

# Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Duty Delivery Plan

Section 6 Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Flintshire County Council

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## **1 Vision**

***Flintshire County Council is committed to reducing the decline of biodiversity in our County and realises the importance of biodiversity conservation and enhancement for our communities' health and wellbeing and enables behaviour change towards a sustainable lifestyle.***

## **2 Executive Summary**

Flintshire County Councils' Biodiversity duty delivery plan has been produced in response to the enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which requires that Public Authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.

A public authority, in complying with the Section 6 duty, must have regard to:

- The Section 7 list of habitats and species of principle importance for Wales
- The State of Nature Report published by Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
- Any area statement which covers all or part of the area in which the authority exercises its functions, once these are produced.

Complying with the Section 6 duty will help Public Authorities subject to the Well-being of future generations (Wales) Act 2015 to maximise their contributions to the Well-being goals.

All major threats to biodiversity including over-exploitation, habitat loss, invasive species, can be addressed by living more sustainably.

Flintshire County Council like other Local Authorities are under extended and continued financial pressure. It is essential that environmental initiatives are viewed holistically, embraced as an opportunity to improve County wide well-being and contribute where possible towards financial resilience.

## **3 Introduction**

Nature is our planet's life support system and consequently essential for human survival. Our natural environment provides our food, water, air, building materials, medicines and landscape. Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and biodiversity loss continues as a direct result of human impacts, through habitat loss and degradation, over exploitation, pollution, climate change and invasive non-native species.

Welsh Government recognise all the benefits that are provided by plants, animals microorganisms and the places where they live and are aiming to reverse the decline of biodiversity in Wales with a ground breaking new framework of legislation.

As a local authority we have a duty to function sustainably and lead by example when it comes to protecting and enhancing our natural environment. To meet the challenge of reversing the decline in biodiversity it is essential that we act now and ensure as a local authority we meet the

needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This document is Flintshire County Council's biodiversity duty delivery plan which outlines how, as an organisation, it plans to address its biodiversity duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2015 and consequently help achieve its Well-being objectives and Nature Recovery Plan objectives over the period 2016-19.

## **4 Strategic context**

### **Environment (Wales) Act 2016**

Under the Environment (Wales) Act (2016) all public bodies in Wales are required to;

- Maintain and enhance biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities and in doing so promote the resilience of ecosystems
- Demonstrate an ecosystem approach by applying the principles set out in the Act
- Prepare and publish a plan outlining how they intend to fulfil the duty
- Publish a report, every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this duty. (The first report is due to be published by 2019 covering the period 2016-2019)

### **Wellbeing of future generations (Wales) Act 2015**

Under the Wellbeing of future generations (Wales) Act (2015) all public bodies in Wales are required to;

- Carry out sustainable development by demonstrating the 5 ways of working, any plan or project must demonstrate that they are following these ways of working.
- Publish well-being objectives which maximise its contribution to the 7 well-being goals set out in the Act - these have been agreed by Flintshire County Council, published and are available to view at <http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Policy-and-Performance/Well-being-Objectives-2017-English.pdf>.

### **The Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales**

The Welsh Government published the national biodiversity strategy "The Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales" in 2015 with the ambition to "halt the decline in biodiversity by 2020 and then reverse the decline, for its intrinsic value, and to ensure lasting benefits to society" The Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales builds on the new legislative framework and sets out how Wales will deliver the commitments of the UN convention on biological diversity, the strategic plan for biodiversity 2011-2020 and the 20 associated Aichi targets which is a short term framework for action, as well as the EU biodiversity strategy to "halt the decline in our biodiversity by 2020 and then reverse that decline".

The Nature Recovery Action Plan focusses on 6 objectives for nature recovery in Wales, actions to reverse the decline of biodiversity are set out under each objective.

Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.

Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management

Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation

Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

The actions are allocated to specific partners including public bodies and local nature partnerships who are considered key partners for delivery. Welsh Government guidance states that public bodies should consider using the Nature Recovery Action Plan on which to base a biodiversity and ecosystem resilience duty forward plan. This duty plan is required by the Environment (Wales) Act (2016) and is based on the Nature Recovery Action Plan objectives, it will also help public bodies to achieve their well-being objectives which are a requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015).

