

SUBJECT: BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE (ENVIRONMENT WALES ACT 2016, SECTION 6) REPORT

MEETING: PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 29th JANUARY 2026

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To scrutinise the review of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Report (Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Section 6) known as the 'Section 6 Report' which sets out the council's delivery against statutory duties and responsibilities as detailed in the adopted Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience (Section 6) Forward Plan 2024-28 which forms part of the Nature Recovery pillar of the Monmouthshire County Council Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.2 That Place Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience (Section 6) Report 2024 to 2025 and endorses publication for the council to comply with the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty by Individual Cabinet Member Decision.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 As a local authority we now have a duty (via the Environment (Wales) Act 2016) to maintain and enhance biodiversity in all our functions, with the responsibility for delivery sitting across all council services. 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 State of Nature Report (2021) showed a 34% decline of assessed species. More recently the updated 2023 the State of Nature 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
- 3.2 The Section 6 Report presented summarises the work undertaken by Monmouthshire County Council during the calendar years of 2024 and 2025 against the eight Section 6 Forward Plan objectives (See Table 1) which were established during the preparation of the adopted Plan in 2024. As part of its statutory obligations, the Council is required to report every three years on actions taken to deliver its biodiversity duties; a report for 2020-2023 (due in 2022) was submitted to Welsh Government in 2023 and subsequently published to the MonLife website.

Table 1

The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience (Section 6) Forward Plan key objectives:

1. Embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels
2. Provide nature-based opportunities to raise awareness, support health and well-being and encourage action for nature
3. Undertake land management for biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience
4. Influence land management to improve ecosystem resilience
5. Tackle key pressures on species and habitats
6. Support landscape scale projects and partnerships to maximise delivery
7. Use improved evidence, understanding and monitoring to inform action
8. Monitor the effectiveness of the plan and review

- 3.3 The 2024-5 reporting includes a cover report detailing the strong corporate commitment via the Community and Corporate Plan, Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy, Motion for Rivers & Ocean, Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy, with acknowledgment of our established governance and delivery mechanisms.
- 3.4 The report identifies how action undertaken by the Local Authority has contributed to the Section 6 objectives that were refreshed and adopted in 2024. The detailed action plan summarises progress towards Milestones and Measures and reviews each of our commitments with an up-to-date description of progress.
- 3.5 We are pleased to be able to complete a report demonstrating significant work across the local authority area towards the Biodiversity Duty. Highlights have been covered by a series of case studies including:
- Replacement Local Development Plan
 - The Healthy Rivers Project
 - Monmouthshire Nature Recovery Action Plan
 - Mill Common Project
 - Gwent Green Grid: Biotapestry
- 3.6 In accordance with the Welsh Government Guidance on reporting, we have also considered any key issues that the authority continues to face in delivering the Biodiversity Duty including incompatible and contradictory legislation e.g. event licensing, challenges to our Nature Isn't Neat approach to grassland management e.g. public perception, and approaching resource issues e.g. where statutory duties are being directly and indirectly funded by external competitive grants.

3.7 A review of existing actions, measures and milestones is included with recommendation for actions to take us to the next reporting round in 2028. Minimal updates are recommended including two new milestones

- Ecologist (Highways and Operations) new post,
- Management Strategy implementation for Neddern Brook

3.8 New measures are identified for the Area (Ha) of Nature isn't Neat managed land, Number of Sites Managed in accordance with a Green Infrastructure management plan, Number of new Green Infrastructure Management Plans for MCC sites, Number of county farms taking part in activity as exemplars for nature friendly, sustainable, and regenerative agriculture.

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

4.1 The Section 6 Report demonstrates significant positive contributions to the Wellbeing Goals. A Healthier Wales is supported 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 teaching 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. 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.

4.2 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 were used throughout the development of the Section 6 Forward Plan against which the Section 6 Report has been prepared.

4.3 An Integrated Impact Assessment is attached.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 An options appraisal is provided in the table below.

Options	Benefits	Risks	Comments/Mitigation

Do Nothing	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure to comply with statutory S6 Legal Duty to maintain and enhance Biodiversity. -Potential Regulatory scrutiny or intervention - Weakened defence against legal challenge - Poor alignment with Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) - Reduced eligibility for grant funding (e.g. Local - Places for Nature which supports statutory delivery) - Inconsistent decision making - Reputational risks &lack of credibility - Failure to demonstrate progress in climate adaption and resilience. 	Not recommended
Approve Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -MCC meets is required Statutory Legal S6 Duty - Good governance - Strengthens transparency and public trust. - Aligns with NRAP and Green Infrastructure Strategy - Strengthens funding and grant opportunities to help deliver Statutory functions. - Supports compliance with corporate aims and objectives and plans such as Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requirements to deliver on actions 	Recommended

	and Corporate Plan and Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan.		
--	--	--	--

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. Reporting also aligns with the Climate and Nature Emergency corporate reporting.

7. REASONS:

7.1 To ensure that the Council delivers upon its statutory Biodiversity Section 6 duty, supporting the Gwent Well Being Plan and South East Wales Area Statement and addressing its commitments to climate and nature emergencies through the council's Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy and the Communities and Corporate Plan.

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. CONSULTEES:

9.1 All relevant areas of the Local Authority are responsible for the implementation of the Section 6 duty. The following areas were consulted and contributed to the reporting on the actions:

- Highways including Active travel, Highways Projects, Flooding
- Countryside, Destination and Environment including Countryside Access,

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 2: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience (Environment Wales Act 2016, Section 6) Report

11. AUTHOR: Kate Stinchcombe – Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Manager

12. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644684

E-mail: katestinchcombe@monmouthshire.gov.uk

DRAFT