

BRIDGEND BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE PROGRESS REPORT

2018-2022



Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Legislative Requirements	3
1.2 Governance	4
2. Background	4
2.1 Bridgend County Borough Council	4
2.2 Broader Context	5
3. Key Outcomes	6
3.1 Key Achievements	6
3.2 Challenges / Issues	11
4. Action Report	12
4.1 EMBED	12
4.2 SAFEGUARD AND IMPROVE	20
4.3 RESTORE AND CREATE.....	24
4.4 TACKLE KEY PRESSURES.....	26
4.5 EVIDENCE BASE	30
4.6 GOVERNANCE.....	33
4.7 COMMUNITY	36
5. Summary	38
5.1 Recommendations	38
5.2 Next Steps	39
Appendix A – Delivery against the Well-being Goals.....	41

1. Introduction

1.1 Legislative Requirements

The Environment (Wales) Act, 2016, introduced an enhanced **biodiversity and ecosystem resilience duty** (the Section 6 Duty) for all public authorities in Wales. The duty requires that public authorities must 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.*

As required by the legislation, Bridgend County Borough Council (the Council) prepared, and published, a plan, setting out how it would meet this duty, i.e., what it proposed to do to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystems resilience. This plan, the **Bridgend Biodiversity and Ecosystems Resilience (BER) Forward Plan**¹ (the Plan) was approved by Cabinet on 24th April, 2018. It laid out the approach, and actions, to be taken by the Council to meet the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act, for the period 2018 to 2022.

The Plan structure was guided by the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales², which laid out 6 objectives to support aims to reverse the decline of biodiversity in Wales. Plan actions were categorised into themes, based on these objectives, outlining the Council's commitment to:

- Embed biodiversity into ways of working
- Safeguard and improve management of important species and habitats
- Restore degraded habitats and undertake habitat creation
- Tackle key pressures which lead to habitat and species loss and fragmentation
- Improve the evidence base for biodiversity
- Ensure governance is in place to support delivery of the Sct. 6 Duty
- Increase community understanding in, and action, for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience (BER)

The capacity for an ecosystem to withstand pressures or demands, whilst still functioning as an ecosystem. Generally influenced by diversity, extent, condition and connectivity.

¹<https://democratic.bridgend.gov.uk/documents/s15257/180424%206%20Biodiversity%20and%20Ecosystems%20Resilience%20Forward%20Plan%202018-2022.pdf>

² NRAP – the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Wales. See <https://gov.wales/nature-recovery-action-plan>

The legislation requires that each public authority must publish a report every three years on what they have done to comply with the duty. In order to meet this requirement, the Council commissioned Catrin Evans Consultancy to carry out an independent review of delivery against the BER Forward Plan, and the Sct. 6 Duty, for the period 2018 to December 2021. This report outlines the findings of that review, alongside initial recommendations for a revised Forward Plan.

1.2 Governance

Corporate Responsibility

Responsibility for delivery of the Sct. 6 Duty lies with Bridgend County Borough Council as an organisation. As outlined in the BER Forward Plan, implementation of the Plan is overseen by the Council's Corporate Management Board, with facilitation the responsibility of the Corporate Director for Communities. The Countryside Team, within the Economy and Natural Resources Section, are lead for biodiversity and advisors to the Council on Plan implementation and how to meet Sct. 6 requirements.

Implementation of the Plan is subject to scrutiny by Cabinet, and the Progress Report will be presented accordingly, alongside recommendations for the revised Forward Plan.

Review Process

An assessment of progress against delivery of actions within the Plan, and in meeting the Sct. 6 Duty, was carried out by direct engagement with relevant departments throughout the Council. In total, 26 individuals, representing 16 teams, provided input to the review process between October and December, 2021. This was carried out by a combination of virtual group workshops and individual meetings. The findings of these sessions have been collated, and are presented in detail in Sct. 4 of this report, alongside recommendations for future delivery. An overview of the key outcomes is presented in Sct. 3.

2. Background

2.1 Bridgend County Borough Council

Bridgend County Borough Council is the governing body for Bridgend County Borough (hereafter referred to as Bridgend), in South Wales. Bridgend has a wealth of biodiversity, with coastal habitats of international significance, ancient woodlands, river valleys and wetland habitats. The Nature Recovery Plan for Bridgend identifies the biodiversity that is important to Bridgend, providing further detail on the pressures, risks

and opportunities that exist for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, therefore providing an evidence base that supports delivery of the BER Forward Plan.

2.2 Broader Context

The state of nature is increasingly making headlines due to the alarming rate of biodiversity decline, with growing recognition that biodiversity should be given equal priority and urgency as that given to climate change. The Senedd has already declared a Nature Emergency, whilst there are calls for Local Authorities to demonstrate their intent to take action to halt biodiversity loss by signing up to The Edinburgh Declaration. The role of a Local Authority is broad, and therefore there are significant opportunities to support national efforts to reverse biodiversity decline and enhance ecosystem resilience.

Natural Resources Policy and Area Statements

The Senedd's Natural Resources Policy sets out the key challenges and opportunities in Wales in relation to our natural environment. These are transposed into regional priorities, risks and opportunities, through production of the Area Statements. Bridgend falls within the South-Central Area Statement, which identifies 'building resilient ecosystems' as one of its key themes.

Well-being and Corporate Plans

The value of biodiversity in underpinning society is recognised in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which puts in place a 'sustainable development principle' and identifies seven well-being goals, which public bodies must work to achieve. Whilst 'A Resilient Wales' is most directly related to a healthy and biodiverse natural environment, biodiversity undoubtedly supports each of the well-being goals, through the multi-functional benefits that it provides. An overview of how activities have contributed to the well-being goals is outlined in Appendix 1.

The Bridgend Public Services Board Well-being Plan sets out 4 objectives, including the ambition to enable 'Healthy Choices in a Healthy Environment'. The Council's Corporate Plan identifies its own well-being objectives, including a need for 'Smarter use of Resources', which introduced targets for delivery of biodiversity schemes in the 2020/21 revision. Clearly, the Well-being and Corporate Plans both recognise the important of the natural environment at the heart of its delivery, whilst delivery against the BER Forward Plan will ultimately deliver against these broader, corporate plans.

A Resilient Wales

'A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change'

3. Key Outcomes

Detail of the progress made in delivery against the Sct. 6 Duty is outlined in Sct. 4. Action Report, however an overview of the key achievements, and challenges faced, are detailed below.

3.1 Key Achievements

Project Delivery

There are a number of regional and landscape scape projects that have been delivered in Bridgend, which make a significant contribution to the Council's delivery of its Sct 6 Duty. Project delivery has been greatly enhanced by the supporting role provided by the REACH Team, which has provided additional expertise in grant funding and project delivery. These include:

Digital Shepherd Project

The project included piloting of grazing tracking collars and activities to raise awareness on conservation grazing and to promote responsible behaviour around livestock and use of the countryside. A new web-based resource pack for schools was created, providing lesson plans and activities from Foundation Phase through to Key Stage 5, and can be found at www.bridgendreach.org.uk/digital-shepherd-resources.



Community Engagement Activities, Dune 2 Dunes © BCBC



Brown Banded Carder Bee © BCBC

Ogmore Washeries

Biodiversity enhancement activities at Ogmore Washeries, a disused coal washery in the Ogmore Valley, included habitat creation and scrub clearance for invertebrates, resulting in a new priority species being identified on site, the Brown Banded Carder Bee. Additional enhancements included native tree planting, laying of wildflower turf, installation of a bee post for solitary bees and bird and bat boxes. The work was funded from the Welsh Government's Local Places for Nature Fund, whilst additional funding to improve access and interpretation will also provide the opportunity for increased access to, and understanding of, nature.

Dune 2 Dunes – See Case Study 1

Case Study 1 – Dunes 2 Dunes

The Dunes 2 Dunes project formed a collaboration of nature reserve managers, volunteers and landowners to sustainably manage the habitats along Bridgend's coastline. Positive engagement with the golf clubs was a key element, successfully delivering a new partnership with these landowners. The clubs have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to sustainable management practices, with two clubs achieving GEO certification, an international ecolabel for golf facilities.



Figure 1 Dry Stone Walling © BCBC



Figure 2 Bee Identification Training © BCBC

Volunteer training provided opportunities to learn skills such as dry stone walling (See Figure 1), habitat management and species identification (See Figure 2), raising the profile of scarce species such as Shrill Carder Bee. Visitor experience and access have been improved by project activities, whilst dune management and enhancement works are already demonstrating positive outcomes for biodiversity, with records of the critically endangered, and legally protected, Fen Orchid increasing from approximately 400 to over 4000 over the course of the project.

