

SUBJECT: Nature Recovery

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 25th June 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

1.1. To seek Cabinet approval of the:

- Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Part 1: Strategy,
- Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy Volumes 1&2 (and executive summary),

which together set out the Council's statutory duties, responsibilities, and associated actions for delivery.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1. That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Part 1: Strategy, and the Monmouthshire Green Infrastructure Strategy Volumes 1&2 as part of the Nature Recovery pillar of the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and associated action plans.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1. As a local authority we have a duty via the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience in the proper exercise of our functions. This means that the responsibility for compliance and delivery sits across all services and functions.

3.2. Climate change is having a significant impact on habitats and species and is one of many pressures on our natural world. In 2021 the Senedd declared a 'Nature Emergency' promoted by the State of Nature Report (2019) highlighting the extinction of 17% of species across Wales. In Gwent, the Greater Gwent State of Nature Report (Blaenau Gwent Couty Borough Council, 2021) showed a 34% decline of assessed species. More recently, the State of Nature (State of Nature Partnership, 2023) report makes the stark statement that Wales is now one of the most nature depleted countries on Earth and along with the rest of the world, is facing a biodiversity crisis; with one in six species in Wales at risk of extinction.

3.3. In May 2024 Monmouthshire County Council reviewed the 2019 declaration of the Climate Emergency to include a recognition that the climate and nature crises are interlinked. This review included the development of four interlinked pillars of work:



3.4. The Nature Recovery pillar has a delivery framework composed of three interlinked action plans:

1. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience (Section 6) Forward Plan 2024-28 (Approved by Cabinet in May 2024)
2. Monmouthshire Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Part 1: Strategy
3. Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure Strategy Vol 1&2

The relationship between the three plans is illustrated in Appendix 4.

3.5. The Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) (Appendix 2) helps to deliver the Council's commitments under the Climate and Nature Emergency and Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The NRAP aims to provide practical, achievable actions designed to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and build ecosystem resilience in Monmouthshire. Supported by the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) the Plan will comprise 4 Parts. Part 1 is the Strategy that sets out our approach for nature recovery in Monmouthshire and a general Action Plan. Parts 2, 3 & 4 will be developed in collaboration with the Local Nature Partnership and will comprise, Habitat Action Plans, Species Action Plans, and a collation of case studies of projects.

Nature Recovery Action Plan Part 1: Strategy includes the following key areas:

- Policies, plans and procedures.
- Education and Awareness
- Evidence and Understanding
- Promoting Ecosystem Resilience
- LNP Governance and Monitoring

3.6. The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy (Appendix 3a, b & c) sets out the Council's approach to enhancing biodiversity and increasing ecosystem resilience through GI in line with the Forward Plan prepared under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It

also sets out the Council's approach to improving health and wellbeing outcomes through GI in line with objectives of the Gwent Well-being Plan (2023), South East Wales Area Statement, Monmouthshire's Communities and Corporate Plan and the emerging Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy, seeking to deliver climate action through landscape scale projects and partnerships.

The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy

Core Aims:

- 1 Enrich people's lives through engagement and activity
- 2 Build strong and vibrant places and communities in Monmouthshire
- 3 Conserve, protect and enhance Monmouthshire's GI assets

GI Objectives:

- Improve Health & Wellbeing
- Enhance Biodiversity & Increase Ecosystem Resilience
- Strengthen Landscape Character & Distinctiveness
- Increase Climate Change Resilience
- Support Sustainable Economic Development

3.7. Following Place Scrutiny and the approval of Cabinet in 2024, the public consultation was launched at The Usk Show on the 14th of September 2024 and followed the below methodology and timeframe:

Date	Location	Method
14 th September 2024	Usk County Show	Launch public consultation (including public questionnaire on Nature & Climate)
15 th September 2024	Online	Press release issued advertising consultation, press release promoted on social media and via mailing lists
7 th October 2024	Libraries and Hubs*	Consultation advertised on information boards and posters in libraries for green libraries week. Hard copies made available.
31 st October 2024		Consultation closed

*Caldicot, Chepstow, Abergavenny, Monmouth, Gilwern and Magor

A consultation report has been prepared to detail the methods used, consultation responses received, and minor changes proposed (Appendix 5).

3.8. Appendix 6 refers to the use of the integrated Health Impact Assessment (iHIA) process to design projects and ensure that we are engaging with underserved groups. This has been a workstream of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership and can be rolled out for wider Green Infrastructure project delivery.

3.9. During the development of the current adopted Green Infrastructure Strategy which forms the basis of the 2025 review, Town Councils were integral to the co-development of Volume 2 Delivery Plan and the supporting Action Plan which lists the aspirations for GI delivery. The Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and the GI

strategy are intended to be live documents that are reviewed and updated as aspirations and projects develop.

