

# Environment

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This means:

- Developing greater access opportunities to the green infrastructure
- Protecting and enhancing the environment
- Improving flood protection
- Reducing the impacts of climate change

## Why is this a priority for the partners?

- ✓ Collective action is needed to ensure we value, protect and enhance Flintshire's environment and landscapes to maximise the benefits it can offer to current and future generations;
- ✓ PSB partners understand the crucial link between the natural environment and the well-being of people, both in terms of physical and mental health;
- ✓ Flintshire has many attractive areas that can be used to promote activity and ensure people, especially children, can enjoy and benefit from spending time outdoors;
- ✓ We need to enhance the natural environment beyond already protected sites, especially around our urban areas to realise the full benefits that the environment can offer residents;
- ✓ Several aspects of environmental resilience need addressing, particularly the need to better prepare for climate change, especially the risk of flooding;
- ✓ We want to ensure our air quality is the best it can be by working with partners to monitor and reduce harmful emissions; and
- ✓ PSB partners should lead the way by enhancing the environment on their own land and across Flintshire, and by being as carbon neutral as possible.

## What is the evidence behind this story?

- Those living, working and/or visiting Flintshire have said they place a high value on the natural environment and want to use it more for their own well-being.
- The barriers stopping some people from using the environment need to be better understood to provide equal opportunities for everyone.
- Statistics show a long-term increase in the percentage of overweight people in the county. In 2014, over 25% of 4 to 5 year olds and approximately 57.5% of Flintshire adults were found to be obese or overweight. Opportunities to take part in outdoor activity has a significant role to play in reversing this long-term increase.

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- The Dee Estuary, Halkyn Mountain and Deeside and Buckley newt sites are internationally designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). In addition, there are 23 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), nationally important ecological sites. Despite these designations, many species are in decline primarily due to agricultural intensification, urbanisation, invasive species and climate change.
- Significant flooding events have occurred in Flintshire in recent years and some 8,400 properties are at risk of flooding. This issue has a significant effect on people's well-being.
- There is increasing evidence of the serious impact of air pollution on health in parts of Flintshire in urban areas or close to major roads.

## What are we committed to doing?

- ✓ Working with communities of all ages and backgrounds to understand and appreciate the benefits of the natural environment and how its use will improve their physical and mental well-being
- ✓ Building resilience in our communities so they understand and can manage flood risks more effectively

## What specific actions will we take to support these commitments?

- ✓ Work at a local level to increase the resilience of communities so that they are better adapted to future climatic changes. This will include identifying communities most at risk from extreme weather events (e.g. flooding) and seeking innovative solutions to these challenges
- ✓ Build pride and ownership in communities so they want to protect and enhance where they live and work, helping to build community and family cohesion
- ✓ Promote the benefits of using the natural environment for exercise, volunteering and education
- ✓ Identify and act on issues which are causing environmental and ecological deterioration by working with partners such as the farming, commercial, industrial and transport sectors
- ✓ Identify all existing 'green' assets through an asset mapping exercise, and seek opportunities to enhance and link these in future
- ✓ Improve green transport links across Flintshire and into neighbouring counties
- ✓ Take collaborative actions to reduce the PSB carbon footprint. This will include reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and improvements within their assets to support greater biodiversity
- ✓ Encourage employees to reduce their own environmental impact and inspire them to use the natural environment for their own well-being

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## Where should we see an impact?

- ✓ Decline in biodiversity reversed
- ✓ Number of properties at risk from flooding in Flintshire reduced, with those at risk being better prepared and more resilient
- ✓ Number of people using the outdoors for exercising, volunteering or educational purposes increased, resulting in benefits in mental and physical health and stronger community and family cohesion
- ✓ Carbon footprint of public sector organisations reduced
- ✓ Natural resources, including designated sites managed sustainably – both to benefit species and to allow us to showcase what we have in Flintshire
- ✓ Choice and use of green travel opportunities increased resulting in a reduced rate of car usage amongst residents and visitors to Flintshire
- ✓ Delivery of the other priorities within this plan supported, as early engagement work with communities is one of the key elements of: supporting people back into employment; improving an individual's physical and mental health; valuing, protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment within local communities

## Links with other priorities:

- ✓ **Well-being and Independent Living** – improving physical and mental health via increased access to the outdoors for exercise
- ✓ **Community Safety** – making communities safer
- ✓ **Economy and Skills** – developing and improving strategic sites (employment and housing)
- ✓ **Resilient Communities** – enabling and inspiring communities to become confident, cohesive and forward thinking