

SUBJECT:	BIODIVERSITY & ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE FORWARD PLAN
MEETING:	STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT
DATE:	2ND MARCH 2017
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL WARDS

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To advise Members of the preparation of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience forward plan in order to meet the Section 6 duty of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and to provide support for delivery of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To seek Select Committee's endorsement of the Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience forward plan prior to its consideration by Council.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 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 the Council must take a pro-active approach to improve and not reduce biodiversity when carrying out functions.
- 3.2 The duty came into force on 21st May 2016 and replaces the biodiversity duty in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The preparation of a forward plan assists in complying with the new duties and is currently a requirement on all Public Authorities.
- 3.3 There is a requirement to report on the plan in 2019 and every 3 years following this. The plan can be subsequently reviewed following the results of monitoring.
- 3.4 The work undertaken to meet the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems duty will assist the Council to maximise contributions to Well-being Goals under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It will particularly help towards delivery of the Well-being goal for Resilience. This goal is to ensure Wales is 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 (for example climate change).

- 3.5 In production of the forward plan we have considered the work that individual service areas undertake which could have a positive or negative impact on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience.
- 3.6 The work of other key organisations with whom Monmouthshire County Council can collaborate with to maximise delivery under the Act has also been considered e.g. Wye Valley AONB, Gwent Wildlife Trust and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.
- 3.7 Objectives have subsequently been developed which cover key areas of the Council's work. Objectives include proposals to adequately consider biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in decision making at all levels, environmental education and awareness raising, management of land for biodiversity and partnership working at a landscape scale to maximise benefits.
- 3.8 To ensure future delivery is integrated into the Council's functions, Welsh Government guidance suggests that commitment to action is integrated into business and corporate plans. This will be the next step in the Council's compliance with the duty.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 As a Public Authority, the Council has a duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems when exercising its functions. The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience forward plan, produced in line with draft Welsh Government guidance, sets the framework for compliance with that duty and aids with compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Much of the work already identified involves a continuation of projects and programmes that are already underway with no additional resource implication. The resource implications of new actions will need to be considered by each service area through normal business and budget planning processes.

6. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

- 6.1 If the forward plan is adopted it will have positive effects on all well-being goals, particularly help towards delivery of the well-being goal for resilience, and will meet all of the sustainable development principles. Monitoring will be via the Environment Partnership Board and statutory reporting will be undertaken on progress in 2019.
- 6.2 A Future Generations Evaluation is attached. This includes Equalities and Sustainability Impact Assessments (attached as Appendix 2).

7. CONSULTEES:

7.1 As indicated in the forward plan, significant consultation has been carried out in the preparation of the plan including internal consultation and with external bodies including the Monmouthshire Environment Partnership.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

8.1 Appendix 1: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan

8.1 Appendix 2: Future Generations Evaluation

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