**Figure 1:** The legislative and policy architecture surrounding the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Duty delivery plan



*\*The Areas for area statements are still to be finalised by NRW but we are assuming they will be at a regional scale*

**Figure 2:** The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Duty delivery plan will follow the 6 objectives set out in the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales



## 5 Reporting/Monitoring

Action under the plan will be monitored and reported on through a number of ways this is due to the cross cutting and integrated nature of the plan. Regular updates on plan progress will be received by the Environment Working Group. Actions will be reported on quarterly through the Single Revenue Grant reporting requirements. Action will also contribute to the annual output report for the Well-being objectives and report for the Environment (Wales) Act duty every 3 years.

**Figure 3:** Table showing the methods of monitoring and reporting

Area	Format	Deadline	Monitoring body
Environment (Wales) Act 2016	Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Duty Forward Plan  Report	Guidance recommends it should be in place 1 year after the legislation came into force  Every 3 years from 2019	Welsh Government
Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015	Wellbeing Objectives PSB and FCC  Output report	Published by May 2017  Annually	Welsh Audit Office and WFG Commissioner
SRG/ESD Core Local Authority Funding	Reporting	Bi-annually	Welsh Government

FCC Environment Working Group	Verbal report	As appropriate	FCC
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## 6 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience in Flintshire

### Biodiversity and Ecosystems in Flintshire

Flintshire is a county of contrasts. Set between the rural counties to the west and the more developed areas of Cheshire and Merseyside, land use varies from intensive industrial development along the Dee estuary through to remote and wild areas on the Clwydian range. The moorland, coast and woodland are important to all who live, work and visit the County.

Flintshire contains a high number of international, national and local nature conservation designations. The saltmarsh, sand dune and mudflat habitats of the Dee Estuary are not only important in their own right, but host internationally important populations of wildfowl and waders and are designated a Special Protected Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and RAMSAR wetland site of international importance.

Many of the commons within Flintshire are important for wildlife. The Halkyn Common SAC has formed over glacial deposits and 350 million year old limestone creating a unique habitat and the largest resource of Calaminarian grassland in Wales. Nationally uncommon species such as the lead-tolerant spring sandwort are abundant as a result of the long history of metalliferous mining in the area. The commons in the more urban areas also provide important diverse habitats. The network of ponds, wetland and scrub areas on Lower Common, Buckley are particularly important as breeding sites for frogs and newts and form part of the Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC. Flintshire is one of the key counties in Wales for the Great crested newt, they will often favour rural farm ponds, old quarries and derelict land in urban settings.

Woodlands cover 8.8% of the county, well below the Wales average of 14%. It is characterised by small blocks of farm woodland and some rural estates, as well as larger forest blocks, such as Nercwys and Moel Famau in the south of the county. Woodland forms an important habitat component in the wider countryside and within protected sites. For example Alyn Valley Woods SAC which follows the river Alyn from Loggerheads to Rhydymwyn is designated for its broadleaved woodland on limestone and wet alder woodland. Much of the Deeside and Buckley newt sites SAC is woodland which is important terrestrial habitat for Newts and Wepre Woods in Connahs Quay is designated for the sessile oak woodland present.

Moving from the more urbanised east, Flintshire is bounded to the west by the Clwydian Range, designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, here Coniferous forests are prominent and although areas have been ploughed for agriculture, much of it is still covered by a mosaic of heath, heather and gorse. Our only areas of deep peat in the county are in the Clwydian range. Peatland habitats can play an important role in water management, slowing down flood waters and naturally reducing flood-risk downstream. By slowly releasing water during dry periods, peatland helps to reduce the impact of droughts on water supplies and on river and stream flows.

Most urban areas within the County incorporate informal 'green space' which is important for wildlife and recreation. Many of these are the legacy of old industrial or mineral workings which have developed natural flora and are the home for numerous insect species. Greenfield Valley, Holywell and Wepre Park, Connah's Quay are particularly valuable 'wild spaces'.