The project was funded by the Welsh Government Sustainable Management Scheme, to a total of £312K. Additional project legacy has been secured through the Plantlife Green Links project, the NHLF and EU LIFE funded Dynamic Dunescapes and EU LIFE and Welsh Government funded Sands for Life Projects.

Further detail on the project can be viewed on the *Dunes 2 Dunes Celebration Film* on [YouTube](#).

Internal Engagement and Collaborative Working

There is evidence of positive engagement between the Countryside Team and many departments, leading to good examples of BER outcomes being delivered through collaborative working.

Of particular note is the establishment of the **PSB Asset Board**, which is a delivery vehicle for the Well-being Plan, focusing on the environment, community engagement and benefit. It has provided opportunities for new collaborations and provided an avenue for awareness raising and engagement on biodiversity. The Board aims to work together to improve the quality and extent of natural resources and is able to demonstrate good examples of project delivery and activities which support BER outcomes.

There is an established, and extremely positive, working relationship with Planning, with examples provided of biodiversity requirements being positively supported through the decision-making process and appropriate policies within the Local Development Plan.

The value of biodiversity as an educational resource is recognised, and the adaptive approach taken to the discovery of a bat roost during planning work for developments at Penyfai Church in Wales Primary School provides a positive example of how biodiversity constraints can be turned into positive outcomes. See Case Study 2.

Management of green space and highways as wildflower meadows has been taken on by Greenspaces and Highways, with a regime of two cuts per season of identified areas, allowing wildflowers to set seed.

Case Study 2 – Penyfai Church in Wales Primary

Plans were in place to build a new school for Penyfai Church in Wales Primary, replacing the existing building, which included a detached boiler house. Ecological surveys identified a bat maternity roost in the boiler house, which made use of connecting hedgerows as commuting routes.

Following identification of the maternity roost, the boiler house was not demolished as originally intended, and was refurbished to support the roost, incorporating 'Bat-House' design features. This included modifications to the access points and the provision of new independent heating to replicate the previous heat-leakage conditions, as the existing plant was de-commissioned with the old school demolition. Additionally, the hedge line was maintained/reinforced as far as possible and where this wasn't possible was replanted to reinforce the commuting corridor.

CCTV was installed within the roost to observe the bats and as an educational tool.

Green Infrastructure Schemes have been designed and delivered by the Strategic Regeneration Team. An example of such is the GI Enhancement Strategy for Bridgend Town Centre, which included a GI audit, GI project proposals and action plan, and a best practice GI design specification resource that can be utilised to inform future schemes within the County Borough's town centres.

Awareness Raising and Engagement

There are dedicated, and well resourced, biodiversity pages on the Bridgend Council website, providing engaging and detailed information on places to visit, how to get involved, fact sheets and signposting to relevant organisations and websites. The series of 'How to' leaflets (See 'How to Build a Bug Hotel'), produced by the PSB Asset Board, provides a range of activities that can be carried out by the public. The nature and well-being section of the website is a welcome approach of bringing together features of interest for biodiversity and well-being. See www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/nature-and-well-being.



Bridgend Green Network has been established, comprising a range of organisations and individuals as a central resource for promoting volunteering, joint working and the dissemination of information and good practice. The network was established with Plantlife, and has facilitated knowledge exchange and training, however is currently only funded to March, 2023.

Case Study 3 – Hedgehog Packs



Photo by Alexas Fotos on Unsplash

Residents were invited to apply for a hedgehog pack, which provided an information sheet, self-assembly hedgehog house, a hole fence plate to allow hedgehogs to move between gardens, and a recording sheet. The project also provided an opportunity to raise awareness on the decline of hedgehogs, share facts on their ecology and provide tips on how to help them. There was high interest in the project and 50 packs were very quickly taken up by local residents, each of which were required to meet certain criteria to ensure their gardens were suitable for the introduction of hedgehog friendly features.

Funding for the project was provided by Local Nature Partnership Cymru.

Local Nature Reserves

There are 5 LNRs within Bridgend, with Frog Wood Pond LNR having been extended and Bedford Park declared as a new LNR in 2021. There are good examples of partnership working to achieve management of the sites, including support from Llais y Goedwig. Volunteer support is provided by woodland groups for Craig y Parcau and Tremains Wood LNRs, both providing vital support in achieving the management plan aims of the site. See Case Study – Craig Y Parcau LNR River Walk, detailing access works carried out in 2018, in partnership with Bridgend Town Council, Keep Wales Tidy and Natural Resources Wales.

Case Study 4 – Craig y Parcau LNR River Walk

Erosion of the bank along the River Ogmore had undermined the riverside path, affecting access to the LNR. A scheme was designed to reinstate the path, utilising soft engineering techniques for river bank restoration, using large woody debris, brush faggots and rock rolls.



Image A: Original path © BCBC



Image B: Reinstated path © BCBC

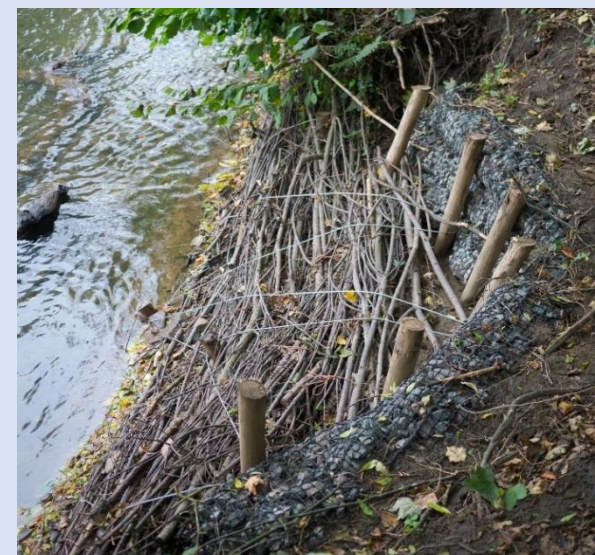


Image C: Bank reinstatement © BCBC

The images above show the path prior to works (Image A), clearly showing how the path has been lost to erosion. Image B shows the path following reinstatement, whilst Image C demonstrates how silt has been trapped in the brush following a flooding event. This silt will build up over time, supporting revegetation and reforming of the river bank.

3.2 Challenges / Issues

Progress on some actions has been limited, however this didn't necessarily mean that there had been no progress in these areas of work, rather that the actions themselves were challenging in the way they were worded. Recommendations for revision of the Plan will include a review of these actions, to ensure they deliver the best outcome for biodiversity with the available resources.

Generally, there are positive examples throughout many departments of collaborative working with Countryside, and embedding of biodiversity requirements into their functions. However, such processes are typically not formalised and are reliant on existing working relationships. Similarly, there is little evidence of delivery against this Plan being monitored, or reported, at a corporate level. Whilst these don't indicate a failure by the Council in delivery of its Sct 6 Duty, it does increase the risk of a biodiversity issue being missed, particularly if there is a change in personnel or new activity being undertaken.

There isn't currently a system for pulling together biodiversity records into a system that can be shared with Countryside colleagues. Ecological assessments are recommended prior to work being carried out, however it would be beneficial to supplement this process by the collation of records into a system that can systematically be accessed by all Countryside staff. This will support the need to build the evidence base for biodiversity in Bridgend, whilst also increasing resilience and providing continuity in the event of staff absence.

It's noted that the Countryside Team is a relatively small team, resulting in there being limited scope to increase the level of ecological support that is available for the Council. Outputs which support delivery of the Sct. 6 Duty is supplemented by project delivery carried out by the REACH team, however this additional staff resource is currently time limited. Ongoing delivery against the Forward Plan, especially if efforts are to be made to embed a consistent approach to meeting the Sct. 6 Duty, would require a review of the current staff resources with a view to increasing capacity.

The cessation of involvement in Kenfig NNR can be considered a reduction in the Council's contribution to securing Bridgend's biodiversity resource, particularly given the loss of knowledge and skills that would have supported site management. However, it's hoped that this will be a short-term loss only, particularly given the level of protection that is afforded to the site.

4. Action Report

This section provides a progress update against each action that was set out in the Forward Plan for 2018-22. Additional queries have also been addressed where relevant, informed by reporting guidance issued by the Senedd subsequent to development of the Plan.

Individual actions will be reviewed for the revised Plan. Where significant changes, deletions or additions are recommended, these proposed changes are reflected here. Where there are gaps in delivery, or recommendations for improvement, these will be reflected in the appropriate section or as part of final recommendations in Sct. 5.

