



St Clears Town Council Biodiversity Forward Plan

Background

All local councils in Wales have a duty to prepare and publish a Biodiversity Forward plan, setting out its proposals to comply with the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, section 6, duty in the exercise of the Council's functions, and in doing so, to promote the resilience of ecosystems.

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. It includes all living organisms (including humans), their genetic variation and the ecosystems on which they depend. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers and in the sea. Biodiversity represents quality of life.

The Biodiversity Forward Plan looks at how the Council manages and improves natural resources to ensure that biodiversity and sustainability are considered in all areas, becoming a natural part of the decision-making process.

Action

The actions in this plan, will be reported on every three years in accordance with statutory requirements, and reviewed and updated at the end of each 3-year period.

The biodiversity duty seeks to improve the environment for all to benefit, and with the aim that results in biodiversity enhancement and conservation, and a more sustainable way of living, to protect our resources and ensure that future generations have the same or better quality of life.

Actions resulting from this plan to meet the Council's obligations under section 6, of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 will need to be funded from existing budgets, with grant sources sought.

About St Clears Town Council

St Clears Town Council is a local council in the west of Carmarthenshire covering the town of St Clears, the village of Bancyfelin and surrounding areas. A predominantly rural area with the town providing services for the surrounding villages, the area has a lot of green spaces where nature can flourish. There are also three rivers in the area, which provide a habitat for many species including protected wildlife.

The Town Council has direct responsibility for a community field in the town in addition to a grassed area at the rear of the car park, and some land along the river Cynin. The Town council voluntarily cuts the growth further along the river path

beyond where their responsibility for the land ends in order to keep the path safe. Voluntary arrangements are also in place for the maintenance of five footpaths on behalf of the County Council.

Decision Making and Procurement

Working to protect our natural resources and wildlife is a key objective for Council and will be reflected in the council decision-making process. Contracts that are due to be renewed during this time e.g. grounds maintenance, floral displays will adhere to the provisions of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and take opportunities to enhance biodiversity in the area.

Council will also seek other opportunities, through its other activities to promote biodiversity and engage the community in this action, where possible.

Raising Awareness

The Town Council will seek to raise awareness of the importance of this work by sharing updates with the public via our website. Over this three year period, Council will seek to liaise with other organisations in the area who have land to encourage them to take small steps to promote and maintain biodiversity.

Changes will also be made to the arrangements for Council's annual Best Garden Competition to include categories to reward the inclusion of pollinators, or areas for wildlife. The competition also has a schools' category which will also have a theme in fitting with the principles of this plan and the requirements of the 2016 Act.

Safeguarding Principal Species and Habitats

As a Town Council with relatively little direct responsibility for land, some efforts have been made to safeguard wildlife in the town. The Town Council voluntarily cuts back growth along the riverside walk, which forms part of the town's heritage trail. St Clears Town Heritage Trail was developed to help promote the rich history and culture of the town and to create a focal point for residents and visitors to learn more about the local environment. The growth here is not cut back in its entirety, a section is cleared to make the path safe and ensure the river is visible. This aside, the bank is left to grow and create a safe space for wildlife.

The Town Council will consider how this can be extended to other areas where it currently maintains the grass or foliage. Areas will be identified where growth can go unhindered. This will be communicated to the public in order to explain the reduction of maintenance and to educate the community about the importance of safeguarding wildlife.

Restoring and Creating Habitats

By seeking to reduce the amount of maintenance work carried out in grassed areas, new safe spaces for habitats will be created as a result. Several new trees have been planted on Town Council land during the last three years. All land will be assessed for potential to plant more trees or foliage that would support critical species.

The Town Council will also seek to engage with the local schools and voluntary organisations e.g. scouts, guides etc to invite them to create habitats for birds and other wildlife on land for which the Town Council has responsibility.

Tackling Negative Factors

The Town Council will engage with local and national organisations e.g. Carmarthenshire County Council, Natural Resources Wales to tackle identified problems e.g. pollution of rivers, flooding, fly tipping. Council will also be involved with local voluntary organisations to support their work to improve the natural environment.

Communication is key to engaging the public in positive behaviour to look after their community. Work with young people is especially important, and will be carried out as detailed above, and in other ways as opportunities arise. By informing the public and promoting positive action, the Town Council hopes to contribute to the slow change in behaviours and attitudes that can cause problems. Council will also seek to deal with naturally occurring problems such as flooding through dialogue and action with partner organisations.

Use, Share and Improve Evidence

The collection of evidence in a scientific rather than anecdotal manner is beyond the current capability of the Town Council. However, during the next period of this plan, the Town Council will seek, in partnership with other organisations such as Natural Resources Wales to establish mechanisms to collect evidence to demonstrate the positive (or otherwise) impact of the work carried out.

At the end of the next reporting period (December 2022), it is hoped that some initial evidence will have been acquired that will be a baseline from which to measure improvement.

Support Capacity and / or Other Organisations

Any local organisations that are looking for support, or would like to involve the Town Council in their efforts to promote biodiversity should contact the Town Clerk for more information.

Key Outcomes

The key outcomes for the next three years include, but are not limited to:

- Revision of Council contracts to include clauses to promote biodiversity.
- Reduce cutting of grassed areas, foliage to give an opportunity for wildlife to create habitats.
- Promote the work in the community through work with schools and organisations, Best Garden Competition.
- Engage with key partners to work together to make changes and gather evidence.

Review Points 2022

Points for review in 2022 will be:

- Success of revised contracts to deliver the requirements.
- Amount of space created to allow wildlife to flourish in a safe environment.
- How can the community be further educated and voluntary actions, on homes and on farmland be encouraged?
- Review working arrangements with key partners to assess the need for improvement.

How and when will s6 duty be monitored and plan renewed

This is a live plan that will evolve during the three years. It will be monitored by the Town Council's Environment Committee on an annual basis with regular updates provided to committee during the year. The next formal report and renewal of the plan will be published no later than December 2022.

St Clears Town Council
15th October 2019