In total the County hosts over 23 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and over 300 locally designated wildlife sites. These contain sensitive habitats including coastal and floodplain grazing

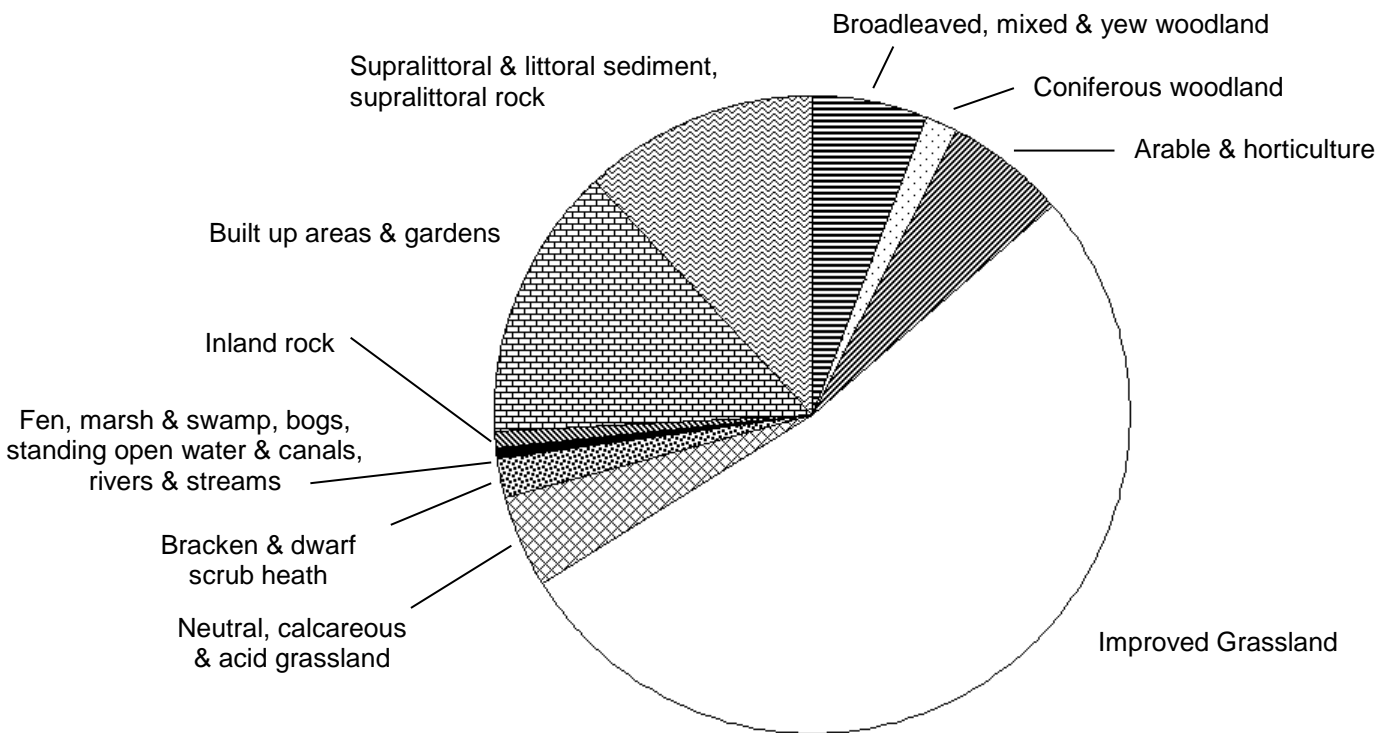


marsh (5% of the welsh resource), Lowland Calcareous grassland (17% of the welsh resource), Saltmarsh (12% of the welsh resource) heathland, reedbeds, calaminarian grassland, ponds and coastal sand dunes\*.

In addition there are many undesignated sites and scattered fragments of habitats which have nature conservation value and are key elements in the County’s biodiversity. These include streams and woodlands, particularly those of ancient semi natural origin, small pockets of wet woodlands, areas of limestone pavement (an internationally important habitat with less than 40ha remaining in Wales); old hedgerows, acting as corridors for wildlife in otherwise species-poor fields; ancient woodlands hosting hundreds of species including bluebells and yellow archangel. These combined habitats provide for rare species such as Sand Lizards, Natterjack toads, Bats, Dormice, Otter, Great Crested Newts and thousands of wading birds on the Dee Estuary.

\* figures taken from Welsh habitat targets disaggregation CCW report 2007 which was based on the Priority Habitats of Wales a Technical Guide (PHW) (Jones *et al*, 2003)

**Figure 4 Broad habitat types in Flintshire**



Source: Phase 1 data: no data available for inshore sublittoral sediment

## **Local ecosystem resilience**

Over the decades, Flintshire has undergone significant transformation. The impact of development from agriculture, housing and mineral extraction is significant, yet Flintshire still retains many areas that are of importance for wildlife, within both urban and rural areas.