4.1 EMBED

BCBC activities which aim to ensure BER is considered in the way that it operates, delivers services and makes decisions

Action	Progress	Recommendations
Capacity Development		
<p>1 Develop communications approach on BER outcomes to staff, members, communities and partners.</p>	<p>There isn't a formalised approach in place however there are a number of positive examples of BER outcomes being communicated, in particular to the broader public and to partners, as detailed for action 2, below. Partner communication is achieved through established networks, such as the Bridgend Local Nature Partnership mailing list and Bridgend Green Network Facebook page (of which Bridgend Council is a partner).</p> <p>In terms of internal communications, much of this is achieved through the PSB Asset Board, which brings together departments and PSB partners who have a role to play in management of natural resources.</p>	<p>Whilst there are excellent examples of communication initiatives in place, particularly so for external partners, internal communications are less well-established. Future communications activities should have an increased focus on internal and member communication, to ensure BER requirements are understood across the Council. Furthermore, BER messages would benefit from being embedded into broader, corporate communications, and work being undertaken in development, and delivery, of the Decarbonisation Strategy (A Route Map to Net Zero, 2030), reinforcing the message that climate change and</p>

			biodiversity decline need to be tackled together.
2	Support awareness raising and capacity building in relation to BER through community ambassadors, knowledge exchange sessions, training events and BER web-based material.	<p>Internal: There is general awareness of the need to address BER within the Council, with levels of engagement with Countryside varying between sections. Awareness raising and capacity building of internal colleagues has generally been achieved through dialogue and engagement, supplemented by ad hoc training where opportunities have arisen, or where specific needs have been identified. These have included topics such as protected species (in particular in relation to bats), sustainable urban drainage or invasive species. Dissemination of information is generally manager led, often as a result of external communications or feedback from regional meetings, such as the Planning Officers Society for Wales (POSW).</p> <p>External awareness raising and capacity building: The Council biodiversity webpages are well resourced, providing information on places to visit, how to get involved, fact sheets and signposting to relevant organisations and websites. The nature and well-being section of the website brings together features of interest for biodiversity and well-being. See www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/nature-and-well-being. Targeted projects include the Urban Hedgehog Resource Packs, funded by LNP Cymru, which encourage Bridgend residents to help and think about nature and wildlife, which included provision of a hedgehog house. See Case Study 3.</p> <p>Bridgend Green Network has been established, comprising a range of organisations and individuals as a central resource for promoting volunteering, joint working and the dissemination of information and good practice. The network was established with Plantlife, and has</p>	<p>It's recommended that future action is categorised to target groups, to ensure most important audiences are captured in awareness raising activities, to include:</p> <p>Staff: maintaining engagement where it exists, and broadening engagement into new areas. In order to take a consistent approach with new staff, a basic level of knowledge of BER requirements and points of contact could be included as a corporate induction e-learning module.</p> <p>Elected members: the Council would benefit from more regular, or formalised, engagement or awareness raising with elected members, tying in to established member training programmes.</p> <p>External: The Green Network is a valuable resource, providing a framework for knowledge sharing, engagement and action. The network is currently facilitated by Plantlife, however there are notable benefits to Bridgend Council in ensuring its continuity, and efforts should be made to secure funding / resources to maintain this function beyond March, 2023. Additionally,</p>

		<p>facilitated knowledge exchange and training, however is currently only funded to March, 2023. Tree ambassadors were developed through Single Revenue Grant funding, however lack of funding has resulted in this scheme becoming inactive. The Local Nature Partnership is a network of interested individuals and organisation, with the aim of reconnecting people with nature, but have not met recently due to Covid.</p>	<p>whilst recognising that online meetings don't suit all people, efforts should be made to re-establish meetings with the Local Nature Partnership, and the resources to support both networks could be considered simultaneously. The Nature Partnership is an important function, providing expertise, knowledge and evidence on the biodiversity status for Bridgend, which underpins delivery of the BER Forward Plan.</p>
<p>Corporate landlord and Community Asset Transfer</p>			
3	<p>Investigate options to include BER outcomes as part of Community Asset Appraisal</p>	<p>Transfer or disposal of assets is generally carried out in consultation with Countryside, with measures put in place to maintain or protect areas with biodiversity value, either through the use of conditions on leases, or by halting proposals due to biodiversity constraints on the site.</p>	<p>Formalise an approach to ensure measures are consistent for all activities, building on the positive relationship that is already in place. This could include inclusion of BER outcomes in the Packs of Information to accompany any asset transfer, and taking a proactive approach to inclusion of enhancement opportunities.</p>
4	<p>Support BER through the delivery of the 2021 Asset Plan</p>	<p>The 2021 Asset Plan provides the overriding strategy for management of Council assets, and is shortly to be updated for the 2022-2030 Asset Management Plan. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience requirements are not explicitly addressed in the Plan however there is positive engagement with Countryside and there are a number of examples of positive outcomes being achieved through delivery of the Asset Plan, as detailed for Action 3.</p>	<p>The 2022-2030 Asset Management Plan is currently in development and initial discussions have identified an opportunity to embed BER outcomes into the Plan itself, alongside decarbonisation requirements. Whilst engagement between Corporate Landlord and Countryside is already established, the process to ensure consistent consideration of BER should be formalised and recognised within this Plan.</p>

Corporate functions			
5	Research options to develop an integrated plan for managing BCBC land holdings through the Corporate Landlord approach which includes objectives and actions for BER outcomes.	The Corporate Landlord approach is in place, with specified responsibilities delegated to key sections, but overall responsibility remaining with Corporate Landlord. The approach to asset management is addressed within the Asset Management Plan. Where works required may impact on biodiversity, Countryside would be consulted.	Actions 3, 4 and 5 to be incorporated, to embed BER Outcomes into the Asset Management Plan and standard working practices in management of assets.
6	Provide evidence to assist with considerations of: 1) Financial and well-being implications of loss/enhancement of biodiversity 2) External challenge on risk register 3) Whole life costing approaches Incorporating BER into programme and project management approaches	1) There is increased awareness and understanding of the well-being benefit from access to green space, of which biodiversity is an integral element. Increasingly, PSB activity is focusing on the links between biodiversity and health, and there has been a targeted approach to promote social prescribing and access to such activities. A Health Impact Assessment workshop was carried out in 2019 which further reinforced the value of greenspace for health, in particular children and young people. 2) Biodiversity is not currently identified on the risk register; there has been no external challenge to the risk register 3) Whole life costing approach has been considered for some schemes, but not as a matter of course, and there is no corporate approach for doing so and there has been no indication that this is likely to change. Where it has been considered, although there hasn't been a specific focus on incorporating BER outcomes, these have been addressed as part of normal planning activities for these schemes.	Whilst it is important that BER is integrated into services and working practice throughout the Council, it would be more beneficial for future action to focus on developing a consistent approach across the organisation. It's recommended that the ambitions of this action are integrated into a broader action in the revised Plan, to embed BER Outcomes into corporate planning and decision making.
Ecological advice and expertise			
7	Continue to deliver advice on ecological matters to services and establish	Ecological advice is provided by the Countryside Team, who support service delivery of departments across the organisation.	The provision of advice is generally a reactive process, responding to requests and queries as they come in. Such a system

	expert call off contract list for in depth advice on BER	There is an established relationship with many departments and it's clear that continuity and the ability to develop working relationships has been important in ensuring that ecological advice is built into service delivery. Support is provided in seeking additional advice and signposting to regulatory bodies / consultant ecologists where appropriate.	is reliant on an established relationship with departments, therefore does require some initial engagement / setting up of processes to ensure a consistent approach across the Council. There are extremely positive examples of engagement and collaborative working within the Council, however it's recommended that actions for the revised Plan include efforts to increase engagement and formalise working arrangements / processes.
Flood Risk			
8	Provide support to: Include BER in flood options appraisals; Include detail of BER options in Flood Risk works	Ecological advice is provided for flood defence works, Ordinary Watercourse Consents (OWC) and new flooding schemes. There are positive examples of integration of BER outcomes into these schemes, such as the flood defence scheme at Porthcawl, funded as part of the Coastal Risk Management Programme. Measures were put in place to protect and enhance biodiversity, including the introduction of structures to encourage colonisation of <i>Sabellaria</i> reef (Honeycomb worms), protection of the dune system and creation of a boardwalk to tackle issues of erosion.	In addition to new schemes and formal processes such as SABs and OWC, ensure that processes are in place in relation to maintenance of existing drainage infrastructure. Ecological input into new drainage schemes is established, however concern has been expressed on incompatibility between management of biodiversity features alongside maintenance as a drainage structure, therefore there would be merit in further collaborative working to agree design and maintenance schedules that meet both requirements.
Planning			
9	Provide observations through the planning system as considered appropriate. Report	There is an established consultation process for development control, with Countryside classed as statutory consultees for major developments and involved in discussions / meetings with developers where potential biodiversity constraints are identified.	Engagement is reliant on consultation by Development Control, therefore does leave some potential for gaps in the process, although there is no evidence that this is the

