has resulted in a small number of saplings being vandalised just months after planting in Penlan. The community's reaction to the vandals has galvanised support for the project locally. The Council's response has resulted in previously disengaged young people having a personal stake in the neighbourhood improvement process which will inform future planting work.

#### **Case Study: Young people help replace vandalised trees**

**Young people in Swansea have helped to replant trees in a Swansea community after a spate of vandalism resulted in newly planted trees being ripped up.** Swansea Council is aiming to make Penlan greener and started a tree planting scheme in 2019 which has seen more than 300 trees were planted on green spaces and in streets in the community. Regrettably, vandals have since ripped up a number of trees along Heol Gwrosydd and Penderry Road. However young people that are part of the Youth Justice Service have since pitched in with the Council's Parks Team to replace the damaged trees. Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy, said: "We want our tenants to live in good quality homes within a safe and secure community - a green environment will help us achieve this. ""It was disappointing to discover the new trees had been targeted so soon after they had been planted. "The young people within the Youth Justice Service have done an excellent job in assisting the Council with the replanting exercise. Hopefully it will send a positive message out to other young people in the city that they can contribute to a greener, improved community environment."

#### Mapping Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Opportunities

- We plan to take forward the development of ecosystem and biodiversity maps at a ward level in consultation with local residents, Friends of groups and Members and identify opportunities for enhancement. We will continue to work with all service areas and partners to develop a high level map of the County's existing ecosystems services and the potential green infrastructure opportunities, deficiencies and constraints. This will help to inform the development of the County Wide Green Infrastructure Strategy

## Biodiversity Audit of Corporate Assets and Effective Management

- The Council is registered with South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) 2019/20 which monitors and holds biodiversity records. This ecological information helps ensure council services carrying out projects do so in line with the Council's Section 6 Biodiversity Duty. A review of how this services is used and funded is planned to maximise effectiveness and share costs across services.

## Enhancing biodiversity and improving ecological connectivity.

- The unplanned reduction in cutting of verges due to Coronavirus has unexpectedly accelerated the strategy of reducing mowing. The unintentional results in appropriate locations has resulted in a visible increase in nature. Work will continue 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.

## A Climate Emergency

- Swansea Rural Development Programme has set up a Local Action Group made up of people from the third, private and public sector. It has successfully refreshed its governing document the 'Local Delivery Strategy' (LDS) to incorporate a new approach to the way in which work is delivered in our rural communities. The LDS now incorporates One Planet principles to address climate change, by placing sustainability and community resilience as the fundamental element of our work. This is the first time any local authority LAG has used the One Planet approach in Wales to affect strategy and grant making decisions. It is a new way of working and thinking, which will also be required from those who wish to partner or benefit from the fund it manages with Swansea RDP. This acknowledges Swansea Council's declaration of a climate emergency and the urgent need for everyone to change tack away from 'business as usual' to a way of doing things to protect the lives of future generations.

## A low carbon economy & carbon reduction

- We have explored approaches and methodologies for measuring Swansea's carbon footprint with Swansea Environmental Forum and the Public Service Board's Working with Nature Group. Swansea Environmental Forum and the Council have also considered a 'One Planet Swansea' approach to measuring the Council's footprint but an application to Big Lottery was unsuccessful. In order to best measure progress towards a carbon neutral in 2030, we have volunteered to participate in a Welsh Government pilot project to develop standard 'scopes' for the public sector in tackling climate change. Working towards decarbonisation will help provide long term sustainable solutions, particularly pertinent during the COVID-19 recovery. We aim to develop a set of net zero commitments/pledges for COP26 in 2021.
- Our Green Fleet policy will be looking at all options to find ways of reducing emission levels from our fleet, including looking into biofuels and hydrogen fuel cells as well as fully-electric methods.

## Engaging with and supporting local community action

- The Council works with the local community to help maintain environmental assets. However, active, committed volunteers are only one part of a solution which also requires equipment, supervision, training and transport costs. As a result, while the wider benefits to individuals and

the local community are significant, valuable and the local impacts critical, organisational resources are still needed to maintain the majority of our environmental assets.

#### Reducing Waste and increasing recycling

- The disposal of waste wood is a problem, which is forecast to increase due to the impact of Ash Die Back. The Council applied for Welsh Government Circular Economy Capital Funding to support the setting up of a Wood Reuse and Recycling Centre. Agile working refurbishment plans for the Guildhall as with previous transformation projects at the Civic Centre will reuse and repurpose furniture contributing to the circular economy. These plans were disrupted by the coronavirus but will be taken forward in an appropriate form. Moving forward the focus will be on increasing the recycling of absorbent hygiene products and exploration of opportunities to recycle textiles.

### **Part 2: How we have worked when taking steps to meet this Well-being Objective**

- This part of the Review will set out how the Council has worked when meeting the steps to deliver its Well-being Objectives in line with the sustainability principles (5 ways of working) set out within the Act.