There are strong development pressures around key European Great crested newt sites in the County. The future of the species in Flintshire will be dependent on maintaining habitat connections through the developing landscape this is also vital for retaining a landscape and ecosystems which will be resilient in a changing climate.

Across the whole of Wales protected areas are generally small and fragmented and are therefore vulnerable to management changes and the influence of surrounding land use. Reductions in public sector funding has also meant a reduction in monitoring for Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI) and in future may mean a reduction in funding for Section 15 SSSI agreements that pay for landowners to maintain protected sites.

The large industrial areas in Flintshire highlight the need for businesses to be performing sustainably and fully engaged in conservation objectives. There are many good examples of links between businesses and conservation work in Flintshire. These partnerships need to be built on and promoted. It is essential that biodiversity is considered and incorporated into design at early stages to ensure our landscape can be both economically and environmentally prosperous.

There are numerous issues which may undermine the resilience of our ecosystems; pressure from development for industry, housing and infrastructure, lack of available land that owners are willing to leave wild/enhance for nature. The spread of invasive non native species. Social pressures such as off-road motorcycling and anti- social behaviour including littering and flytipping all place additional pressure on our ecosystems and their ability to cope with change.

Restoring, expanding and improving the condition of our natural habitats, as well as incorporating natural space into our new development is the key to making them more resilient and able to deliver a wider range of social, economic and environmental benefits.

## **7 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience duty actions**

In accordance with Welsh Government guidance our Section 6 Biodiversity duty delivery plan is in line with the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales's objectives. The action information is provided along with an action lead, other key departments, the year the action will be undertaken and the performance measure.

Nature Recovery Action Plan Objective 1	Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels
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Code	Outcome	Action	Lead	Key Depts	Year				Performance measure
					2016	2017	2018	2019	
1.1	Achieve the Resilient Wales goal: Ensure biodiversity integration with Council Well-being workstreams	<p>1.1.1 Embed the consideration of biodiversity and sustainability throughout decision making</p> <p>1.1.2 Ensure there are strong links between staff and the local nature partnership (Bionet) to ensure input into the PSB, well-being assessment objectives and auditing process.</p>	<p>Corporate</p> <p>Corporate and Biodiversity</p>	All portfolios		•	•	•	<p>Legislative and policy requirements included in council plans where appropriate</p> <p>Clear lines of communication established</p>
1.2	Implement the new biodiversity and ecosystems resilience duty:	<p>1.2.1 Undertake an audit of council services, identify key departments and opportunities, and include recommended actions in the duty delivery plan</p> <p>1.2.2 Produce a biodiversity and ecosystems resilience duty delivery plan for the council</p>	<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Biodiversity</p>	All portfolios	•				<p>Audit report complete</p> <p>Duty delivery plan in place</p> <p>Guidance implemented and referenced</p>

Code	Outcome	Action	Lead	Key	Year				Performance measure
		1.2.3 Implement WG guidance on the duty and undertake specific dept meetings identified in the audit	Biodiversity						
1.3	Legislative and policy requirements are reflected in council plans, reports and processes	<p>1.3.1 Identify and assess council plans and policies for biodiversity impact and provide recommendations for amendments</p> <p>1.3.2 Ensure that the biodiversity and sustainability duty are considered within committee reports by including a standard consideration of the biodiversity and ecosystem resilience duty on all reports.</p> <p>1.3.3 Review the sustainability test which is currently undertaken within council procurement rules</p>	<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Governance</p> <p>Governance</p>			•	•		<p>Report complete</p> <p>Amended report format</p> <p>Report</p>
1.4	Improved understanding and awareness leads to	1.4.1 Undertake an ambitious internal communication strategy to improve understanding of	Biodiversity and Energy	Waste and Recycling		•	•	•	<p>a)Produce a staff advice note on the legislation</p> <p>b)Hold Staff and</p>