	<p>content reflects BCBC commitment to BER outcomes and specific opportunities and impacts.</p>	<p>BER outcomes are a material consideration for planning decisions and are reflected in report content. There is a positive working relationship between Countryside and Planning, resulting in good outcomes for biodiversity through the planning process, with examples provided of refusal, mitigation and compensation. It was acknowledged that biodiversity enhancements had been more challenging to achieve, with evidence of enhancements being taken out by the Planning Inspectorate at appeal. Policies set out in Planning Policy Wales 10 in relation to enhancement will support future efforts to achieve net benefit to biodiversity.</p>	<p>case. In order to demonstrate a consistent approach, it's recommended that a review is carried out of the consultation process, which may simply be a formalisation of the process already in place. Additionally, there should be an increased focus on enhancement through the Planning process.</p>
10	<p>Local Development Plan - to be adopted by 2021 - to support the inclusion of BER through whole LDP adoption process, reflecting requirements of Environment Act, PPW 10 and Strategic Regional Planning and Well-being of Future Generations Act</p>	<p>The Local Development Plan was adopted in 2013, with the revised LDP currently at deposit stage. The SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) reflects biodiversity requirements, whilst biodiversity is assessed in more detail for each allocation. Specific policies, developed in collaboration with Countryside, in relation to biodiversity are: DNP5: Local and Regional Nature Conservation Sites 193 DNP6: Biodiversity, Ecological Networks, Habitats and Species 194 DNP7: Trees, Hedgerows and Development 196 SP17: Conservation and Enhancement of the Natural Environment DNP8: Green Infrastructure 201 DNP9: Natural Resource Protection and Public Health 203</p> <p>SINCs (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) were identified in 2011, and a light touch review was carried out by consultants for the new LDP, looking at SINCs that could be impacted by allocations. With exception to one SINC, influenced by there being an extant permission on the site, SINCs are typically only on the periphery of allocations or can be mitigated against loss. The 2021 Annual</p>	<p>Maintain support of inclusion of BER Outcomes throughout the LDP process, to include establishing a process of SINC review.</p>

		Monitoring Report for the LDP confirmed that there had been no proposals granted contrary to the advice of NRW or the Countryside team, which would be detrimental to the conservation of designated sites or protected species.	
Local Transport Plan			
11	To support consideration of BER outcomes through planned investment and maintenance of transport infrastructure	<p>Investment in transport infrastructure in delivery of the Local Transport Plan by the Council is primarily in delivery of the Active Travel network. BER outcomes are considered to some extent in delivery of schemes, although opportunities for mitigation or enhancement is likely to be affected by the route / footprint having already being established. Measures such as replacement of trees and treatment of invasive species are built into the schemes, as are ecological surveys to mitigate impacts on protected species.</p> <p>Maintenance: certain areas have been identified as conservation verges. These are managed by contractors and generally managed in line with the management regime. Some areas of open space have reduced cutting, with desire lines through them for walking / access.</p>	Investment in transport infrastructure would benefit from earlier engagement, particularly in assessment and design of routes. Environmental benefits of such routes are typically focussed on benefits to be had from reduced travel and increased cycling, and it's recommended that biodiversity / BER outcomes are given higher priority in design and / or location of routes.
Transport Options Appraisals			
12	Support included as part of transport options appraisal and evidenced.	See Action 11.	Action to be deleted and reflected within a revision of Action 11.
Parks and Highways			
13	Support the development of a Parks and Highways Biodiversity Enhancement Plan	The Highways and Parks Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy, 2019, has been developed. In addition to providing a strategic overview of measures that could be taken to enhance parks and highways assets, it identifies sites that could be enhanced through changes in management. A key recommendation is the review of the contract	The Strategy makes a number of recommendations that could be progressed, however although there are changes that have been made to Parks / Highways management, it wasn't generally felt that

		that has been awarded for the maintenance of highway verges and land, however it was recognised that this would be challenging within the duration of the contract period.	this was in direct response to the Plan. It would be beneficial to carry out an internal review of the Strategy, reviewing progress on delivery, setting key targets for inclusion in corporate reporting mechanisms. This should be done prior to a reissuing of the highways management contract to ensure that any agreed changes to management can be incorporated into any new contract.
Schools Developments			
14	To support BER considerations in: Development of options appraisals; Development of business plans	<p>There is good awareness of biodiversity requirements in the Schools Development Programme. Biodiversity is a consideration at initial feasibility stages of proposed schools, as well as design and delivery. There are examples of multi-disciplinary project boards being set up, which have included Countryside, whilst additional ecological support is secured through external consultants as a matter of course. Opportunities are pursued to deliver biodiversity as part of BREEAM excellence ratings.</p> <p>The value of biodiversity as an educational resource is recognised and there are examples of a proactive approach being taken to designing in biodiversity features, which support ecosystem resilience, whilst also acting as an educational tool.</p>	Build on the existing working relationship to ensure there is a consistent approach to proactively adopting new design and green infrastructure techniques to further strengthen the positive impact that can be made through sustainable design.
Additional Question (WG Guidance)			
15	Provide any examples of policies or procedures	There are many positive examples of collaborative working and integration of BER into projects or activities. However, these measures are often reliant on working relationships that have been	Seek to further embed biodiversity requirements into corporate processes, policies and procedures, with a stronger

	<p>changed to incorporate biodiversity.</p>	<p>developed over time, rather than there being established processes in place. The exception to this is where planning requirements are well embedded into processes (for example in delivery of major capital schemes), and biodiversity will fall within that requirement.</p> <p>Increasingly, corporate strategies are recognising the importance of BER and their contribution to broader agendas. The Corporate Plan outlines the aim to ‘maintain and enhance the natural resources and biodiversity of Bridgend County Borough’, with indicators set for delivery of biodiversity schemes. The emerging Decarbonisation Strategy: Pathway to Net Zero by 2030 reflects the importance of biodiversity as part of the solution for climate change, through the role of trees, soils and waterbodies in sequestration of carbon.</p>	<p>focus on indicators and targets that reflect a corporate commitment to delivery.</p>
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4.2 SAFEGUARD AND IMPROVE

BCBC activities which aim to safeguard and improve management of important species and habitats

Action	Progress	Recommendations	
Development Control: Advice to Developers			
16	<p>Support use of the SPG in discussion with developers, and work on Masterplans and Area Development Plans and land allocation.</p>	<p>The Biodiversity and Development SPG (SPG19) is available for viewing on the Council website and is included in the list of review documents associated with the emerging LDP. The SPG is referenced through Development Control observations made by Countryside and a proactive approach is taken to supporting use through discussions with developers.</p>	<p>To ensure that the SPG remains up to date, and reflective of new legislation and policies, there should be a review of the SPG carried out for the updated LDP.</p>
Digital Shepherd - Managed Grazing Project			
17	<p>Deliver the RDP partnership managed grazing project to</p>	<p>The Digital Shepherd Project was successfully delivered, and completed, by Bridgend REACH Team, to promote and support</p>	<p>Conservation grazing is an important tool in addressing biodiversity decline in rural and</p>

	develop use of GPS as a management tool	conservation grazing. It was a partnership project, (also part of the NRW funded Sands of Life Project) with NRW, PONT Cymru, a local farmer and Farming Connect. It included awareness raising activities (including engagement with schools) and piloting of grazing tracking collars. Activities included the promotion of the importance of conservation grazing and activities to encourage responsible behaviour around livestock. An online learning tool was created at www.bridgendreach.org.uk/digital-shepherd , which remains live as a learning tool.	peri urban areas, and should remain a consideration for management where appropriate. Additionally, there remains a need for ongoing action and awareness raising of the importance of responsible behaviour around livestock, including the need to keep dogs under control and dealing with dog fouling. Whilst it's recognised that dog fouling is a county wide issue, ensuring that problem agricultural areas are addressed alongside more urban environments, will be important in supporting efforts to maintain, or establish, conservation grazing.
Local Nature Reserves			
18	Delivery of Craig y Parcau Local Nature Reserve Management Plan actions including stabilisation of river bank.	A woodland group has been set up to support management activities within this LNR, Newbridge FAWR (Fields and Woodland Regeneration). Primary management issues comprised dealing with Ash Dieback, invasive species and riparian erosion, impacting on the riverside walk through the LNR. Stabilisation of the bank was achieved through a partnership project, alongside Bridgend Town Council, Keep Wales Tidy and Natural Resources Wales. The scheme was designed so as to include large woody debris and brash faggots as part of the structure, which would naturally silt up and revegetate over time. See Case Study 4.	General comments and recommendations for all LNRs: There is a budget in place for management of the LNRs, which is a positive demonstration of Bridgend Council's contribution to its Biodiversity Duty. There isn't currently a formal review and monitoring process in place, although management is generally underway.
19	Delivery of Frog Wood Pond Local Nature Reserve Management plan including achieving 90% open water.	The pond has been maintained and monitored to ensure retention of 90% open water. Additionally, FPW LNR was extended in June 2021 to include Village Farm Meadow, which provides a new management focus. Small scale coppicing was undertaken by volunteer work parties led by the Countryside Team.	In order to ensure that management and funding requirements remain up to date, a process of monitoring and review should be put in place, alongside retention of resources to ensure implementation.

