



Scrutiny Report of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Managing Biodiversity & Natural Environment in Cardiff

September 2019



Cardiff Council

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

Managing Biodiversity & Natural Environment in Cardiff

The natural environment that is essential to our very existence is at crisis point. Species are in decline, natural habitats are disappearing at an alarming rate and ancient ecosystems upon which we rely are facing terminal decline. This bleak picture was painted to our inquiry by witnesses who made a series of worrying statements, these included:

- 56% of species in the United Kingdom have suffered a decline since 1970, with 354 species are currently at risk of extinction;
- The United Kingdom has lost 97% of its wildflower meadows since 1945;
- 23 bee and wasp species have become extinct in the United Kingdom since the 1850s – the wider decline also means that the United Kingdom now imports 65,000 bumblebee colonies to support agricultural productivity each year;
- Welsh swift numbers have declined by over 60% since 1995.

Clearly this cannot be allowed to continue, and so our task group carried out a detailed review to explore what the Council could do to better manage Cardiff's biodiversity and natural environment. In delivering this piece of work we explored a number of areas including:

- The development of Cardiff's Biodiversity Forward Plan;
- The approach taken by Welsh local authorities and other public bodies to create biodiversity forward plans;
- The Council's current role, obligations and statutory / legislative requirements for supporting and improving biodiversity;
- The importance of Cardiff's biodiversity and ecosystems;
- The resources available to support and improve biodiversity in Cardiff;
- Cardiff's Green Infrastructure Strategy;

- Aspects of the planning system that are designed to support biodiversity and the natural environment;
- The role of Council's partner organisations and the public.

The inquiry included eight task group meetings that supported fourteen separate witness sessions; dealt with 22 witnesses and made a series of theme based recommendations across the following areas: Context Setting; Council Resources; Commitment, Structure & Process; Communication & Engagement; Baseline & Focus; and Best Practice & Practical Applications. All of this work was carried out with the hope that the findings and recommendations would help the Council better manage existing natural resources and enhance biodiversity in the city. Key recommendations made during the inquiry included:

- Asking the Council to declare a biodiversity emergency to sit alongside the climate change emergency.
- To employ an additional Ecologist or Section 6 Officer to help ensure that the Council meets the requirements of the Section 6 Duty.
- Where practically possible, to limit the use of pesticides such as glyphosate across the Council estate.
- The Council should build a biodiversity well-being commitment into Capital Ambition, decision-making processes, business plans and policies.
- The Council should link biodiversity and the resilience well-being objective into Cardiff's Local Development Plan when it is revised in 2020.
- The Council should deliver a series of actions to improve connectivity of habitat across Cardiff. This would help enhance biodiversity in the city.
- The Council should create and publish a community growing policy.
- The Council should work with Elected Members, partner organisations, volunteer groups and the public to develop a 'Plant a Tree Scheme'.

To conclude I would also like to thank everyone who has taken part in the task & finish exercise. This includes the members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Jane Henshaw, Cabinet members, external witnesses and Council staff. Without your help this inquiry would not have been possible. My hope is that the contents of this report are helpful to the Cabinet,

and that the recommendations made make a positive contribution towards enhancing Cardiff's natural environment.



Councillor Ramesh Patel

Chairperson – Environmental Scrutiny Committee

INQUIRY METHODOLOGY

Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee reviewed the management of biodiversity and natural environment in Cardiff to better understand how it can be better supported by the Council. In doing this the inquiry considered the current position of biodiversity in Cardiff and across Wales; the resources being allocated by the Council to support this area; existing commitment, structures and processes; proposed future plans; communication and engagement; baseline information and best practice / practical applications. In reviewing the information the task group drew upon a number of witness contributions and information sources including:

- Cardiff Council's Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment;
- Officers from Cardiff Council's Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate;
- Officers from Cardiff's Parks Service;
- Natural Resources Wales;
- Welsh government;
- RSPB;
- CLAS Cymru;
- SEWBRReC;
- Bug Life;
- Plant Life;
- Swansea City Council;
- Wildlife Trust;
- Planning & Biodiversity Forum.

From this body of evidence the Members drew key findings and a series of recommendations that are contained within this report.

INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

The aim of the inquiry is to provide Members with the opportunity to explore and consider how the Council can support and help improve the biodiversity in Cardiff. In particular this will include scrutiny of:

- The development of Cardiff's Biodiversity Forward Plan, for example, its structure, aims and objectives;
- The ongoing implications of Cardiff's Biodiversity Forward Plan, for example, future reporting and monitoring of the document;
- The approach taken by other Welsh local authorities to develop biodiversity forward plans and to identify best practice in this area;
- The Council's current role, obligations and statutory / legislative requirements for supporting and improving biodiversity;
- The importance of Cardiff's biodiversity and ecosystems;
- The resources available to support and improve biodiversity in Cardiff;
- Community collaboration and other partnership working approaches to understand how they help support and enhance biodiversity in Cardiff;
- The importance of raising awareness of biodiversity issues in Cardiff – internally, with key stakeholders and the public;
- Cardiff's Green Infrastructure Strategy – including the benefits of green infrastructure and ecosystem services;
- Green Infrastructure Management – including the Green Infrastructure Group;
- Cardiff Green Infrastructure SPG and Planned Development;
- The Green Infrastructure Spatial Strategy;

- Green Infrastructure Implementation Programme (Pollinators Action Plan, Individual Park Management Plans, Local Nature Plan, River Corridors, Tree Strategy, Cross border initiatives, other plans & projects);
- Sustainable drainage – links with the SuDS Approval Body process.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMENDATIONS

Section 1 – Biodiversity & Natural Environment – Context Setting

During the 8 meetings and 14 witness presentations the task group was provided with a range of submissions that provided background information and context to the state of biodiversity, both locally and nationally. Some of the key background points that relate to the state of biodiversity are set out in this section.

❖ State of Nature

1. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – The Cardiff Council presentation explained that the Wales ‘State of Nature Report 2016’ had identified the following:
 - Over the long term, 57% of vascular plant species declined and 43% increased. This pattern was unchanged over the short term.
 - 60% of butterfly species declined and 40% increased over the long term.
 - Over the short term, 58% of bird species declined and 42% increased.
 - Over 5,000 of the species that are known to occur in Wales have been assessed. 354 (approximately 7%) of these are at risk of extinction from Great Britain.

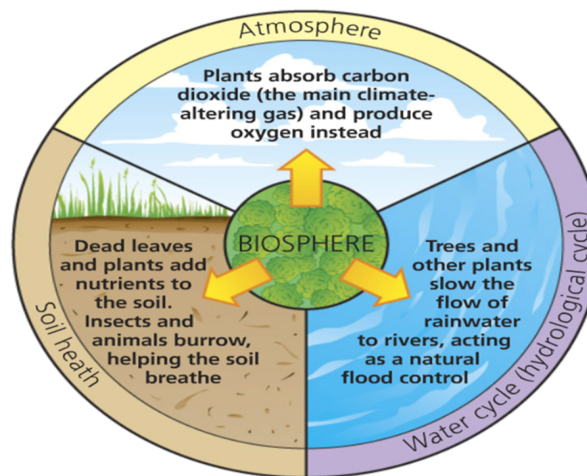
2. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – Explained that overall diversity is declining, which is shown by loss of habitats and species. The extent of some habitats has also declined significantly while connectivity has greatly reduced. All ecosystems have problems with one or more attributes of resilience. This means that their capacity to provide ecosystem services and benefits may be at risk. No ecosystem, on the basis of recent assessment, can be said to have all the features needed for resilience.

3. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The United Kingdom National Ecosystem Assessment identified the following key points:
- The natural world, its biodiversity and its constituent ecosystems are critically important to our well-being and economic prosperity, but are consistently undervalued in conventional economic analyses and decision-making.
 - Ecosystems and ecosystem services, and the ways people benefit from them, have changed markedly in the past 60 years, driven by changes in society.
 - The United Kingdom's ecosystems are currently delivering some services well, but others are still in long-term decline.
 - The United Kingdom population will continue to grow, and its demands and expectations continue to evolve. This is likely to increase pressures on ecosystem services.
4. **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation – (04/07/2019)** - The presentation delivered by RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life made reference to the pressures placed upon biodiversity and the impact that these have had. In doing this it made the following points:
- The presentation made reference to a recent IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) report. This concluded that biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate and predicts that one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction. This is predominantly due to human factors including land use change for intensive agriculture and urbanisation, hunting and the direct exploitation of animals, climate change, pollution and invasive species.
 - Simultaneously, the global community is becoming increasingly disconnected from nature and nearly half of the world's population live in urban areas. Re-connecting people with the natural world and creating opportunities for regular interactions has the potential to ignite public support to protect native wildlife.

- Since the Second World War, the UK has lost at least 97% of its wildflower meadows. In the United Kingdom, 23 bee and flower visiting wasp species have become extinct since the 1850s, primarily caused by habitat loss and fragmentation, the introduction of inorganic nitrogen-based fertilizers and pressures on land use (i.e. industry and farming). Each year the United Kingdom imports 65,000 bumblebee colonies to support agricultural productivity due to wild pollinator declines. Re-establishing and stabilising wild pollinator populations in the UK is vital for pollination services to both wild and agricultural systems.
- In Wales, swift numbers have declined by over 60% since 1995. If numbers continue to fall at the same rate, we might lose them as breeding birds altogether in the next 20 years.
- Feeding on midges, moths, beetles and spiders, the lesser horseshoe has declined nationally in both population and distribution, but in Cardiff there are a number of protected roost sites for this threatened species.
- 56% of species in the United Kingdom have suffered a decline in numbers since 1970, with 15% of species on the endangered list.

5. **Welsh Government Presentation (18/06/2019)** – This emphasised the importance of biodiversity in supporting everything that we do, and went on to provide a diagram (**Diagram 1 below**) to illustrate the importance of the relationship between atmosphere, soil and water cycle.

- **Diagram 1 – Environmental relationship between the atmosphere, soil and water cycle**



❖ Legislation & Local Authority Duties

6. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The presentation identified the main roles of the Council in relation to biodiversity as:

- Staff must comply with the same legislation in the exercise of their functions, as the public is required to do.
- Some legislation introduces specific duties upon the Council as a Public Body.
- New duties were placed upon all Public Bodies under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- The Council is well placed to act as facilitator to others in positive action.

7. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The presentation provided examples of legislation that had been created to support biodiversity and the natural environment, this included:

- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 – most highly protected species and sites in Europe;
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural

Communities Act 2006) – protected sites and species in the United Kingdom;

- Protection of Badgers Act 1992;
- Deer Act 1991;
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996;
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

8. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – The presentation provided the following practical examples of how the Council and its staff should comply with legislation:

- Planned maintenance to Council buildings – may disturb bat roosts or nesting birds;
- Cutting hedges – may disturb birds nests or dormice;
- Tree work – may disturb bats or nesting birds;
- Highways schemes may affect roadside verges, hedgerows and trees, and the protected species they contain;
- Footpath and cycleway schemes may cause habitat fragmentation or affect protected species, especially if lighting is introduced;
- Cutting roadside verges – may harm reptiles and chop flowering plants;
- Use of herbicides may affect aquatic habitats or other habitats;
- Failure to control invasive non-native species such as Japanese Knotweed or Himalayan Balsam affect biodiversity;
- Disposal of land with ecological constraints may incur liabilities.

9. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – Reference was made to the various pieces of planning policy that the Council uses to support biodiversity, these include:
- The Local Development Plan (LDP) includes a series of policies, for example: KP 16 - Green Infrastructure; EN 5 – Designated Sites; EN 6 – Ecological Connectivity; EN 7 – Protected and priority habitats and species.
 - A Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been approved and is in use. It contains a series of Technical Guidance Notes, one of which is Ecology and Biodiversity.
10. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 placed a new duty on all public bodies, this includes the Council. In particular Section 6 of the Act sets out a Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty, which means that:
- *'A public authority must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions'*.
11. **Welsh Government Presentation (18/06/2019)** – The Welsh Government presentation also commented on Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, by mentioning the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty. They reiterated that - *'Public Authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions'*.
12. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - In complying with subsection Section 6 of the Environment Wales Act, a public authority must take account of the resilience of ecosystems, in particular the following aspects:
- Diversity between and within ecosystems;

- The connections between and within ecosystems;
- The scale of ecosystems;
- The condition of ecosystems (including their structure and functioning);
- The adaptability of ecosystems.

13. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty on public bodies to:

- Prepare and publish a plan setting out what it proposes to do to comply with subsection (1) of Section 6.
- A public authority must, before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year after 2019, publish a report on what it has done to comply with subsection (1) of Section 6.
- However, enacting legislation and imposing sanctions for non-compliance, whilst important, are not the most productive means of furthering nature conservation.
- Working in partnership with the public and with other organisations such as RSPB and Wildlife Trusts often adds more value nature conservation than legal deterrents.

14. **Wildlife Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** – They highlighted the benefit of SUDS, and that Cardiff was now the local reporting authority. This has benefited from being built into legislation, and illustrates the importance of building other key environmental goals into legislation.

❖ **Cardiff's Green Assets**

15. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The presentation provided a summary of Cardiff's GI (Green Infrastructure) and Biodiversity Assets. This included the following statements:

- Cardiff has a wealth of Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Assets that are under significant pressure in the urban environment, for example, from recreation and development.
- Assets include all habitats, for example, grasslands, woodlands, wetlands, ponds, scrub which are home to a variety of species.
- Many of these assets are on Council owned land. Parks and open spaces are obvious examples, but these assets can also be found on land belonging to Estates, Highways and Housing.
- Biodiversity assets can be found on Cardiff's large stock of private land.
- There are over 400 parks and open spaces in Cardiff. These contain 488 hectares of natural and semi natural green spaces, which include 236 hectares of woodland.
- Cardiff has 58 locally designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's); seven Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's); one Special Area of Conservation (SAC); two Country Parks and four Local Nature Reserves.
- Less obvious sites in Cardiff can support biodiversity assets, for example, road verges, areas around buildings and housing, private land, gardens.

❖ **Area Statements**

16. **Natural Resources Wales Presentation (27/06/2019)** – The presentation addressed 'Area Statements' and made particular reference to the 'South Central Area Statement' that includes Cardiff. They explained that they provided a mechanism to value the natural environment and that the South Central Area Statement aims to recognise the intrinsic worth of and to maximise the multiple benefits of the natural environment to wellbeing and economic prosperity.
17. **Natural Resources Wales Presentation (27/06/2019) - Building Equitable Partnerships** – Natural Resources Wales emphasised the importance of

building relationships that lead to equitable partnerships, giving a voice to and opening doors for partners by balancing empirical and qualitative evidence. This is particularly relevant in relation to developing the 'Area Statements'. They also believe that it is important to put the environment at the heart of decision making. To do this 'Area Statements' spearhead the 'new ways of working' and will help to put the local environment at the heart of decision making.

18. **Natural Resources Wales Presentation (27/06/2019)** – As a part of the development of area statements Natural Resources Wales will set out an Area Profile describing the natural resources in that particular area, as well as the benefits they can provide and how the national priorities, risks and opportunities for the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) are reflected in that place.

❖ **Green Infrastructure**

19. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - Expertise in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience exists within Cardiff Council in the form of a cross-service area collaboration forum referred to as the 'Green Infrastructure Group'. This group includes staff from several services including parks, planning, public rights of way, trees, environmental quality, drainage and flood risk management. The aim is to deliver natural resource management in a coordinated and holistic way, which better reflects the current 'Ecosystem Approach' to natural resource management.
20. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The Green Infrastructure Group has drafted a Green Infrastructure Plan, and this will be merged into Cardiff's proposed biodiversity forward plan. The Draft Green Infrastructure Plan includes the following information:
 - What Green Infrastructure is and why is it important;
 - Six objectives, setting out how green infrastructure can contribute to:
Protection of the natural environment; Climate change mitigation &

adaptation; Supporting the local economy; Improving people's physical & mental health; Creating opportunities for community engagement; volunteering & training and Placemaking;

- How green infrastructure is protected and enhanced in Cardiff;
- An Action Plan which would deliver this protection and enhancement, incorporating an implementation Programme setting out a list of ongoing and potential projects;
- Critical to this Action Plan is working with all service areas within the Council to raise awareness of this duty and to develop Service-area Action Plans to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

21. **Natural Resources Wales (27/06/2019)** – They have made a climate change and biodiversity commitment, this is different to Cardiff Council that has only declared a climate change emergency. They also believe that it is very important for a public body to embed delivery of its biodiversity forward plan into its well-being objectives. Natural Resources Wales has built the idea of 'managing today's natural resources for tomorrow's generations' into its Corporate Plan to 2022.

▪ **Context Setting: Recommendation 1 – Declare Biodiversity & Climate Change Emergency**

Many of the actions linked to the cause of climate change relate directly to habitat and biodiversity loss, therefore, protecting, supporting and enhancing biodiversity will help in addressing climate change.

Organisations like Natural Resources Wales have declared joint climate change and biodiversity emergencies, therefore, the task group recommends that the Council declares a biodiversity emergency to sit alongside the climate change emergency. When declaring the joint emergency, the Council should publish a list of actions that it proposes to take to deliver the aims of the joint declaration.

Section 2 – Council Resources

During the 8 meetings and 14 witness presentations the task group was provided with a range of information about the level of resource that the Council and associated partners allocate towards supporting and enhancing biodiversity in Cardiff. Some of the key points that relate to resource allocation are set out in this section.

❖ Council Resources

22. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - Resources allocated by the Council for supporting and enhancing biodiversity in Cardiff are limited. The allocated resource is mainly focused upon providing advice and management of biodiversity on the Council estate. The main staff resources that are funded via the revenue budget are as follows:
 - A County Ecologist (Strategic Planning);
 - Community Ranger Team – this team consists of a Conservation Officer and eight other FTE posts (Park Services).
23. **Cardiff Council Information** – Information provided explained that the Community Ranger Team consists of nine FTE posts and is based at Forest Farm in Cardiff. The Community Ranger Team is reliant on grant funding and volunteer / partner support for the delivery and development of projects.
24. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The Community Ranger Team delivers a wide range of work including: habitat /site management; habitat creation; events; environmental education / working with schools; working with Community and Friends Groups; working with NEETS and Community Service; working with volunteers; timber recycling; survey work; footpaths and access.

25. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - As referenced above the Community Ranger Team undertakes site management across Cardiff. This typically includes:
- The Community Ranger Team undertake practical management work of habitats across the city for biodiversity in the natural open spaces. This includes SSSI's SAC's and LNR's.
 - They work under licence for European Protected Species.
 - Involvement in projects in more urban parks, for example, pollinator planting.
26. When a Member asked what the Council could do to better support the work of the Community Ranger Team, he was told that the best way to improve things and better support biodiversity was to provide more resources for the team.
27. **Cardiff Council Information** - The Community Ranger Team contains individuals who between them hold a considerable wealth of experience and knowledge on Cardiff's biodiversity and natural environment. Such a resource is massively valuable to the Council. At the time of the inquiry the average age of the Community Ranger Team was 51, with the youngest member being 39. This presents a workforce planning risk, since the experience and knowledge of the team is not being passed down to younger generations. If parts of the collective knowledge were lost then it could take many years to regain. Unlike other parts of the Parks Service, the Community Ranger Team does not have any apprentices.
28. **Cardiff Council Information** - During the years 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 the Community Ranger Team has directly bid for or supported 16 grant applications. Collectively these grant applications have raised £1,471,680 of funding for schemes across Cardiff. This means that the Community Ranger Service has helped to raised significantly more in three years than it would have cost to run the team for the same period.

29. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The current County Ecologist is based in the Planning Service and spends the vast majority of his time dealing with and providing advice on planning applications. The Council previously employed two Ecologists, with one of the posts being deleted several years ago as a result of budget cuts. Having one County Ecologist who has to focus on planning matters means that there is limited expertise in dealing with other ecology matters.

❖ **Herbicides & Pesticides**

30. **Glyphosate Presentation (18/06/2019)** – During the task & finish exercise several witnesses stressed the importance of limiting the use of herbicides and pesticides on the Council estate, and made particular reference to the use of glyphosate. Council officers and other witnesses explained that there were circumstances where glyphosate had to be used by the Council as there were no other economically viable alternatives, for example, along the public highway. However, it was suggested that the Council should review how and where glyphosate is used, and whenever possible to refrain from using it on Council land.
31. **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** – The presentation suggested that the Council should dramatically reduce the use of herbicides and pesticides in Council managed green spaces. Chemical control often harms wildlife beyond the targeted species. Many species targeted through chemical control are not harmful or can be effectively controlled using other measures such as encouraging natural predators and companion planting. Many of the species targeted by chemical control, such as slugs and caterpillars, are fundamental parts of the food chain for birds and mammals.
32. **Glyphosate Presentation (18/06/2019)** – In 2017 the EU licence came to an end and was reviewed. The licence was only extended until 2021. All of the glyphosate products that the Council uses are approved as safe for use in the public domain. It is unlikely that there will be any move beyond that until after

Brexit. Pesticides and herbicides are overseen by the Chemical Research Directorate, which is a part of the HSE.

33. The Vale of Glamorgan Council has become the first local authority in Wales to eliminate the use of glyphosate in its Green Flag Parks. Foamstream herbicide-free technology for managing unwanted vegetation, is being used by the Vale of Glamorgan Council across several parks, making them greener, cleaner and safer for visitors to enjoy. Keep Wales Tidy recently awarded Green Flag status – the mark of a top-quality outdoor space – to 10 sites maintained by the Council. Romilly Park, Alexandra Park and Windsor Gardens, Barry Island Seafront and Friars Point, Belle Vue Park, Central Park, The Knap Gardens, Victoria Park, Gladstone Park, Cosmeston Country Park, Porthkerry Country Park all received the accolade, and all are maintained with Foamstream. Foamstream works by using the extreme heat in boiling hot water to kill the vegetation. The water is insulated by a biodegradable foam that prevents the heat escaping into the surrounding atmosphere. Keeping heat on the unwanted plant for longer ensures a more effective kill of the plant. Foamstream also helps sterilise surrounding seeds and spores, reducing overall regrowth.

❖ **Volunteering**

34. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - During 2017/18 the Community Ranger Team supported 15,221 volunteer hours; based on the living wage this is the equivalent of £101,621. This increased in 2018/19 when they supported 16,278 hours; based on the living wage this is the equivalent of £137,549. As stated, the work delivered by the Community Ranger Team is very reliant on grants and supporting volunteers.
35. **Wildlife Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** – The Wildlife Trust emphasised that Friends Groups and other volunteer based groups were a great free resource that the Council should embrace. They explained that the Council should aim to have a Friends Group in every park, but to remember that volunteers don't just happen, they need to be supported, organised and developed. This requires resource. Supporting parks and volunteering can

provide great health and economic value for a city, therefore, the Council should do what it can to support this.

36. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – This emphasised the importance of community collaboration. The task group was told that working with friends and community groups helped to engender a sense of ownership, helped to source funding, encouraged volunteer involvement, provided networking opportunities and fostered a wider sharing experience.

❖ **Biological Engineering**

37. **Newport Biological Engineering Visit – Salix River & Wetland Services Ltd (02/07/2019)** - The Task Group visited Riverside Walk in Newport on the 2nd July to look at the biological engineering remediation work that had taken place along the banks of the River Usk. During the visit Members were told that the natural habitats of estuaries are often missing, especially in urban areas. The absence of the soft edges (where wildlife is most abundant) impacts on the ecological recovery of our rivers and estuaries.
38. **Newport Biological Engineering Visit – Salix River & Wetland Services Ltd (02/07/2019)** - Salix River & Wetland Services Ltd use bioengineering engineering techniques that work with natural processes and plant species in order to provide long term bank stability whilst creating vital missing habitats. Inter-tidal rivers offer a unique challenge for bioengineering solutions due to the water quality, noticeably higher salinity, and the highly variable water levels and long periods of inundation that occurs with the tidal influence. In addition, the nature of the fine alluvial soils in estuaries, the turbulent flows and wave action means that erosion is prevalent where no vegetation occurs. Vegetation establishment is often more difficult in this environment as is the construction of bioengineering solutions due to the soft soils and tidal restrictions for working on the river.
39. **Newport Biological Engineering Visit – Salix River & Wetland Services Ltd (02/07/2019)** - The Newport scheme applied a soft engineering solution

that used brushwood fascines and rock rolls as a direct alternative to large rock. The approach was described as:

- A low carbon solution (bioengineering has a carbon footprint of 2 tonnes of CO₂ per 25m of riverbank; while hard engineering with blockstone has a carbon footprint of 30 t tonnes of CO₂ per 25m of riverbank).
- Bioengineering absorbs the energy of the river, while hard engineering deflects the energy of the river causing erosion to happen further down the river.
- A scheme that allows natural vegetation to establish.
- A scheme that recreates saltmarsh and mud flat habitats.

40. Cardiff Council and Natural Resources Wales is currently developing a flood defence scheme along the foreshore of South East Cardiff. This scheme includes the river mouth and lower estuary area of the River Rhymney that has some characteristics similar to those seen on the River Usk. Members have been told that the Cardiff flood defence scheme will require remediation work once parts of the basic structure have been constructed. It is hoped that this remediation work will support biodiversity and the natural environment.

▪ **Council Resources: Recommendation 2 - Additional Ecologist / Section 6 Officer**

The Council needs to employ an additional Ecologist or Section 6 Officer. He or she should work across all service areas to ensure that the Council is doing what is needed to meet the requirements of the Section 6 Duty of the Environment Act Wales. This would support the work of the current Ecologist who spends the majority of his time dealing with planning related work. Tasks to be covered by this post should include:

- To co-ordinate, support and promote a range of environmental projects across Cardiff being delivered to meet the requirements of the Section 6 Duty.
- To provide support for volunteer groups that are engaged in work that

relates to the Section 6 Duty of the Environment Act Wales.

- Liaison with partner organisations and other third party groups that are working with or supporting the Council to deliver projects that relate to the Section 6 Duty of the Environment Act Wales.

- **Council Resources: Recommendation 3 - Cardiff Ranger Team Apprentice**

The Council should employ, train and develop an apprentice to work with the Cardiff Ranger Service. Given the current age profile of the Cardiff Ranger Service, the post would help preserve the extensive knowledge and experience of the team within the Council. The length and structure of the apprenticeship scheme should reflect the amount of knowledge and skill that the apprentice would need to become a fully trained member of staff.

- **Council Resources: Recommendation 4 - Biological Engineering – River Rhymney**

Where possible, the Council should use the biological engineering techniques similar to those applied on the banks of the River Usk when undertaking remediation work on sections of the River Rhymney as a part of the new flood defence scheme. Taking this approach would provide biodiversity and reduced carbon footprint benefits when compared against hard engineering alternatives.

- **Council Resources: Recommendation 5 - Herbicides & Pesticides - Glyphosate**

Where practically possible, the Council should limit the use of pesticides such as glyphosate across its estate. Local authorities such as the Vale of Glamorgan have managed to become herbicide free in a number of parks by using alternative weed control and management practices. The Council should look to learn from this and publish details of how, where and why herbicides and pesticides will be applied across the Council estate.

▪ **Council Resources: Recommendation 6 – Volunteer Support**

The Council does a good job in providing support to volunteer groups who carry out lots of work to help enhance Cardiff's natural environment; this is evidenced by the 16,278 volunteer hours that were supported by the Cardiff Ranger Service in 2018/19. However, Members feel that if more resource were invested into volunteering then volunteer contributions would be even greater. On this basis, task group recommends that the Council should invest additional resources to encourage, recognise and expand support from volunteer groups for work that relates to the Section 6 Duty of the Environment Act Wales. Specifically, they believe that this resource would be maximised if it focused on volunteer co-ordination and in applying for grant funding.

Section 3 – Commitment, Structure & Process

During the 8 meetings and 14 witness presentations the task group was provided with a range of information about the commitment, structure and process that the Council and associated partners allocate towards supporting and enhancing biodiversity in Cardiff. Some of the key points raised on these topics are set out in this section.

❖ Section 6 - Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

41. **Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty** – Several bodies explained that public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions. Public bodies should also:
- Embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into their early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans, programmes and projects, as well as their day to day activities.
 - In complying with the Section 6 Duty, must have regard to the Section 7 list of habitats and species of principal importance for Wales.
 - Ensure that decisions are evidence-based.
 - This duty is in addition to the requirement to consider EU and UK legally protected species.
42. **Welsh Government Presentation (18/06/2019) - The Duty to Maintain & Enhance Biodiversity** - The actions to do this should, as far as possible, be guided by the 6 objectives of the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales (NRAP) which have been identified to contribute to reversing the decline of biodiversity in Wales:
- **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.

These objectives address the strategic goals of the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity <https://www.cbd.int/sp/elements/default.shtml>.

43. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019) - The Duty to Report** – It was explained that a public authority must, before the end of 2019, and before the end of every third year after 2019, publish a report on what it has done to comply with the duty. This does not be a standalone report – it can be included in the annual report on well-being objectives, or another report. It can include:

- Identifying what steps have been taken to incorporate biodiversity measures into other areas of policy, strategies or initiatives;
- Identifying practical actions taken on the ground;
- Outlining any partnership initiatives on biodiversity have been set up and what they have achieved;
- What the organisation has done to help raise awareness of and communicate the importance of biodiversity.

44. Virtually all of the witnesses providing evidence to the task group (for example, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and Swansea Council) felt that biodiversity should be an integral part of a public authority's business or corporate planning processes, i.e. it should play a key role in all future decision making. It was suggested that to comply with the Section 6 duty, public authorities should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into their early thinking and business planning, including any

policies, plans, programmes and projects, as well as their day to day activities.

45. **Welsh Government Presentation (18/06/2019)** – The Welsh Government presentation set out a number of key actions that they felt were important for any organisations that were looking to embed the principles of the Biodiversity Duty, these were:
- Make a commitment to biodiversity and embed this into your corporate or business plan or sustainability statement, for example, as in the Swansea Corporate Plan;
 - Raise awareness across the organisation about how biodiversity contributes to our well-being, for example, Public Health Wales and the Biodiversity Duty;
 - Think about how enhancing biodiversity can help deliver across your organisation’s activities, not just what you may think of as biodiversity activities, for example, to support active recreation, education, flood prevention, regeneration and local food growing.
 - Reduce, re-use and recycle materials, but where products such as paper are bought, ensure that supplies come from sustainable sources, for example, paper from sustainable forests.
46. **Wildlife Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** – They felt that it was important for an organisation like Cardiff Council to work with Public Service Boards to deliver the aims of the Biodiversity Duty. All public services are required to adhere to the Biodiversity Duty, and so linking common goals across the Public Service Board parties would help maximise overall benefits for Cardiff. They also explained that green spaces need to feel safe and welcoming to encourage public use; public bodies need to be mindful of this and work towards creating such spaces.
47. **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation – (04/07/2019)** - The first part of the presentation referenced the Duty and the importance of linking this to decision making. In doing so the presentation explained the following:

- By putting nature and the environment at the heart of all decisions that Cardiff Council makes, there is an opportunity for Cardiff to become a forerunner in the sustainable city movement and work towards the Welsh Governments targets of creating a 'resilient Wales'. By implementing some of the simple steps and examples shown in this report, Cardiff Council can help conserve existing areas for biodiversity, create and connect communities of Cardiff with nature.

48. **Councillor Peter Jones, Swansea City Council Presentation (24/07/2019)**

- Members were told that it was important to make a commitment to biodiversity and then to embed it into the Council's corporate / business plan or sustainability statement, this is something that has happened in Swansea's Corporate Plan. Once this statement has been put in place then it is essential that the message is clearly communicated to the public.

49. **Councillor Peter Jones, Swansea City Council (27/07/2019)** - The monitoring of the work will be measured by Swansea's Scrutiny Performance Panel when they look at the natural environment.

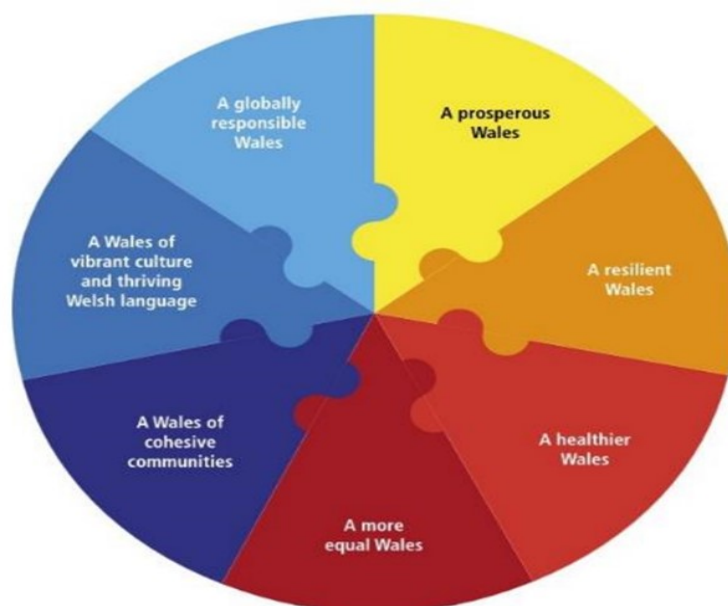
50. **Natural Resources Wales Presentation (26/06/2019)** – The presentation stressed the importance of focusing on the Section 7 responsibilities of the Environment Wales Act, which extends protection and support towards special, protected and rare wildlife. This relates to a list of the living organisms and types of habitat which are of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in Wales. The information in this list needs to be supported by a solid data source.

❖ **Wellbeing of Future Generations Act**

51. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - A public authority must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions (Environment (Wales))

Act 2016). This ties in with the core principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015), these are illustrated in **Diagram 2** (below).

Diagram 2 - Core principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)



52. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) has been created to drive well being and long term sustainability in Wales. The presentation provided a quote which described the Welsh ambition as - *“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).”*
53. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The whole Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty is driven by the Well Being of Future Generations legislation. The seven primary goals (and descriptions) of this legislation are set out below:
- **A prosperous Wales** - An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities,

allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

- **A resilient Wales** - 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).
- **A healthier Wales** - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
- **A more equal Wales** - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** - Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** - A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
- **A globally responsible Wales** - A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

54. **Natural Resources Wales (26/06/2019)** – It views 'a resilient Wales' as the primary Well Being of Future Generations goal that it needs to work to achieve. In response to this Natural Resources Wales has '*set objectives to achieve a biodiverse natural environment with health functioning ecosystems, and take all reasonable steps to achieve those objectives*'. They felt that the current Cardiff Corporate Plan could have included more information setting out how it aims to address its biodiversity duty.

❖ Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity Forward Plan

55. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The Green Infrastructure Strategy for Cardiff is based on the 'Ecosystem Approach'. An 'ecosystems approach' draws on the Convention of Biological Diversity definition. The Green Infrastructure Strategy for Cardiff is described as '*a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way*'. The Green Infrastructure Strategy for Cardiff puts an emphasis on maintaining the health of ecosystems as well as the sustainable human use of the environment, for present and future generations.
56. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - Green Infrastructure: Instead of referring to biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, Cardiff Council uses the term 'Green Infrastructure' to reflect a more holistic approach which incorporates:
- Ecology and biodiversity;
 - Trees, soils and landscaping;
 - Access, public open space and recreation;
 - Sustainable drainage;
 - Use of vegetation to ameliorate pollution.
57. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - Green infrastructure is about multi-functional, connected green spaces that make the best use of land - at the same time providing green open space for all, helping wildlife to flourish, and delivering a wide range of economic, health and community benefits. This is as important to the city as its 'grey' infrastructure of roads, buildings and power lines (CABE 2009), and helps to address many of the social and environmental issues linked to urban life.
58. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – Cardiff's Green Infrastructure Plan Objectives are:

- **Objective 1:** To protect and enhance Cardiff's ecosystems to ensure that they continue to support diverse habitats and species, allowing them to adapt to change;
- **Objective 2:** To ensure that Cardiff's green infrastructure is enhanced and managed in a way that increases resilience to the changing climate and provides protection for people and places;
- **Objective 3:** To maximise the contribution that green infrastructure makes to Cardiff's economy by enhancing the city's attractiveness for business, tourism and living;
- **Objective 4:** To increase the potential physical and mental health benefits from a good quality, natural environment by improving, promoting and creating connected, multi-functional green infrastructure in Cardiff;
- **Objective 5:** To use Cardiff's green infrastructure to provide opportunities for people to access the outdoor environment and to participate in learning, training and volunteering to foster social inclusion and equality and improve life chances;
- **Objective 6:** To build upon Cardiff's reputation as a vibrant, green and attractive city by continuing to enhance and sustain the green infrastructure that underpins the city's unique qualities and sense of place.

59. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - As part of the Implementation Programme, a 'Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Action Plan' had been drafted. The Green Infrastructure Plan and the BRED Action Plan was the subject of a Cabinet Report that had the intention of securing approval of these documents to discharge the Council's duty to prepare and publish a forward plan. The Green Infrastructure Plan was approved on the 26th September 2019, and the document sets out the following vision for the city:

- *'Cardiff's distinctive natural heritage will provide a network of Green Infrastructure which will be protected, enhanced, developed and managed*

to ensure that its integrity and connectivity is sustained for the economic, social and environmental benefit of the City and the Region.'

60. **Cardiff Council Presentation (03/07/2019)** - As a part of this inquiry, the Committee considered the draft document and sent a letter to the responsible Cabinet Member which set out the comments, observations and recommendations of the task group in relation to the draft Green Infrastructure Plan. This was received by the Cabinet Member in advance of the Cabinet meeting on the 26th September 2019. A copy of this letter is attached to this report as **Appendix 1**.
61. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - The Green Infrastructure Plan is supported by the Green Infrastructure Implementation Programme. The key projects / plans identified for delivery within this Green Infrastructure Implementation Programme are:
- Pollinator Action Plan;
 - Site Management Plans;
 - Local Nature Plan;
 - River Corridors;
 - Tree Strategy;
 - i-tree Cardiff;
 - Cross departmental and cross border initiatives, for example, PRoW;
 - Green Infrastructure Plan.
62. **Welsh Government Presentation (18/06/2019)** – The presentation explained the duty of a Local Authority Biodiversity Forward Plan as:
- A public authority must prepare and publish a plan setting out what it proposes to do to comply with the duty.
 - This need not be a standalone plan - it can be included in your well-being statement as to how your well-being objectives will be met, or another plan.

- It can include how biodiversity will be incorporated into policies and strategies; what initiatives are being introduced to raise awareness within organisation; what programmes are being introduced to improve connectivity, condition and diversity; and what partnerships will be developed.
- If it hasn't already, the plan should be produced as soon as possible.
- It can align with corporate planning cycles, including Well Being of Future Generations planning.

❖ Partnership Working

63. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – Identified the importance of partnership projects, for example, those delivered by the Cardiff Rivers Group, Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales. These had supported river clean up projects in 2019.
64. **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** – The presentation emphasised how important community collaboration was in terms delivering projects to support biodiversity and the natural environment. The task group was told that working with friends and community groups helped to engender a sense of ownership, helped to source funding, encouraged volunteer involvement, provided networking opportunities and fostered a wider sharing experience.

❖ Planning

65. **Cardiff Council Presentation (03/07/2019)** - A Cardiff Planning Officer explained that any policy decision needs to be backed up and explained within the Local Development Plan. You can't create a Supplementary Planning Guidance document without having a relevant policy hook in the Local Development Plan. Developers will challenge any planning related proposal that isn't referenced in the Local Development Plan, and any unsupported Council decision would be thrown out on appeal.
66. **Planning & Biodiversity Forum (10/09/2019)** – At the meeting it was explained that Cardiff Council officers had not attended the Planning & Biodiversity Forum. Members felt that this was a missed opportunity since

Planning Policy Wales Edition 10, the Environment (Wales) Act and the Well Being of Future Generations had all had an impact on biodiversity related planning practice in the last twelve months. They felt that the profile and influence of the Planning & Biodiversity Forum would benefit from Elected Member involvement.

67. A review of Cardiff's Local Development Plan is scheduled to begin in 2020. This will provide Cardiff with an opportunity to review its Local Development Plan in the light of recent changes, for example, Planning Policy Wales Edition 10, the Section 6 Duty of the Environment (Wales) Act and the Well Being of Future Generations legislation. It will also allow the Council an opportunity to enhance the environmental policies and goals that underpin its Local Development Plan.
68. **Planning & Biodiversity Forum (10/09/2019)** – Following the meeting with the representatives from the Planning & Biodiversity Forum, the task group concluded that a lack of detail was the biggest weakness in environment related planning guidance, meaning that developers were consistently able to win on appeal and offer 'mitigating measures' to comply with planning conditions.
69. **Planning & Biodiversity Forum (10/09/2019)** – After a discussion Members concluded that the Council should focus on measuring tree coverage instead of the number of trees in the city. They felt that the environmental benefits of established tree coverage were far greater than those provided by newly planted trees; which are often provided as an environmental mitigating measure. They agreed that accurately measuring Cardiff's tree coverage would be a good future performance indicator.
70. During the task & finish exercise the task group was provided with information on a range of features that could be built into new developments to support biodiversity, for example, bat bricks and hedgehog holes. The cost of these features is relatively small; for example, a single bat brick costs less than £20.

- **Commitment, Structure & Process: Recommendation 7 – Building Biodiversity into Decision Making & Governance** – During the task & finish exercise several witnesses raised the importance of building biodiversity and the Section 6 obligation into Council governance, policy documents and the wider decision making process. This would ensure that biodiversity becomes a corporate responsibility. Members supported this idea and based on the evidence provided recommend the following:
 - **Recommendation 7 (a)** – The Council should build a biodiversity well-being commitment into Capital Ambition, alongside the other well-being objectives. This would ensure that biodiversity becomes a corporate responsibility and policy objective.
 - **Recommendation 7 (b)** - Ask the Cardiff Partnership Board adopt a biodiversity well-being objective into its Well-Being Plan. This would help provide consistency in approach for all of Cardiff's public sector organisations who are, by definition, subject to the new responsibilities created by Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
 - **Recommendation 7 (c)** - Build biodiversity and climate change into the Council's decision-making process so that it is considered when all decisions are taken. This should include a Well Being, Climate Change, Biodiversity & Natural Environment Implications section in all Council, Cabinet and Committee reports / papers.
 - **Recommendation 7 (d)** - Build responsibility for biodiversity into the key Council business planning documents, for example, Directorate Delivery Plan and Personal Review Documents. This should place biodiversity on a similar footing to Equalities and the Welsh language.
 - **Recommendation 7 (e)** - Ensure the Green Infrastructure Plan (including the Biodiversity Forward Plan) links into the new well-being biodiversity objective, and other relevant cross organisational policies at a strategic level, for example, the Local Well-being Plan and Area

Statements.

- **Recommendation 7 (f)** - Appoint a dedicated biodiversity and climate change champion to represent the Council. The task group felt that the title should be clear enough for the public to instantly understand the purpose of the role, for example, the 'Champion for Nature' was suggested. The task group felt that the champion should: i) become the Council spokesperson for biodiversity and climate change announcements; ii) act as Chair for a re-established Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership; iii) have sufficient status within the Council to ensure that he or she has regular access to the Cabinet and Senior Management; iv) have the support and responsibility to deliver an annual biodiversity and climate change report to Cabinet or Full Council setting out the progress achieved during the year against a set of agreed targets.
- **Recommendation 7 (g)** - The Council's biodiversity and climate change responsibilities should be built into one Cabinet portfolio to ensure clear lines of responsibility and accountability. The range of responsibilities are currently split across three Cabinet portfolios; Members felt that this division of responsibility created a barrier in terms of accountability and delivery.
- **Recommendation 7 (h)** - Develop a clear and enthusiastic vision for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity to ensure a consistent 'buy-in' from each service. Once established this should be circulated across the Council and if possible to all of the other partners on the Cardiff Partnership Board.
- **Recommendation 7 (i)** - The Council should identify and create a series of biodiversity and natural environment performance indicators that would sit alongside the Biodiversity Forward Plan and feature in the Council's Performance Reporting. The indicators should be meaningful and directly relate to the positive outputs that support biodiversity in the city, and should be included in an annual biodiversity

and climate change report.

- **Recommendation 7 (j)** - Identify funding for a dedicated officer to support the reincarnation of the Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership. This post could either be held within the Council or delivered by one of its partners. Tasks would include arranging meetings, collating information, producing reports and reporting on performance. Ideally the individual would work with the Council and all of its partner bodies.

- **Commitment, Structure & Process: Recommendation 8 – Planning**

The task group received evidence relating to the planning system and the part that it could play in protecting biodiversity and the natural environment. Members shared concerns that development priorities were continually being put ahead of nature, with developers regularly overturning planning decisions on appeal thanks to insufficiently detailed planning guidance. This in turn meant that Cardiff was regularly losing valuable pieces of green infrastructure, for example, mature trees, which were then replaced by 'mitigating measures', for example, saplings. Members felt that the cumulative effect of these decisions had been huge over the years. The task group also had concerns about the lack of participation by Cardiff with the Planning & Biodiversity Forum, and that the Council should do more to ensure that developers did more to support biodiversity and the natural environment on new developments. Cardiff's first Local Development Plan review is due to begin in 2020, and this ties in neatly with the recently updated Planning Policy Wales review and the shift towards all policy linking into the Well Being of Future Generations. Members felt that now is a good time to align and improve this suite of policies for the long-term benefit of the environment. Considering the summary of planning information above, the task group recommends the following:

- **Recommendation 8 (a) - Planning & Biodiversity Forum** – To date Cardiff Council officers have not attended the Planning & Biodiversity Forum. Members felt that this was a missed opportunity, particularly as

the direction of travel for supporting the environment has shifted in the last twelve months under Planning Policy Wales Edition 10, the Environment (Wales) Act and the Well Being of Future Generations. The task group, therefore, recommends that an officer from Cardiff attends future meetings of the Planning & Biodiversity Forum. They also feel that the profile and influence of the Planning & Biodiversity Forum would benefit from Elected Member involvement, and so ask the Council to approach the group to ask if it could be expanded to include councillor representatives from each of the represented local authorities.

- **Recommendation 8 (b) - Review of Cardiff's Local Development Plan** – A review of Cardiff's Local Development Plan is due to begin in 2020. Given the importance of recent changes within Planning Policy Wales Edition 10, the Section 6 Duty of the Environment (Wales) Act and the Well Being of Future Generations legislation, the task group recommend that now is an excellent opportunity to enhance the environmental policies and goals of Cardiff's Local Development Plan. Strong and detailed environmental policy that link to the Council's main corporate objectives could be used as a 'hook' to develop stronger supplementary planning guidance, which in turn could provide greater protection for Cardiff's valuable green infrastructure.
- **Recommendation 8 (c) - Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 – Greater Detail** – Following the meeting with the representatives from the Planning & Biodiversity Forum, the task group concluded that a lack of detail was the biggest weakness in environment related planning guidance, meaning that developers were consistently able to win on appeal and offer 'mitigating measures' to comply with planning conditions. The task group asks that the Council raises these concerns with Welsh Government, and asks them to increase the level of detail around the suite of planning guidance that is used to ensure environmental protection.

➤ **Recommendation 8 (d) - Measuring Tree Coverage** – Members believe that the Council should focus on measuring tree coverage instead of the number of trees in the city. The environmental benefits of established tree coverage far outweigh that provided by newly planted trees, which are often provided as an environmental mitigating measure. As a consequence, the task group recommends that the Council should identify a way of accurately measuring Cardiff's tree coverage, and then report on this annually.

➤ **Recommendation 8 (e) - Supporting Nature in new Developments**

The task group was provided with information on a range of features that can be built into new developments to support biodiversity, for example, bat bricks and hedgehog holes. The cost of these features is relatively small; for example, a single bat brick costs less than £20. On this basis the task groups recommends that the Council asks developers to install nature supporting features on all new build properties as standard, and if necessary identify a policy 'hook' within the new or revised Local Development Plan to use to create supplementary planning guidance to support this aim.

Section 4 – Communication & Engagement

During the 8 meetings and 14 witness presentations the task group was provided with a range of information about communication and engagement issues relating to biodiversity and the natural environment. Some of the key points that relate to communication and engagement are set out in this section.

71. **Councillor Peter Jones, Swansea City Council Presentation (24/07/2019)**
- Members were told that more communication and engagement were key in getting people to be more understanding towards biodiversity issues. They were told that the message needs to get out there, and that Council service areas have to properly engage on the matter. For example, reducing the amount of cutting in parks can help biodiversity, but at the same time it can generate lots of complaints from the public. This is why clean communication on what and why the Council is doing is important.
72. **Wildlife Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** – The task group was told that it was important to raise awareness across the organisation about how biodiversity contributes to our well-being. This would help contribute to the Public Health Wales objectives and the Council’s Biodiversity Duty.
73. **Wildlife Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** – Commented that good clear communication and engagement was essential in changing the public attitude towards biodiversity, which is essential to achieve real change.
Communication and engagement is also vital in helping to give people the skills to enjoy the experience of nature.
74. **Wild life Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** – When it comes to education it is important to catch children when they are young. Local authorities need to embrace this idea. It is beneficial to focus education facilities on sites, for example, Dow Corning has a very good site reserve that welcomes visitors.