Code	Outcome	Action	Lead	Key	Year				Performance measure
	behavioural change	the duty and sustainability issues and responsibilities as a whole							Member training c)Produce an e learning module/sustainability and biodiversity staff and member pack
		1.4.2. Continue and improve our outreach education and awareness programme through work with schools/training events/social media/interpretation/press releases	Countryside services, Biodiversity	Local Nature Partnership		•	•	•	Increase no of people engaged through events and no of schools engaged each year.
		1.4.3. Establish links between biodiversity projects and carbon and waste reduction initiatives	Biodiversity and Energy	Waste			•		Look into possibility of a joint projects with Energy and Waste
		1.4.4 Encourage the development of corporate volunteering activities to promote environmental awareness and responsibility amongst staff and to enable individuals to develop values, skills and knowledge to contribute to sustainable	Biodiversity and corporate				•		No. of corporate volunteer hours

Code	Outcome	Action	Lead	Key	Year				Performance measure
		development.							

Nature Recovery Action Plan Objective 2	Safeguard species and habitats of principle importance and improve their management
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Code	Outcome	Info	Lead/Department	Key Departments	Year				Performance measure
					2016	2017	2018	2019	
2.1	Implement the suite of environmental legislation through our in house Ecological advisory service	2.1.1 Continue to provide ecological advice with regard to protected habitats and species, development control, licencing applications and protected site impact assessments, monitoring and enforcement action.	Ecologist		•	•	•	•	No. of applications responded to No. of licence applications No. TLSE
2.2	Ensure best evidence to underpin development control and planning policy decision making and safeguard species and habitats	2.2.1 Continue funding service level agreement with Cofnod/LERC	Access and Natural Environment Manager		•	•	•	•	Service level agreement in place
2.3	Increased resilience of our ecosystems by improving the attributes of resilience: diversity, extent, condition	2.3.1 Production of a local nature recovery plan which focusses on diversity, extent, condition and connectivity of Sec 7	Biodiversity and Local Nature Partnership				•	•	Production of a Local nature recovery plan





Nature Recovery Action Plan Objective 3	Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation
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Code	Outcome	Action	Lead	Key departments	Year				Performance measure
					2016	2017	2018	2019	
3.1	Habitat creation for pollinators with wider environmental benefits.	3.1.1 FCC to achieve national accreditation under the Bee friendly Wales scheme.  3.1.2 Submit Expression of interest and bee friendly plan to Welsh government and work towards accreditation.	Biodiversity				●		Bee friendly accreditation
3.2	Restoring degraded habitat and improving wider landscape connectivity.	3.2.1 Maintain and enhance our wildflower road verges	Highways	Biodiversity	●	●	●	●	Increase number of wildflower verges
3.3	Habitat creation, maintenance and enhancement.	3.3.1 Produce and implement a tree strategy and planting plan	Tree Officers	Countryside		●	●	●	Strategy and plan in place
3.4	Restore areas of degraded habitat and increase resilience of protected sites	3.4.1 Draw on evidence from the landholding biodiversity audit to create /enhance further council estate.	Ecologist and Biodiversity	Assets			●		Establish criteria for prioritisation  Improve 1 site per

		3.4.2 Assess landholdings and prioritise habitat improvements near protected sites							•	annum
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Nature Recovery Action Plan Objective 4	Tackle key pressures (Climate change/Invasive non native species/Habitat loss) on species and habitats
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Code	Outcome	Action	Lead	Key departments	Year				Performance measure
					2016	2017	2018	2019	
4.1	Climate change	4.1.1 Ongoing Carbon reduction and energy efficient initiatives	Energy	Planning policy	•	•	•	•	
		4.1.2 Follow best practice guidelines in terms of biodiversity enhancement on council owned renewable energy sites.	Energy			•	•	•	
		4.1.3 Reducing waste production and promoting resource efficiency	Waste and Recycling		•	•	•	•	
4.2	Reduction in invasive species	4.2.1 Coordinate and support projects which control Invasive Non Native species	Biodiversity Officer	Streetscene	•	•	•	•	Project reports
		4.2.2 Continue support for specific projects including Living landscapes/Alyn							Ongoing events, funding submissions

		valley Himalayan balsam project/Dee INNs project							
4.3	Reduce key pressures on habitats and species of principle importance for conservation	4.3.1 Coordinate and support Section 7 species/habitat specific project work  4.3.2 Undertake practical management to benefit section 7 species or habitats	Biodiversity and Ecologist			•	•	•	Project reports/data records  Habitat management recorded
4.4	Reduce pressures on habitats and species related to reduced habitat options in new builds and building maintenance.	4.4.1 Review processes and consider opportunities for improvements for wildlife. in our New homes/buildings schemes and when maintaining our local authority housing	Biodiversity and Ecologist	Planning			•	•	Checklist? Best practice guidance?
4.5	Reduce development pressures through continued ecologist advice and guidance notes	4.5.1 Improve process to enhance biodiversity by producing local Section 7 guidance note.	Ecologist				•		Complete advice note