		<p>Extension of the LNR is a positive contribution by Bridgend Council to its Sct. 6 Duty, over and above the actions already delivered as part of the Plan, and further supporting the ecosystem resilience of Bridgend's biodiversity resource.</p>	
20	<p>Delivery of Lock's Common Local Nature Reserve Management Plan, including grassland mowing regime.</p>	<p>The site is subject to a scheme of management which is operated by the Greenspaces Team, with input from the Countryside Team. This involves a wildflower meadow cutting regime of two cuts a year, with more frequent cuts carried out to maintain access on paths through the grassland.</p>	
21	<p>Delivery of Tremains Wood Local Nature Reserve Management Plan, including circular walk.</p>	<p>Tremains Woodland Ranger Group is established and currently being supported by Llais y Goedwig. The group is carrying out monthly tasks and also inputting into the development of a circular walk, improving accessibility to the reserve. Primary management issues being dealt with are Ash Dieback, littering and some invasive species, which is being dealt with by additional support from the Council.</p>	
22	<p>Deliver the Kenfig National Nature Reserve (KNNR) Management Plan</p>	<p>Prior to December, 2019, management of KNNR was overseen by the Site Warden, employed by Bridgend Council, who was responsible for implementation of the Management Plan. At this point, site management responsibilities reverted to Kenfig Corporation Trust, therefore Bridgend Council no longer has any control or influence over the site.</p> <p>Kenfig National Nature Reserve is also a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and therefore afforded a good level of protection that will not be lost as a result of the change of management. Ongoing management will now be carried out by the Trust, who have put</p>	

		<p>measures in place to facilitate ongoing management. However, the loss of ongoing involvement by Bridgend Council is likely to have at least a short-term detrimental impact on the site's biodiversity, from the loss of skills / knowledge from well-established staff who are no longer involved in the site management. Whilst it's anticipated that the future of the site will remain secure, the change of management arrangements does result in a reduced contribution by Bridgend Council towards the protection and enhancement of Bridgend's biodiversity resources.</p>	
Additional Activities to safeguard / enhance			
23	Declaration of Bedford Park Local Nature Reserve	<p>Bedford Park was declared as a new Local Nature Reserve in June 2021. The LNR, forming part of the Bedford Park Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, includes marsh, woodland, grassland and wetland habitats, supporting both common and protected species, including Dormouse and Pipistrelle Bat. The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales were commissioned to prepare a management plan for the site. Llais y Goedwig have been commissioned to implement the management plan, which will include woodland management in support of Dormouse and invasive species control.</p> <p>Declaration of a New LNR is a positive contribution by Bridgend Council to its Sct. 6 Duty, over and above the actions already delivered as part of the Plan, and further supporting the ecosystem resilience of Bridgend's biodiversity resource.</p>	
24	Implementation of the conservation verge management	<p>Management of green space and highways as wildflower meadows is underway, with a regime of two cuts per season of identified naturalised areas. The areas of naturalised maintenance are:</p>	<p>Management of highways and greenspace is a key mechanism that Local Authorities can utilise to support efforts to reverse biodiversity decline, whilst also contributing</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Spaces: 22.56ha over 24 sites, • Highways: 9.1ha over 21 sites. <p>Additional measures on the highway include a principle of hedgerows being managed outside of bird nesting (where not compromising highways safety).</p>	<p>to climate change efforts through increased soil and vegetation carbon sequestration. Whilst progress has been made in managing the green estate for biodiversity, efforts should be made to regularly increase the extent of highway and green space being managed proactively for biodiversity. Furthermore, an exploration of opportunities to implement measures to remove arisings should be carried out, in order to increase the biodiversity value of sites managed in this way.</p>
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4.3 RESTORE AND CREATE

BCBC activities which aim to restore degraded habitats or habitat creation

Action		Progress	Recommendations
Biodiversity Enhancement Schemes: Ward Level			
25	Deliver ward level biodiversity enhancement schemes involving town and community councils and schools.	<p>Positive examples have been provided of ward level schemes across the County. These include the biodiversity enhancement scheme delivered in Ogmore Washeries during 2020/21 in partnership with Ogmore Valley Community Council. (see Key Outcomes).</p> <p>A number of Green Infrastructure schemes are underway, or have been delivered, by the Strategic Regeneration Team. An example of such is the GI Enhancement Strategy for Bridgend Town Centre, which included a GI audit, GI project proposals and action plan, and a best practice GI design specification resource that can be utilised to inform</p>	<p>There are positive examples of enhancement schemes having been delivered, however collaborative and partnership working to broaden the influence of Bridgend Council remains an important focus for ongoing delivery. It's recommended that future delivery against this action includes an increased focus on supporting partners in developing and delivering biodiversity focused projects.</p>

		<p>future schemes within the County Borough's town centres. Additionally, a tree replacement planting scheme was delivered at Commercial Street, Maesteg Town Centre.</p> <p>There is a proactive approach to the integration of green infrastructure and sustainability measures being built into schools, including lighting reduction, solar power and waste management. Biodiversity is built into school ground designs and forest school is supported and utilised where possible. A positive example was provided of Penyfai Church in Wales Primary School, where a bat roost and commuting corridors were fully accommodated within the scheme, and the opportunity taken to create an educational resource, through the installation of CCTV. See Case Study 2.</p>	
Dunes2 Dunes - Green Infrastructure Project			
26	<p>Deliver RDP partnership project to re-instate biodiverse corridors between the two sand dune areas either side of Porthcawl. Kenfig Burrows and Merthyr Mawr Warren. Funding Application Pending.</p>	<p>Welsh Government SMS (Sustainable Management Scheme) funding was secured to deliver the Dunes2Dunes project, drawing down £312K. The project formed a collaboration of nature reserve managers, landowners and golf club owners to sustainably manage the coast, delivering training, engagement and habitat management. See Case Study 1 and <i>the Dunes 2 Dunes Celebration Film on YouTube</i>.</p>	<p>Dune2Dunes is an exemplar project, enhancing and showcasing the nationally and internationally important coastal habitats of Bridgend. It's recommended that efforts are made to support activity beyond the life of currently funded projects, particularly to increase connectivity with new sites where possible, taking up opportunities for grant funding as they arise.</p>

Tree Management Plan and Actions			
27	Produce a county wide holistic approach to management of trees.	<p>A Tree Management Policy was adopted in 2018, which sets out how Bridgend Council will manage its trees and woodlands, i.e. those which are the responsibility of the Council. It includes management of trees to reduce any associated hazard, whilst also recognising social, economic and environmental benefits of trees. Consequently, the policy sets out some guidance on where requests for removal of trees would be considered non-essential work, therefore demonstrating a positive approach to the retention of urban trees where safe to do so.</p> <p>The policy supplements (but does not supersede) additional measures and procedures in place in relation to trees, such as tree preservation orders and the new policy to included in the new Local Development Plan: SPG07 - Trees and Development.</p> <p>Additional work is underway to address measures needed to address Ash Dieback, in development of an Ash Dieback Action Plan.</p>	Maintain this function, implementing a consistent approach to management of trees and woodland in Bridgend, to include current (and new) issues such as Ash Dieback.

4.4 TACKLE KEY PRESSURES

BCBC activities which aim to tackle key pressures which lead to habitat and species loss and fragmentation

Action		Progress	Recommendations
Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience: Demonstration projects			
28	Develop externally funded, multi partner demonstrator projects for BER which support place-based working.	There are a number of multi-partner projects already detailed within this report, tackling key pressures which lead to habitat and species loss / fragmentation. These include the Digital Shepherd Project, dealing with issues such as dog fouling and promoting responsible visitor behaviour, the Dunes2Dunes project, supporting sustainable	Maintain this function.

		management practices and Ogmore Washeries, improving access to, and understanding of, nature, reconnecting people with the natural environment. The newly funded Cwm Taf Nature Network Project, will build on these activities, supporting volunteer involvement and action across a range of sites in Bridgend, tackling key pressures alongside direct habitat and species conservation action.	
Public Services Board: opportunities and risks from BER			
29	Support the development of a shared approach to BER across the PSB	The PSB Assets sub board is a delivery vehicle for the well-being plan. It is well attended by members of the Natural Resources team and is a conduit for collaborative working and engagement with key departments of PSB partners. The group is well placed to inform and influence priorities in the well-being plan and consequently provides a good opportunity to develop a shared approach to delivery of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience outcomes across the PSB. Activities include development, and delivery, of an Action Plan.	The Assets Sub-board is a positive example of collaborative working and has provided good opportunity to engage with colleagues within the Public Service Board. It is focused on managing the PSB green space estate in line with the PSB Wellbeing Plan and whilst this remains an important outcome, opportunity should be taken to influence greater action through seeking to integrate BER outcomes into broader policies and strategies of PSB partners, alongside other sustainability issues, in particular the decarbonisation and climate agenda.
Rural Development Plan: Regional Working			
30	Continue to input into opportunities for regional working on South East Wales regional projects involving local authorities and businesses up to 2020.	Input has continued to be made into regional working through the Rural Development Plan, however no opportunities have arisen with regards to BER outcomes. The focus for regional working has now shifted to South Central to tie in with Area Statement areas.	Lack of progress on this action is a reflection of lack of opportunity, rather than a failure to deliver on the action, however efforts to continue to pursue regional working opportunities remain important for future delivery. The focus for regional working has

			shifted towards the South Central region, to tie in with Area Statement boundaries, however, in the future a flexible approach should be adopted, to pursue opportunities that best suit biodiversity requirements and partnership opportunities.
Single Revenue Grant			
31	SRG funding proposals incorporate enhanced BER outcomes which demonstrate compliance with enhanced Biodiversity Duty and support BCBC approach to Green Infrastructure.	SRG funding included a series of biodiversity enhancement projects and was a good funding avenue to support delivery of BER in Bridgend, whilst also providing the match funding opportunity to draw down additional grant funding. SRG funded activities included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Parks and Highways Biodiversity Enhancement strategy; • Implementation of biodiversity enhancement works at seven sites within Bridgend County Borough, namely: Badgers Brook Allotments, Brackla; The Wilderness Park and Allotments, Porthcawl; Maesteg Welfare Park; Bryn y Cae Nursing Home Brackla; Bryngarw Country Park; Glanrhyd Hospital and Nantymoel Boys and Girls Club. These schemes included wildflower meadow creation, a tree nursery, woodland management, wetland creation and Hügelkultur (a horticultural technique of building a mound shaped raised bed); • Bat and tree training for BCBC officers; • Through a joint project with Bridgend Ford and Natural Resources Wales over 1200 trees were planted included heritage fruit trees and hedgerow planting. 	The Welsh Government Single Revenue Grant provided a much needed, and reliable, funding allocation to support delivery of biodiversity outcomes by Local across Wales, and consequently cessation of this funding stream is a loss for biodiversity delivery. Generally, current competitive funding mechanisms require higher levels of administration, highlighting a need to ensure there is sufficient staff capacity in order to deliver grant funded projects.
32	Additional activities to tackle key pressures on species and habitats (WG Guidance)	There are a number of measures currently being undertaken which will support efforts to tackle key pressures on species and habitats: Invasive Species: the spread of invasive species is a considerable issue	Additional measures that should be reflected in the revised Plan: Procurement: alongside broader

for Bridgend, as it is for many areas in Wales. Treatment of Japanese Knotweed is well established throughout the organisation and an Invasive Species Management Policy is being finalised, which will outline a more consistent approach to the management of invasive species, not limited only to Japanese Knotweed.

Waste: there is a new team in place to promote recycling and carry out enforcement, with a focus on fly-tipping and dog fouling. The Council is also involved in the Caru Cymru Project (a pan Wales project led by Keep Wales Tidy), working with schools and promoting messages on litter, etc.

Climate Change: The decarbonisation strategy is being developed and climate change is increasingly a corporate priority. Activities include a project to increase charging points for electric vehicles and design of new roads are incorporating ducting in preparation for future improvements for electric charging infrastructure.

Water Quality: Natural Flood Management techniques have been utilised, with a good example of long-term partnership working provided in work carried out in the Upper Garw Valley, to address issues of siltation and high flow rates coming off the hillsides.

sustainability and climate related measures, procurement policies have a significant opportunity to influence positive action by suppliers. The recent inclusion of a 'carbon footprint' question by the Natural Resources Team in tender documentation is an example of the kind of influence that can be achieved by building in sustainability requirements to the procurement process. Expansion of this principle to include biodiversity, or general sustainability measures at a corporate level, would send a powerful message to businesses of the need to support efforts to address biodiversity decline.

4.5 EVIDENCE BASE

Activities which aim to improve BCBCs evidence base

Action	Progress	Recommendations
Flood Risk management: Historic contamination		
<p>33 Undertake research on risk of historic contamination and flooding to biodiversity and well-being and plan for managing risk</p>	<p>Research not undertaken however there is recognition of the issue and there has been some site-specific work carried out which has sought to deal with historic contamination of water course in the Upper Garw Valley. The valley suffers from high flow rates and deposition of silt in the lakes along the valley floor. Feasibility and design work has been carried out, with a view to carrying out interventions which reduce the sediment load reaching the lakes, whilst naturalising the channels and creating additional wetland habitat.</p> <p>Additionally, there is recognition of the issue within the planning system, with strategic flood consequences work carried out for the new Local Development Plan and consideration of flooding, alongside biodiversity constraints of sites, in the Strategic Environmental Assessment.</p>	<p>There has been limited progress against this action however ongoing progress would be better served by ensuring that measures are in place to embed BER outcomes into schemes / activities designed to address historic contamination.</p>
Flood Risk Management: Invasive Species		
<p>34 Undertake research of biodiversity and well-being risk associated with invasive species and plan for managing risk</p>	<p>Research not undertaken however the impact of invasives species is broadly recognised and an invasives policy is currently being finalised, looking to deliver a consistent approach to dealing with invasive species on Council land, and in delivery of Council activities.</p>	<p>There has been limited progress against this action however ongoing progress would be better served by ensuring that measures are in place to embed BER outcomes into management of invasive species.</p>

Green Infrastructure Project: Bridgend; Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot			
35	Development and delivery of partnership project with Swansea and Neath & Port Talbot on evidence base and Green Infrastructure actions	The GI project was delivered during 2019. It created a new partnership across the three county areas, improving the evidence base for green infrastructure across the region. It provided a framework for action and delivery, and funding for initial implementation. 5 sites were enhanced through tree planting, enhancing publicly accessible greenspace. Additionally, it acted as a valuable engagement tool with PSB partners, generating interest in the broader value and importance of biodiversity as a key element of green infrastructure. The mapping work carried out has informed further design and identification of sites for tree planting.	Ongoing review, and utilisation, of the maps generated by the project is recommended, as part of building the evidence base for Bridgend.
Highways Maintenance			
36	Initiate research and planning on role of biodiversity in managing risks on highway infrastructure (drainage, tree maintenance and land management regimes)	Research not undertaken however there has been some activity in managing risk of trees on highways, with a survey of highway trees carried out and development of the Ash Dieback Plan.	There has been limited progress against this action however evidence on the role of biodiversity in managing risk on highway infrastructure is generally available. Therefore, recommended activity for progress would be to follow up on opportunities to deliver collaborative schemes (where those opportunities exist) and to ensure that measures are in place to ensure BER outcomes are considered as part of management of highway risk.
Natural Resources Wales: Area Statements			
37	Support NRW on development of Area Statement in order for it to contribute to BER outcomes	The Council were involved in development of the South Central Area Statement and remain engaged in ongoing progresses and implementation. Opportunities have been taken to align current	There is positive engagement between the Council and NRW on Area Statements, and ongoing alignment and engagement will need to be reflected in the revised Plan.