#### *Addressing long-term challenges*

- *Safeguarding People from Harm* - An ageing population represents a significant increase in the demand for health and social care services. We will address this by working towards a financially sustainable position, delivering on agreed savings targets and delivering priorities identified by our established improvement programmes.
- *Improving Education & Skills* - The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Educational Tribunal Wales (ALNET) Act 2018 is just one aspect of an overarching ALN Transformation Programme. At the heart of these reforms is a focus on inclusion; putting children and young people at the centre and ensuring they are supported to reach their full potential in the future.
- *Transforming our Economy & Infrastructure* - A long term approach that considers how Swansea can flex and adapt to an uncertain future is particularly evident in City Deal projects which aim to prepare Swansea by building skills and infrastructure for a successful future. Using future trends to embrace new ways of working from 5G to the internet of things will ensure Swansea's future generations are resilient and able to thrive. This is particularly pertinent while the opportunities and risks associated with Brexit are being understood. Investment in projects such as the Kingsway digital employment district aim to future proof the city centre by acting on identified future trends in technology and behaviours.
- *Tackling Poverty* – Our future well-being is dependent upon tackling the long term causes and impact of poverty. Our Early Years strategy is designed to tackle poverty at an early stage by providing support to parents and families and aiming to ensure that children living in deprived communities reach their developmental milestones, before they start school. Our work in schools supports children and young people living in deprived areas by reducing inequalities in educational attainment and access to further and higher education, training and employment. We continue to support individuals to overcome their barriers to employment through co-ordinated person-centred employability support. Our long term approach to tackling poverty is based on the premise that it is “everyone’s business” and we have a cross-departmental



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### **Addressing long-term challenges**

Our well-being, prosperity, quality of life and future survival is dependent on a healthy resilient natural environment and stable climate. We have started work to better understand our carbon footprint, in line with emerging guidance for public sector greenhouse emissions reporting. Swansea volunteered to take part in a Welsh Government pilot exploring this area. We are starting research and development to scope the implications of introducing decarbonisation policies and strategies to inform future work programmes between 2021 and 2030.

### **Preventing problems from occurring or getting worse**

Our Green Infrastructure Strategy will help the Council take a preventative approach to managing extreme weather events like the high winds and flooding of Storm Dennis responded to by the Council in 2020. A planned approach to wider environmental improvements in neighbourhoods should prevent need for more responsive action by designing out opportunities for anti-social behaviour.

### **Working in partnership with others**

The Council has forged close relationships with both national organisations like Natural resources Wales and the RSPB and also local ones such as Swansea Environmental Forum, the Swansea Biodiversity Partnership and the Swansea Environment Centre. The Council provides supports and works in partnership with several key not for profit organisations. The development of tools and strategic guidance for developers is resulting in closer working with the private sector.

### **Integration - Joining things up and avoiding conflicts**

In order to align biodiversity awareness and decision making across the Council in a virtuous circle, the Nature Conservation Team is liaising 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 synergies with activities developing the mapping and identification of environmental opportunities at ward level (these assessments include school sites). It is hoped in the medium term that they can also report back on each school's environmental activities and this can inform the 3 yearly section 6 report to Welsh Government.

## **Involving people**

Over the past eighteen months, hundreds of members of the public have fed into our largest ever engagement with citizens about the natural environment. The overwhelming message from our public engagement was that city nature is important to people; it increases their enjoyment and the time they spend in the city centre. Our actions reflect that finding.

## **Part 3 - How the Council is changing the way we work: Where the change needs to happen**

The Council recognises that we have to work differently if we are to meet challenges in the future. For this change to happen we have to first change the Council-wide systems that support the delivery of specific services.

### **Corporate Planning**

Following the adoption of the Corporate Plan in May 2017, the Corporate Plan was refreshed for 2018/22. This enabled consideration of Swansea Public Services Board's (PSB) Local Well-being Plan, a review of progress and an assessment of the evidence, looking at how we could close any gaps and further maximise our contribution to the National Well-being Goals. The main change following the review was the addition of a sixth well-being objective to the Corporate Plan – 'Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity'. Minor refreshments of the plan have been made each year since to reflect changing circumstances; for example, the Council's Declaration of a Climate Emergency.

### **Financial Planning**

In January 2019, the City & County of Swansea Pension Fund became one of the first Pension Fund's in the UK to adopt an Environmental, Social & Governance policy which commits the pension fund to reduce its already low exposure to carbon based fossil fuel investments by up to 50% over the next 4 years. This is significant as pension assets are in excess of £2bn. An initial review identified Swansea's investments in carbon based industries were already 9% below average. Since then over £0.5bn of assets have been moved into low carbon index tracking funds which has reduced further what was already a low level of investments in carbon-related industries. Alongside its carbon reduction programme in its listed equity portfolio, the fund also actively seeks to invest in energy-efficient infrastructure projects (renewables, solar, alternative fuels) and clean tech in other parts of its portfolio, always seeking to optimise its return, whilst having a positive environmental impact. In future continued pooling will take place with the Wales Pension Partnership. Our Environmental Social and Governance policy explicitly recognises the duty on protecting future generations around exposure to carbon, climate change emergency, and the government aim of net zero carbon by 2050. In 2020, the Fund was recognised as having the best approach to sustainable investment by the Local Authority Pension Fund Awards best scheme in the UK by the Local Authority Pension Fund Investment Awards.

## **Performance Management**

Since the adoption of a new well-being objective in 2018/19, we have worked to identify appropriate and suitably robust performance indicators to fully and quantitatively measure the Council's contribution to improving environmental well-being through the new Corporate Well-being Objective on Natural Resources and Biodiversity. In future years, this reporting mechanism will also include progress relating to the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency.