



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	14 th January 2020
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Service Area	Planning and Countryside
Exempt/Non Exempt	Strategic
Committee Date	29 th January 2020

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Nature Recovery Action Plan (2019 – 2024)

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Merthyr Tydfil Nature Recovery Action Plan (MTNRAP) 2019-2024 replaces the previous Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Action Plan (MTBAP) 2014-2019, and represents the S6 plan for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough (MTCB), in accordance with Welsh Government Guidance: *Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1: Guidance for Section 6 – The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty*.
- 1.2 The document sets out the legislative context as it relates to the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Act states that all public authorities are required, when undertaking their functions in Wales, to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity wherever possible within the proper exercise of their functions. In doing so, public authorities must also seek to promote the resilience of ecosystems.
- 1.3 The status of biodiversity within the County Borough is described within the document in the context of its important habitats, its protected sites and the incidence of European protected species.
- 1.4 The MTNRAP explores the six objectives found within the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales in the context of MTCB.
- 1.5 Other areas addressed in the report include Green Infrastructure Assessment and Strategy, The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) and Area Statements [to be produced by Natural Resources Wales (NRW)].

1.6 The Appendices detail actions taken and proposed to be undertaken by MTCBC in relation to Priority Habitats (Appendix I), Priority Species (Appendix II) and those actions to be undertaken by individual departments.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION that

2.1 Council adoption of the Merthyr Tydfil Nature Recovery Action Plan be approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 The Environment (Wales) Act came into force in 2016. Public authorities are required to prepare and publish a plan showing how the S6 duty will be fulfilled (the S6 plan). This MTNRAP document (attached at Appendix 1) not only replaces the previous Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Action Plan (MTBAP) 2014-2019, but also represents the S6 plan for MTCB, in accordance with Welsh Government Guidance: Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1: Guidance for Section 6 – The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty.

3.2 The MTNRAP, in line with this guidance, sets out the measures undertaken by MTCBC to comply with the S6 duty. An update to the MTNRAP (S6 plan) will need to be published every three years.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 – Section 6 replaces and strengthens (in Wales) the previous biodiversity duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Section 6 states that *all public authorities are required, when undertaking their functions in Wales, to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity wherever possible within the proper exercise of their functions. In doing so, public authorities must also seek to promote the resilience of ecosystems.*

4.2 **Biodiversity in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough.** The MTNRAP sets the scene for the current state of biodiversity in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough by describing in broad terms the diverse range of habitats and species found.

4.3 Habitats found within the County Borough and outlined within the plan include Urban areas, Enclosed farmland, Semi-natural grassland, Native woodland, Fridd, Forestry, Heath, Green urban, Wetland, Mineral habitat, Inland rock, Rivers and streams, Invasive Non-Native Species.

4.4 Protected sites within the County Borough are described in the plan, there are two statutory designations, both Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – Cwm Glo a Glyndryys and Cwm Taf Fechan Woodlands. There are a number of non-statutory designations in the form of 59 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). In addition, there are 139 open spaces included within the Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy 2016 (MTOSS), 22 of which are priority open spaces chosen to

focus resources for improvement. Examples of species with protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (European otter, Bats, Common dormouse and Great crested newt) are provided along with an exploration of their status within MTCB.

4.5 The Merthyr Tydfil Nature Recovery Action Plan and Section 6 Plan. In 2015, Welsh Government published the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales, which set out six objectives for reversing the decline of biodiversity. These objectives have been used to develop the Merthyr Tydfil Nature Recovery Action Plan (MTNRAP) and S6 Plan. The objectives are as follows:

- 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.

4.6 Other relevant considerations within this section included:

- Connectivity and Green Infrastructure – looking at current progress of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council’s Green Infrastructure Assessment & Strategy and the role planning has in helping to protect and enhance green infrastructure features and networks.
- State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) – In September 2016, Natural Resources Wales produced a report setting out the state of Wales’ natural resources as required by the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The extent to which natural resources in Wales are being sustainably managed was assessed and recommendations made for a proactive approach to building resistance. The report also linked the resilience of [Welsh] natural resources to the well-being of the [Welsh] population. MTCBC is required (as part of their duty under subsection 1 of Section 6 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016) to have regard to the SoNaRR.
- Area Statements – The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 made it a duty for Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to produce ‘Area Statements’. The statements will cover a total of seven areas in Wales. Merthyr Tydfil, along with Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Cardiff make up the South Wales Central area. This area includes: the moorland fringes of the Brecon Beacons National Park, The South Wales valleys of the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf, the gentle lowlands of Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan, the cliffs of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, Cardiff capital of Wales.

4.7 Other relevant considerations within this section included: Reviews of the MTNRAP / Section 6 Plan (2019-2024) will be undertaken annually following its adoption in January 2020. The results / outcomes of these reviews will be incorporated within the next published Section 6 report due in 2022.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Any costs relating to these actions will be covered by existing departmental budgets. (Some actions will have no financial implications (e.g. changes to the wording of the IIA document to better reflect the Section 6 duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016).

6.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	4 of 4	0 of 4	0 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	0 of 10	0 of 10	10 of 10
4. Biodiversity	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1

Summary:

The main positive impacts are ... the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and the promotion of resilient ecosystems in MTCB with all the knock-on benefits this brings both to wildlife in general and the residents of Merthyr.

No negative impacts have been identified.

JUDITH JONES
CHIEF OFFICER PLANNING AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

COUNCILLOR DAVID HUGHES
CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING &
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Merthyr Tydfil Nature Recovery Action Plan – Section 6 Plan	December 2019	Supplied with this Full Council Report
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.