	for BCBC including the LDP evidence base and well-being Plan.	plans and strategies with the Area Statement, including key documents such as the Well-being Plan and the LDP.	
Public Services Board: Well-being Assessment			
38	Work to ensure Biodiversity Forward Plans of PSB members inform the PSB's well-being assessment and well-being planning process.	The well-being assessment draws on the well-being objectives of PSB partners, therefore where these objectives are informed by respective Forward Plans, this will naturally flow through to the well-being assessment and ultimately the Well-being Plan. Additionally, members of the PSB Asset Board, which is well attended by lead officers in BER delivery, input to the assessment, providing additional opportunity to embed BER outcomes into the Well-being Plan. Whilst there hasn't been a formal process to draw on partner Forward Plans, there has been representation from the biodiversity sector, through involvement of the Council's Countryside Team and NRW in the PSB Asset Board.	Ongoing delivery of this action would benefit from establishing a process to ensure that the steps are in place to embed key outcomes from Partner Forward Plans to the well-being planning process.
39	Additional activities to develop the evidence base	<p>Biodiversity records by local recorders are fed through to SEWBREC, the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre. Developers are widely encouraged to make use of SEWBREC's services as part of their ecological assessments for planning.</p> <p>There is no established system for collating / building biodiversity data, however recommendations are made for ecological assessments to be built into scheduled works / project delivery. Staff within the Countryside team have good knowledge of many sites, however this information isn't held within a central place.</p> <p>There are ad hoc monitoring and surveys in place, such as Dormouse monitoring at Bedford Park and the ecological assessment that has</p>	There are processes in place to assess sites and make use of records that are available through the records centre, however it is recommended to supplement this process by the collation of records into a system that can systematically be accessed by all Countryside staff. This will support the need to build the evidence base for biodiversity in Bridgend, whilst also increasing resilience and providing continuity in the event of staff absence. It's recommended that this includes SINC data,

	been carried out in the Upper Garw Valley to inform management decision. There has been a review of the SINCs for the LDP, although not an in-depth one.	and consideration of establishing a process of their review.
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4.6 GOVERNANCE

BCBC activities which contribute to the way in which BER is managed at the highest level in the Council and its partnerships and the systems for doing this.

Action		Progress	Recommendations
Member Leadership			
40	Support the Biodiversity Champion to act as an advocate for BER	The role of the Biodiversity Champion is held by the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, who is supportive of the work carried out by the Countryside / Natural Resources Team. There is engagement between the team and the Biodiversity Champion, which provides the opportunity to share information and support the role of advocate for BER, however there isn't a regular arrangement for such meetings.	In order to act as an advocate for BER it would be beneficial to establish a more regular process of information sharing and engagement between the Biodiversity Champion and the Countryside Team. This will provide the opportunity for the Biodiversity Champion to be kept up to date on relevant activities and projects, whilst also becoming aware of issues or challenges that limits progress in delivery of BER outcomes.
Decision Making: Judicial Review of BCBC Decisions			
41	Support BCBC to manage risk of external challenge on decisions via Judicial Review	The risk of external challenge is managed by ensuring that appropriate processes are in place to avoid harm or damage to biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The activities outlined in this	It's recommended that this action is revised, to set out a more general need to ensure that there are robust measures in place to

		report broadly outline the measures and approaches that have been taken to meet BER requirements, and therefore avoiding challenges via Judicial Review, or by any other means. There has been no challenge made to Bridgend Council during implementation of the BER Forward Plan.	ensure delivery of the Sct. 6 Duty, and the revised Forward Plan. This will include formalisation of processes, as outlined in Sct. 4.1 ('EMBED') and ensuring that monitoring and implementation is underway.
Development Control: Challenge to Decisions			
42	Deliver coherent approach to BER through Section 6 Duty, LDP and approach to PPW (10)	There is positive integration of BER outcomes into the planning process, as outlined earlier in this report. There isn't a recognised issue of challenges to decision through the development control process although it is recognised that there has been concern about enhancement and the potential for these decisions to be overturned.	Whilst positive outcomes have been evidenced with planning processes, it would be beneficial to review / monitor the approach to BER in the planning system, alongside formalisation of processes, as outlined in Sct. 4.1 ('EMBED').
Local Development Plan: SE Wales Strategic Development Plan			
43	Support the integration of BER in the South East Wales Strategic Development Plan	The LDP Team sit on SEWPOG, SE Wales Strategic Planning Officers group, and are involved in discussions on any proposed Strategic Development Plan. There isn't currently confirmation that the SDP will go ahead, and even if so, the timescale or mechanism by which it should happen.	Any proposed SDP isn't expected to be delivered within the timescale of the revised Forward Plan for Bridgend, therefore recommend removal of this action.
Public Services Board: Bridgend Assets Board			
44	Contribute to a new board under the PSB which will develop work to advance environmental sustainability, local economic sustainability (circular economy) and the use of assets to advance wellbeing.	The PSB Assets Sub Board has been established, with a strong focus on the environment and community engagement and benefit. It is chaired by the chief fire officer for Taf Morgannwg, and is attended by relevant officers of PSB partners, with stakeholder mapping having been carried out to aid delivery. The board aims to work together to improve the quality and extent of natural resources and is able to demonstrate good examples of project delivery and activities which support BER outcomes.	Delivery of the Assets Sub Board is a good demonstration of collaborative working in delivery of BER Outcomes. It also has the potential to influence positive change more broadly within PSB partner functions and it's recommended that a more strategic and policy-based approach is also taken, alongside the asset management work which is well established.

Public Services Board: Bridgend Nature Recovery Plan			
45	Support the delivery of Bridgend Nature Recovery Plan through PSB activity.	The Nature Recovery Plan is directly referenced in, and biodiversity is well integrated into, the Well-being Plan, as part of 'Healthy Choices in a Healthy Environment' well-being objective. Biodiversity focused activities have been delivered through the Asset sub board, with a strong focus on asset management and awareness raising. NRW Funding has been put in place to support delivery of PSB activities which deliver environmental outcomes, with activities such as the Green Spaces survey and web-based biodiversity resource pack successfully delivered.	The role of the PSB, and Asset sub board, will be key in ensuring ongoing delivery of BER outcomes in Bridgend. It has been a driver for collaborative working and for demonstrating delivery of biodiversity initiatives in Bridgend. There is potential to focus more on influencing policy and procedures within PSB partners, alongside standardising procedures within Bridgend Council, and the sub board will be a key delivery mechanism for achieving this.
46	Additional activity to provide governance and support for BER delivery	Currently there are 2 FTE posts which directly support delivery of BER outcomes. Additional progress in implementation of the plan has been achieved by collaborative working with the Rural Programme Coordinator, which has been particularly beneficial in increasing capacity to draw down additional funding and deliver biodiversity focused projects. However, this post is fixed term and currently only funded to December, 2022. Additional managerial support has been put in place by the creation of the Climate Change Response Manager. There is potential for a 3 year Local Places for Nature Post, however this is dependent on Welsh Government funding and is currently unconfirmed.	In order to fully support Bridgend Council in meeting its Sct 6 Duty and truly embedding biodiversity into standard working practices, there is a need to ensure that there is appropriate capacity in place. Current staff members are at capacity and the loss of the supporting function provided by the Rural Programmes Coordinator will be a loss to delivery. It's recommended that a review is carried out of staff resources, to include consideration of: - increasing capacity to provide ecological advice and further embed biodiversity into processes and activities carried out by Bridgend Council. This could include consideration of income generation, such as providing internal consultancy services, or

			<p>building in support for ecological advice to Planning Performance Agreements where appropriate.</p> <p>- securing, or increasing, capacity to secure and deliver grant funded projects / capital schemes and support delivery of partnership projects and initiatives. There is an opportunity to also deliver nature-based solutions which would support Climate action for this function, providing a holistic approach to delivery.</p>
		<p>Additional project delivery has been achieved by securing of external grant funding, as outlined through this action report. In addition, there is core funding in place for management of Local Nature Reserves, which is a positive demonstration of commitment to managing key sites within Bridgend.</p>	<p>In order to meet the need to reverse biodiversity decline, there will be a need to adequately resource delivery of the Sct. 6 Duty. Whilst recognising that there is pressure on Local Authority budgets, it's recommended that budget requirements for Sct. 6 delivery is considered as part of broader budget reviews.</p>

4.7 COMMUNITY

Activities which aim to inform the communities' understanding of BER and /or engage them in management which supports it

	Action	Progress	Recommendations
Biodiversity Opportunity Maps: Ward Level			
47	Production of ward maps on what to explore, what can be seen and	Ward maps have not been produced, although web-based resources have been created which showcase areas to visit and provide ideas on activities to enhance biodiversity.	There has been a lack of capacity to deliver this action, and it's recognised that it would be a resource requirement to deliver this

	opportunities to enhance biodiversity.		over in the subsequent plan period. However, it would be valuable resource, increasing engagement at a local level and providing opportunity to raise the profile of biodiversity with local members, therefore it is recommended to retain this action going forward.
Parks: Mental Health			
48	Develop opportunities for social prescribing through PSB and RDP work with partners.	Social prescribing has been actively promoted, and taken forward, by the PSB Asset Sub Board. A Social Prescribing framework has been established by Bridgend Council and third sector organisations (through Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations), and funded by the Integrated Care Fund. Delivery is taken forward through the sub board and the green network. Activities included identification of green spaces and creation of a Nature on your Doorstep leaflet, which was sent to doctors and Local Community. A Green Spaces survey was carried out, with over 400 respondents, 200 of which left contact details as they wished to be involved, resulting in the programming of volunteer taster sessions.	There has been good progress in this action, and ongoing delivery should be supported going forward, looking to maintain focus with Local Community Coordinators and further signposting. This could include raising the profile of the value of participating in general, community-based activities and volunteering, alongside more health focused activities.
Parks: Maintenance Regimes			
49	Support an approach to informing the public view of proactive approach to biodiversity through maintenance.	There have been a number of awareness raising initiatives which support delivery of this action. The newly established Cwm Taf Nature Network Project includes management of 10 sites for biodiversity alongside awareness raising activities, an approach which is seen in many of the projects already referenced within this report. Broader awareness raising has been achieved through publishing of press releases, such as 'Life on the Verge: how grass cutting has changed to boost biodiversity in Bridgend County Borough', issued in June, 2021.	Community involvement and engagement is an important element of a collectively tackling biodiversity decline and should be retained in the revised Plan, as part of a broader action to support and encourage community engagement and action.

