

Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel Update

1. Remit of the Panel

The Panel is responsible for ongoing monitoring of performance in relation to climate change and the natural environment. The Panel will monitor delivery of the Council’s work, commitments and implementation of agreed plans, and assess progress.

2. Key Activities

The Panel is currently meeting every two months and has met 4 times since the beginning of this municipal year. The issues covered are as follows:

Meeting	Topic(s)
9 November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel • Water Quality and Management • Overview of Climate Change and Nature in Swansea (including key priorities and challenges). • Draft Work Programme 2022-23
10 January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Update (including action plan for 2030 and Response to WAO report: Public Sector readiness for net zero carbon by 2030) • Green Vehicle Adoption • Public / Residential EV Charging • Weed Management / Use of Glyphosate
8 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Conservation – Project Updates • Air Quality Management • Local Flood Risk Management – Annual Update
2 May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Update • Achievement Against Corporate Priorities / Objectives / Policy Commitments • End of Year Review

3. Achievements / Impact

The Panel has written to relevant Cabinet Member(s) following each meeting in order to give its views, raise concerns and make recommendations, for example:

Positives:

- Water Quality and Management - Panel queried if there had been any major incidents locally with sewerage getting into the sea after storms and was pleased to hear lots of work has been done over the last 10 years, and on our most valuable stretches of coast, overflows only spill in extreme conditions.

- Climate Change update - Panel asked about mini hydro power and wanted to know if an audit had been done of potential sites across Swansea. Heard the Council is working with neighbouring authorities on development of a regional energy development plan dealing with how we can 'green the grid', more towards the 2050 target than 2030 target. Work on the procurement exercise for a local energy development plan has only just started (which will feed into the regional plan) and then all opportunities will be looked at when it comes to generation of renewables.
- Panel was pleased to hear the Council has responded to all recommendations from the Wales Audit Office, has a fully costed delivery plan for Net Zero by 2030 and has received the bronze One Planet Standard accreditation (the first within the UK).

Issues / Concerns:

- Weed Management / Use of Glyphosate – Panel feels glyphosate has an effect on pollinators that are essential to the eco system and queried how seriously the Authority is taking the biodiversity of Swansea when it is continuing to use glyphosate. Informed the biodiversity of Swansea is extremely important as is evident in the number of biodiversity schemes the Authority is doing across the County. Heard that in respect of bees and other wildlife, results on toxicity of glyphosate are often conflicting. Panel disagrees with this statement and feels scientific data very strongly shows a positive correlation between the use of glyphosate and health issues within most insects, pollinators, amphibians, and zooplankton populations, particularly bees. Informed the Council is open to alternative viable methods should they become available or should scientific evidence change.
- Public / Residential EV Charging – Panel concerned people who choose an electric car but do not have off road parking are forced to use public chargers and are seriously financially disadvantaged. Panel feels very strongly about this and queried if the Council could consider installing various devices that are available, which allow people to charge on the road from their own properties. Informed the Council has installed several public charge points, so people have the opportunity to charge within their local community and that this is part of a wider provision of charge points offered by commercial operators. Heard people are not allowed to use private electric vehicle charging cables to charge vehicles on street locations in Swansea due to the risk this poses to the public, but the Council is keeping abreast of new developments that could potentially make that possible in the future.
- Local Flood Risk Management - Panel is concerned attenuation ponds are dangerous and need to ensure safety is the main concern and they are managed correctly. Heard SUDS legislation was brought in by Welsh Government who are keen to promote sustainable features, which provide multiple benefits to a development, and means a lot of drainage features will be above ground which creates biodiversity improvement to the area. Reassured on the issue of SUDS and that ponds are all designed to guidance, so health and safety has been very much considered.
- Nature Conservation Project Updates – Panel queried if three granted funded temporary posts are still running - Community Green Space Officers and Natural Environment Volunteer Coordinator. Heard grant funding was only received for one year, that currently no alternative funding has been found so the posts are not being continued after June 2023 and it is limited in terms of

what can be rolled out. Informed this work remains a priority and officers will continue to look at all avenues of funding.

- Air Quality Management – Panel concerned about air quality around schools and asked if every school in the County has been checked to ensure they are safe. Informed the Council monitors air quality at some schools and is currently compliant across Swansea but that there is no safe limit so is working towards trying to reduce it.
- Panel pleased to hear schools are a focus for Welsh Government and noted that exposure outside schools is a problem and more evidence is needed for Wales in terms of exposure levels and the health impacts on children. Informed that the Council is currently involved with interventions at two primaries and it is part of a Welsh Government support grant received last year.

Action Recommended / Agreed:

- Public / Residential EV Charging – Panel concerned about the amount of street furniture currently, which affects people with mobility issues and discourages walking, and that this could increase if on street charging was introduced. Panel mentioned a pilot scheme in Plymouth where charging points come up out of the street, which would prevent adding to street furniture. Officers agreed to investigate the project in Plymouth and consider this in options for future infrastructure of this nature if funding becomes available.
- Local Flood Risk Management - Panel feel it would be useful to have some understanding of SUDS and its impact on new developments. Discussed a training package which is currently being put in place on SUDS which it would be useful for Panel Members to attend.
- Panel asked for confirmation that environmental links have been made within all school governing bodies to receive support for biodiversity activities and initiatives. Heard progress is being made on this and that there are good contacts with some schools but not all schools. Officers agreed to provide a generic nature conservation link which schools/governors can use to get involved.

4. Future Work Programme

The Panel is keen to ensure focus on the right things so that its work can make a difference. The Panel is also keen to engage more widely with external organisations and the public so that it can benefit from a range of perspectives on Council action and performance and help inform advice on improvement.

The work programme for the next municipal year will be agreed at the Panel meeting in July 2023.

5. Action for the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None.