

# Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems policy and report - Machynlleth Town Council

## Background

The council has an obligation under section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016

## Ecosystems Duty -

“Public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.”

NRW's State of Natural Resources report shows that we are losing habitats and species in Wales.

The council has to **prepare and publish a plan** setting out what it proposes to do to comply with the duty.

It can include:

- How biodiversity will be incorporated into policies and strategies;
- What initiatives will be introduced to raise awareness within your organisation;
- What practical biodiversity programmes will be introduced;
- What partnerships will be developed.

‘A public authority must, before the end of 2019, and before the end of every third year after 2019, **publish a report** on what it has done to comply with the duty.’

## The Duty to Maintain and Enhance Biodiversity

• Further detailed information in the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales (NRAP) to contribute to reversing the decline of biodiversity in Wales:

### – Embed biodiversity into delivery, and raise awareness of its importance

Commitments, Sustainability and procurement policies, management plans, community engagement, awareness raising, **all** functions

### – Safeguard special sites and species and improve their management

Local nature sites, protected species e.g. bats, great crested newts, birds

### – Restore and create habitats

Churchyards, play-spaces, village greens

### – Tackle key pressures like pollution, and Invasive Non Native species

Himalayan balsam bashing, reducing the use of pesticides

### – Use and collect biodiversity evidence

Citizen science, Local Environment Record Centres

We need to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and embed this value into decision making. For example – a small piece of Local Authority owned woodland may be worth far more for its water retention, air particulate matter filtering, recreation area, mental health benefits, cultural value of birdsong and wildflowers than a financial value.

We need to bring these benefits into decision making to reflect the true value of our biodiversity and green space.

As climate change is one of the major threats to biodiversity, the policy reflects this.

## Context

Machynlleth Town Council manages the Plas and its grounds. The grounds include historic parkland and the building is Grade 2 listed. There are allotments, a children's playground and a pump track. Parts of the grounds are leased out to the Football Club, the Rugby Club, a community garden, a local farm a new cemetery and a local project that has a display allotment.

The Plas building is a listed stately home with most of the rooms rented out as offices, a café, community hall and a couple of other rooms let out for meetings.

The Council is responsible for a second set of allotments, the town clock, the war memorial, plant pots and beds and some street seats.

Topic	Policy	Current action
Embedding the environment and biodiversity into decision making	The council considers climate change and environmental impacts when decision making.	In December 2018 the Council passed a motion declaring a Climate Emergency and subsequently accepted the report produced by the local action groups which included biodiversity actions.
Raising awareness of biodiversity & its importance	The council will use social media and put up signage to explain its land management e.g. mowing. Awareness raising and training sessions will be held for members and staff.	The council intends to do these. Signage has been put up explaining the mowing regime.
Woodland management	The Council will get regular professional surveys done on the trees and take the action recommended. The Council will develop a policy of using the timber and leaving some to benefit wildlife. The council will develop a tree planting policy to ensure that the trees planted will cope with future climate changes, using native species where appropriate.	A professional survey is commissioned annually to assess the state of the trees and the actions recommended are carried out. This normally requires the felling of some trees due to risk or disease. Some tree planting has been done by the Gerddi bro Ddyfi Gardens. We have consulted the Powys Biodiversity officer for advice on small woodlands. We haven't yet developed a tree planting policy. In invasive species removal we have observed a lot of self seeded young trees so we will consider that in our tree planting policy.
Grassland management	The Plas grounds include areas of grassland that are used in different ways. The council will optimise the areas left unmown and investigate developing wildflower areas. Moles will only be removed when their molehills are in areas like the playground.	Significant areas are left unmown at present. We have consulted the Powys Biodiversity officer for advice on meadows.
Invasive species	The council will monitor and remove invasive species unless there are justifications for not doing so.	There are 2 areas of rhododendron ponticum which do not appear to be spreading and provide a very popular play area for children. There is no intention of removing these but they will be monitored. There has been some removal of Rhododendron ponticum and brambles but this is an ongoing task.

Wildlife	<p>The council will develop and maintain habitats for species, particularly improving the monitoring and understanding of Locally Important indicator species.</p> <p>The council will work with other groups who use the parkland, particularly Gerddi bro Ddyfi Gardens to monitor and encourage wildlife.</p> <p>The Council will work towards being a bee friendly community.</p> <p>Locations for bird and bat boxes will be considered.</p>	<p>Some areas of woodland are left 'wild'. Gerddi bro Ddyfi did a Bioblitz which has provided a 'snapshot' of species in the Plas grounds in June 2022. Results included 30 tree, 20 bird, 34 lichens, 61 moth and 3 bat species. Future surveying will inform Council action.</p> <p>There has been discussion about installing swift boxes on the site. Many swift boxes have been installed around the town.</p> <p>A project run by the council in the allotments has installed many bird boxes, bee hotels, frog hotels, ladybird tower, hedgehog houses and a pond for wildlife.</p>
Flower beds, pots etc	<p>Only peat free and organic compost or fertiliser will be used. Herbicides and Pesticides will only be used where absolutely necessary (eg Japanese Knotweed).</p> <p>The council will maximise perennial planting rather than annual.</p> <p>Plants that can cope with future climate changes will be used.</p> <p>Plants with native pollinator friendly flowers will be used.</p>	<p>Only peat free and organic compost or fertiliser are being used.</p> <p>No herbicides are being used.</p> <p>The new entrance to the hall has perennial planting.</p> <p>In the allotments there has also been a lot of pollinator friendly planting.</p>
Use of cleaning products etc in buildings	<p>The council will work towards only using biodegradable cleaning products and paper from sustainable forests. The amount of paper used will be minimised.</p> <p>The council will take further opportunities to procure goods which are biodegradable and/or made from recycled material using local procurement.</p>	<p>Printing is done double sided where possible.</p>
Use of consumables	<p>The use of single use products will be minimised.</p>	<p>The café uses washable crockery and cutlery apart from take-aways..</p>
Waste	<p>Every effort will be made to make sure that no waste products escape into the natural environment.</p> <p>The council will work towards collecting general waste separately in public bins so that it can be recycled.</p> <p>The council will investigate composting our green waste.</p>	<p>Organic waste is now going to the local composting project (Criw Compostio).</p> <p>In the building there are now different bins for different types of waste. We intend to budget for separate bins for the Plas grounds.</p> <p>Green waste from the grounds is used as mulch.</p>
Equipment use	<p>All new equipment will be chosen to be as energy efficient as possible.</p>	
Energy use	<p>The council will develop a plan to reduce energy use in buildings and grounds and to access renewable energy.</p>	<p>New more efficient boilers have been installed, there is an on-going programme of ensuring that the lighting is low energy and secondary glazing is being installed in part of the Plas. We have also installed motion sensors for lighting in corridors, toilets and a kitchen..</p>

Working with volunteers	The Council will work towards developing a group of volunteers who will help to enhance the biodiversity of the grounds.	There has been some very productive involvement of volunteers (580 hours on the allotments) but we still hope to recruit a team to do regular things.
Allotments	The council will work with the local allotment association to encourage them to be managed organically.	The vast majority of allotment holders do grow organically.
Planning	Consider impacts on biodiversity when commenting on planning applications	This is happening, but the planners do not always take our views into account.

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