Nature Recovery Action Plan Objective 5	Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring
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Code	Output	Action	Lead	Key departments	Year				Performance measures
					2016	2017	2018	2019	
5.1	Improved use of evidence in decision making	5.1.1 Use SoNaRR to help guide local action for ecosystems	Local nature partnership		●	●	●	●	
5.2	Improve baseline evidence for decision making	5.2.1 Support and undertake Surveys of S7 habitat and species	Biodiversity, Ecology, Countryside Services, Local Nature Partnership		●	●	●	●	Survey results
5.3	Improved understanding and monitoring	5.3.1 Monitor results of historical habitat improvement schemes to guide future projects	Biodiversity			●	●		Report
5.4	Improved evidence, understanding and monitoring	5.4.1 Maximise use of volunteers particularly in survey and monitoring roles	Biodiversity and Countryside			●	●	●	A volunteer group is established and maintained
5.5	Standardised data capture and action reporting	5.4.1 Use of LERC for evidence and data gathering  5.4.2 Report biodiversity action through agreed national	Ecologist and Biodiversity		●	●	●	●	Planning list reports  To be confirmed

		database/process							
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Nature Recovery Action Plan Objective 6	Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery
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Code	Outcome	Action	Lead	Key departments	Year				Performance measures
					2016	2017	2018	2019	
6.1	A council who is fully compliant with legislative and policy requirements and proactive in biodiversity conservation.	6.1.1 Ensure there is sufficient capacity to comply with legislative requirements and enable proactive action for biodiversity conservation.	Access and Natural Environment		•	•	•	•	Sufficient staff and resources in place
6.2	Support is provided for local biodiversity action delivery	6.2.1 Ensure that funding is secured through the Single Revenue Grant which supports and delivers biodiversity projects.	Biodiversity	Local Nature partnership	•	•	•	•	Funding bid and report
6.3	A framework is in place to support and govern local biodiversity action	6.3.1 Coordinate the Local Nature Partnership/North East Wales Biodiversity Network	Biodiversity	Natural Environment, Countryside	•	•	•	•	
6.4	Establish a framework of governance internally for council projects which focus on biodiversity or sustainability	6.4.1 Produce a council sustainability policy which will replace the environmental policy and build in links with	Biodiversity and Energy	Waste, Whole Council			•	•	

		the new legislation. 6.4.2 Create a cross departmental sustainability working group to implement the policy							
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## 8 Glossary of terms

**Biodiversity:** The variety of life found on earth. It includes all species of plants and animals, their abundance and genetic diversity.

**Ecosystem:** An ecosystem is made up of living organisms (plants, animals and microorganisms) in conjunction with their non-living environment (air, water, minerals and soil) and all the diverse and complex interactions that take place between them

Sustainable development

Ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**NRW:** Natural Resources Wales is the largest Welsh Government Sponsored Body. NRW were formed in April 2013, largely taking over the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales and the Environment Agency in Wales, as well as certain Welsh Government functions.

**Bionet:** The North East Wales Biodiversity Network (Bionet) was formed in October 2009 and renamed in 2010. It brought together partnerships that had existed in the Counties of Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. The broad aim of the network is to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity for current and future generations. Coordination and collaboration are seen as being important to the partnership alongside other objectives that include raising awareness and the promotion of biodiversity and identifying local priorities to deliver local and regional biodiversity improvements.

**SAC:** Special Area of Conservation, international designation

**SPA:** Special Protected Area, international designation

**SSSI:** Special Site of Scientific Interest, national designation

**RAMSAR:** Designation for wetlands of international importance, named after the place in Iran where the conference was held.

**WG:** Welsh Government

**INNs:** Invasive Non Native species