- 3.10 Reference to the importance of working with Town and Community Councils is made in the Local Nature Recovery Action Plan under **Section 1.2 Who is it For?** Also, **Section 4 General Action Plan G2.2** provides an action to: *Engage with communities, schools, businesses, landowners and town and community councils to promote understanding of biodiversity in their area and work together to encourage appropriate management and actions to achieve nature recovery.*
- 3.11 Strategic engagement is undertaken through the Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership and includes a combination of engagement with T&CC who contact the LPA for help and co-delivery, and those that are targeted for delivery. This could relate to ecological need or the need to target underserved groups in those areas.

4 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (includes equality, future generations, social justice, safeguarding and corporate parenting).

- 4.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is attached (Appendix 1).
- 4.2 The GI Strategy and Nature Recovery Action Plan have significant positive contributions to make to the Wellbeing Goals. A Healthier Wales through health and wellbeing opportunities through projects and partnerships, well connected multifunctional green spaces and community growing initiatives. There are also benefits for a Resilient Wales, based on supporting nature-based solutions for land management, raised awareness through training and education of the nature crisis and working in partnership to deliver landscape scale projects to support resilient ecological networks. There is also significant potential to contribute to Cohesive Communities, by working collaboratively and in partnership with our communities to deliver a place making approach. Finally, contributing to a Globally Responsible Wales through sustainable use of natural resources to support Monmouthshire's local green economy and develop skills and learning. There are no negative impacts on the Well-being Goals.
- 4.3 There are no significant positive or negative impacts on the protected characteristics, safeguarding or corporate parenting. The principles of Long term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration and Involvement have been used throughout the development of the Action Plans.

5 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 Doing nothing is not an option. Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty on public authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity where it is within the proper exercise of their functions. In doing so, public authorities must seek to promote the resilience of ecosystems. This means that Monmouthshire County Council must take a pro-active approach to improve and not reduce biodiversity when carrying out its functions. The NRAP and GI Strategies are the framework for delivery of this statutory function.
- 5.2 In addition, the 2024 publication of Planning Policy Wales edition 12, which emphasises delivery of biodiversity and green infrastructure aims to avoid biodiversity loss, provide Net Benefit for Biodiversity, and protect and

enhance green infrastructure, setting out requirements for Green Infrastructure Assessments / Strategies as part of the planning process.

5.3 The GI Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Action Plan will also help provide a mechanism for the delivery of the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill which was introduced to the Senedd on the 2nd June 2025, when it becomes law. This Bill aims to:

- Establish certain environmental principles and an environmental objective into Welsh law;
- Establish an independent environmental governance body for Wales;
- Amend the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to establish a biodiversity target setting framework aimed at halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity in Wales, as well as imposing a duty on the Welsh Ministers to promote awareness in Wales of the importance of, and the threats to, biodiversity

5.4 The law will place a duty on Welsh public authorities to contribute to the delivery of the statutory biodiversity target delivered through our Local Nature Recovery Action Plan including a Nature Positive target which will become statutory as per S6 Forward Plan so will include reporting.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 Updates on progress will be reported upon in line with statutory requirements as set out in the Section 6 duty including six-monthly updates to the Monmouthshire Council Climate and Nature Steering Group and statutory reporting to Welsh Government every three years (next round by end 2025). The Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill will also have requirements for associated statutory reporting when it becomes law.

7 REASONS:

7.1 To ensure that the Council delivers upon its statutory Biodiversity Section 6 duty, emerging requirements of the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill, and seeks to fulfil requirements of Planning Policy Wales edition 12, supporting the Gwent Well Being Plan, and South East Wales Area Statement. It will also address the commitments of the Council's Community and Corporate Plan and Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 Actions will be funded in different ways, some are zero cost or will require core funded officer time alone, others will involve project and partnership funding delivered through current grant programmes. It is anticipated that where additional funds are needed, these will be subject to subsequent decision-making processes.

9 CONSULTTEES:

9.1 As part of the NRAP preparation, the Local Nature Partnership were directly consulted to allow co-production. The Draft NRAP and Draft GI Strategy were also taken to Place Scrutiny in May 2024 for approval of a public consultation. This consultation was undertaken in Autumn 2024 and only minor amendments were required to the NRAP with no changes required for the GI Strategy.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 - Nature Recovery Action Plan

Appendix 3a, 3b and 3c – Green Infrastructure Strategy Executive Summary, Volume 1 & Volume 2

Appendix 4 – Nature Recovery Diagram (2025)

Appendix 5 – Public Consultation Report

Appendix 6 –Integrated Health Impact Assessment

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APPENDIX 4 Nature Recovery Diagram (2025)