5. Summary

The Council's progress in delivery against the Forward Plan is generally positive, with many examples of activities, projects and collaborative working that have delivered good outcomes for delivery. There are some areas which have been identified as requiring more progress, particularly in terms of formalising processes and embedding BER requirements into corporate procedures. Recommendations for specific actions are outlined in more detail within the Action Review, however some general principles to inform the Plan review are detailed below.

5.1 Recommendations

Engagement and accessibility to the Plan could be enhanced by some changes to the format and style of the report, and the actions on which it is based. The focus of actions has been weighted towards delivery by the Countryside team, therefore revised actions should have a greater focus on delivery by relevant departments, thereby encouraging greater ownership in delivery across the Council. In addition, terminology such as BER Outcomes could be defined and a generic term, such as biodiversity, used throughout the Plan. The Plan is a public document and provides an opportunity to raise the profile of biodiversity, the need for action, and the role that the Council has to play in achieving positive change.

The revised plan should have a stronger focus on establishing processes and systems that ensure a consistent approach in meeting the Sct. 6 Duty, and also in monitoring delivery. For some departments, this may simply mean formalising existing processes, whilst for some, there may be a need to put new measures in place. Similarly, there is a need to bring biodiversity into the corporate planning and decision-making processes, to ensure that opportunities are not lost to embed biodiversity into service delivery.

Delivery of the Sct. 6 Duty would be supported by efforts to increase the profile of biodiversity as a corporate priority. There are a number of measures that would help achieve this, including:

- Making a clear commitment to taking action to reverse biodiversity decline, such as signing up to the Edinburgh declaration or declaring a Nature Emergency.
- Greater member engagement and involvement, which could include member training and more regular dialogue between the Biodiversity Champion and the Countryside team.
- Setting additional targets within corporate reporting mechanisms, i.e., within the Corporate Plan.

There are good examples of public engagement / development of volunteer networks and this should remain a strong focus going forward. Elements of this, such as Bridgend Green Networks, is currently underpinned by external funding, so consideration will need to be made on how to ensure continuity. It's recommended that this is addressed alongside support for the Local Nature Partnership, which is an important network and source of additional expertise / knowledge to inform the evidence base for biodiversity in Bridgend.

It's recommended that there is an increased focus on building the evidence base. How this is done will be informed by available systems and processes but should provide a mechanism to record / collate data that is available to the Local Authority, to supplement existing processes.

In summary, it's recommended that the revised Plan, for 2022-25, has greater emphasis on raising the profile of biodiversity corporately, and embedding delivery across the organisation, whilst building on the good outcomes achieved by key departments. It's recognised that there is a resource requirement in delivery and therefore consideration will need to be given to ensuring that adequate staffing levels and budgets are in place to ensure that the Plan requirements, and Sct. 6 Duty, can be met.

5.2 Next Steps

The findings of this report should now be used to inform ongoing delivery of the Sct. 6 Duty by the Council. The measures that the Council will take to meet this duty will, as required by the legislation, need to be set out within a Plan, which must be made available to the public. The revised Plan will be developed by Catrin Evans Consultancy. There are a number of approaches that could be taken in development of a revised Plan, as outlined below.

Option 1 – Refresh of existing plan

The current Forward Plan, for 2018-2022 puts in place a number of measures that support the Council's efforts in meeting the Sct 6 Duty. A refresh of this Plan, would bring it up to date with current issues and opportunities, whilst continuing to deliver against actions that are already established in ways of working, and have been agreed by current departments. However, this approach would not provide sufficient opportunity to address the recommendations made within this report, and therefore is not recommended as a way forward.

Option 2 – Produce an updated Plan, based on recommendations

Review of the Plan, and engagement with key departments, has enabled recommendations to be made to improve delivery of specific actions, and to put more robust measures in place to provide improved delivery against the Sct. 6 Duty throughout the Council. There is sufficient information in place for the revised Forward Plan to be written, and for an internal consultation process to be held to seek feedback on the draft Plan, prior to seeking formal approval by Council.

This approach would provide the opportunity for the revised Plan to be ambitious and focused on best delivery options for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. However, this approach would not meet the principles of the Well-being and Future Generations Five Ways of Working, particularly in terms of collaboration and involvement. It also increases the likelihood of lack of engagement with the process and recognition of the collaborative approach that is needed to meet the Sct. 6 Duty, therefore, this is not recommended as a way forward.

Option 3 – Produce an updated Plan, based on recommendations with input from key departments

Review of the Plan has identified key departments, and officers, who would be directly involved with supporting and delivering against the revised Forward Plan. This report has set out the recommendations for improved delivery against the Sct. 6 Duty, for existing actions and for the introduction of new measures to be put in place. Involvement of key officers in agreeing individual actions would ensure that actions embedded in the revised Plan are achievable and supported, whilst reinforcing the message that delivery of the Sct. 6 Duty is a corporate responsibility.

It is therefore recommended that a collaborative approach is taken in development of actions within the revised Plan, with the aim of addressing all recommendations within this report. In order to achieve this, appropriate support will need to be provided by the Council, to enable engagement between relevant staff and Catrin Evans Consultancy, details of which will be outlined within an agreed Engagement Plan.

Appendix A – Delivery against the Well-being Goals

WFG Well-being Goals	Delivery against the Well-being Goals
A prosperous Wales	Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience is an integral part of Bridgend County Borough’s economic prosperity, supporting tourism, local livelihoods and providing vital ecosystem services. Whilst all actions will ultimately support this goal, examples of delivery with a particular focus include the Dunes 2 Dunes project, which included enhancing the visitor experience to the golf courses; Digital Shepherd, which helped farmers reduce barriers to conservation grazing; and the development of skills through training and project involvement.
A resilient Wales	Delivery of all actions within the Forward Plan have directly contributed towards the Resilient Wales goal, by protecting, and enhancing the biodiversity and resilience of Bridgend’s ecosystems. This has included protection through the planning process, management of Council assets, delivery of partnership and community focused projects to manage valuable habitats and public engagement in activities that people can carry out in their gardens.
A healthier Wales	Involvement in volunteer activities, improved access to, and information on, Bridgend’s green spaces, increased social prescribing all provide good examples of how delivery of this Plan has delivered against the healthier Wales goal. In addition, habitat enhancement work and tree planting initiatives all contribute towards a healthier natural environment, improving air quality, reducing flooding and supporting efforts to address climate change.
A more equal Wales	Volunteering and engagement activities have provided opportunities for all people to experience and benefit from biodiversity and the natural environment, whilst increasing information on local sites have increased accessibility for a greater range of people.

A Wales of cohesive communities	<p>Volunteer activities and support for community groups have supported and brought people together in achieving common goals to improve their local environment. Integration of green infrastructure into urban design has provided attractive places to visit and live, whilst providing broader benefits such as urban cooling from solar shade.</p>
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	<p>The Welsh language has been promoted through the consistent provision of bilingual resources, including school activities, 'how to' guides and places to visit. Involvement in local volunteering and projects has provided opportunities to share, and learn, about local cultures and heritage, with natural heritage often closely entwined with broader cultural and social heritage.</p>
A globally responsible Wales	<p>The Council's commitment to local biodiversity initiatives, particularly in terms of protection of local sites and habitat enhancement activities all contribute towards global ambitions to address biodiversity decline. In addition, awareness raising and engagement activities have provided the opportunity to increase understanding on the role that people have in contributing towards global well-being.</p>