75. **Wildlife Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** - Suggested a list of things to do for schools, this included making willow bird feeders; pond dipping; beach clean & rock pooling; clay footprints; bug hunts; reptile rambles; bird watching; tree identification.
76. **Wildlife Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** – The Council should think about how enhancing biodiversity can help deliver its services and activities, and not just what you may think of as biodiversity activities. Examples of where better biodiversity supports Council activities include supporting active recreation, education, flood prevention, regeneration and local food growing.
77. **Natural Resources Wales Presentation (27/06/2019)** – The organisation plans to audit biodiversity awareness and action across all departments in 2019/20. In carrying out this audit it will undertake the following:
- All staff questionnaire;
 - Targeted research and group discussions – particular functions;
 - Recommendations and next steps for training, info and guidance develop and role out from 2020 onwards.
78. **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The second part of the presentation provided a summary of the Giving Nature a Home project that is being delivered in Cardiff. It explained that the Giving Nature a Home is a partnership project delivered by RSPB Cymru, Bug Life Cymru and Cardiff Council's Community Park Rangers. The project is supported from funding by the National Lottery Community Fund between 2017 to 2022. Until July 2019 it received additional funding from ALDI to deliver the free school outreach programme. The project came to life because of a report that found that only one in eight children in Wales have a reasonable connection with nature. The project aims to connect children and families with nature and support communities to act for nature. Childhood experiences of nature have been associated with more positive environmental attitudes and behaviours as adults. These aims have been predominantly achieved in the following ways:

- **Free Schools Outreach** - Since 2017, they have provided 11,599 connections to nature through our free schools outreach programme for primary schools, nurseries and early years settings.
- **Events** – Since 2017, they have delivered events in Cardiff’s parks, libraries, community centres, festivals and fetes to provide 5,955 connections to nature through a variety of Wild Challenge activities including bug hunts, investigating the weather, listening to bird song and finding the signs of spring.
- **Urban Buzz** – They are currently working with 14 groups across Cardiff to help them improve their urban green space for pollinators. These sites include Llandaff North Allotments, the National Assembly, Rumney Hub and Llanishen Fach Primary School. There are 100 Urban Buzz sites in Cardiff and the scheme supports pollinators, training and workshops. Urban Buzz is working in eight cities across the United Kingdom.
- **Volunteering** – They provide numerous opportunities for volunteers to get involved with the project from independently delivering schools outreach sessions to supporting long-term internships for those looking to gain relevant employment skills. They also run family volunteering sessions where they provide the opportunity for families to complete practical conservation tasks either in Cardiff’s parks or at Urban Buzz sites.
- A ‘connection to nature’ is measured as a minimum of 30-minute hands on experience with nature. In addition, the Giving Nature a Home in Cardiff project is working with several other key groups to help connect communities in Cardiff with wildlife.
- The Giving Nature a Home in Cardiff project has been a partner on the Glamorgan Bird Club’s swift project with Cardiff Council’s harbour authority to install a swift tower at Cardiff Bay and run an annual swift survey. This year they have 30-40 people taking part in the survey.

- The project is also working with Cardiff Council's Flat Holm: A walk through time project to help connect communities in Cardiff with the natural heritage of this unique island which is so close to the city.
- The Giving Nature a Home in Cardiff project has confirmed funding until 2022 to continue to deliver the above, however, there are numerous other ways that biodiversity can be improved in the city for future generations.

79. **Councillor Peter Jones, Swansea City Council Presentation (24/07/2019)**

– Change involves explaining to people what we are doing and why we are doing it. The expectations of people need to change and education is a key part of that. Some authorities have explained the changes as they go along, for example, not cutting sections of parks or highway verges – complaints at the outset are inevitable.

▪ **Communication & Engagement: Recommendation 9 - Embed New Biodiversity Well Being Objective**

The Council should embed the new biodiversity well-being objective into the organisation by developing and delivering relevant training to all Council staff. Suggested examples of how to do this include:

- Through the use of e-learning, various staff communications and staff questionnaires;
- Building the new biodiversity well-being objective into the Personal Development Review (PDR) process;
- Targeted research and group discussions – particular functions.

It should also encourage other public organisations to roll out similar training within their organisations.

- **Communication & Engagement: Recommendation 10 - Promote the Council's Drive to Support Biodiversity**

Make information available to the public to encourage participation and understanding, for example, by publishing information on the Council webpages; sharing information with partner organisations and other key stakeholders; communicating the message through social media and running wider communications promotions.

- **Communication & Engagement: Recommendation 11 - Regular Liaison Meetings**

Invite environmental voluntary groups and Community Council representatives to attend regular liaison meetings – these could link into Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership meetings to ensure that all parties are kept informed. The meetings would allow them to access additional support to specialist advice from relevant officers.

- **Communication & Engagement: Recommendation 12 - Schools & Governors**

Create environmental link Governors on school governing bodies who can take relevant information and projects to their school. Encourage better use of school grounds and local wildlife sites for biodiversity.

- **Communication & Engagement: Recommendation 13 - Mandatory Biodiversity Training for Members**

The Council should introduce mandatory Member training to improve knowledge on biodiversity and the natural environment.

- **Communication & Engagement: Recommendation 14 - Dedicated Outdoor Learning Officer** – The Council should either employ a dedicated outdoor learning officer, or identify funding to deliver this role and designate responsibility to a third party with existing experience to

deliver this work. This would provide tailored support, training and delivery to enable Cardiff schools to:

- Fully realise the potential of outdoor learning;
- Deliver educational and wellbeing benefits from the varied natural resources that Cardiff possesses.

Section 5 – Baseline & Focus

During the 8 meetings and 14 witness presentations the task group was provided with some information about the importance of accurately establishing baseline data for monitoring biodiversity levels in Cardiff. They were told that having a good understanding of the current position would place the Council in a position to focus resources to the best effect. Some of the key points of that relate to baseline and focus are set out in this section.

80. **SEWBRcC Presentation (03/07/2019)** - The Council should be making decisions and plans based on the best available evidence, and contributing to our body of knowledge where possible, for example, by supporting citizen-science initiatives. It is important to link this in with existing evidence sources.
81. **Councillor Comment** - During one of the meetings a Member stated that it is important to understand what you have, because without knowing this how can you direct effort and resource to address the problem.
82. **SEWBRcC Presentation (03/07/2019)** - South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRcC) is the centre for the collation, management and dissemination of biodiversity data for South East Wales. Their aim is to make appropriate local biodiversity information available to all those who need it, to help ensure that decisions which affect local biodiversity are made using best available data. They achieve this aim by:
 - **Observation & Identification** - Supporting the local biological recording community and helping them to manage and mobilise the wealth of information they gather.
 - **Collaboration** - Working with a wide range of organisations (from Welsh Government departments to Wildlife Trusts) to collate and computerise the data they hold. SEWBRcC spends a significant amount of time working with volunteer groups.

- **Building Evidence** - Collating and managing these diverse data sets in a central location. SEWBRcC currently holds over three million species records and are constantly working to improve the quality and quantity of our data holdings. All evidence / data recorded on the SEWBRcC database is, in statistical terms, independently verified.
 - **Building Skills** - Delivering a range of innovative and tailored biodiversity information products, training and services to meet the needs of its users.
83. **SEWBRcC Presentation (03/07/2019)** - SEWBRcC is one of four environmental records centres in Wales – between them they provide 100% coverage across all of Wales. No other part of the United Kingdom is able to provide this level of coverage (Scotland, England and Northern Ireland only average 75% coverage). Welsh Government is very keen on the development and growth of a good evidence base to support the protection and recovery of biodiversity across Wales.
84. **SEWBRcC Presentation (03/07/2019)** - Having access to, and making use of, the best available biodiversity evidence base is likely to be considered essential when Welsh Government judge performance of public bodies against the requirements of Section 6 of the Environment Act (Wales) 2016.
85. **SEWBRcC Presentation (03/07/2019)** - The SEWBRcC database could be used as a part of the planning process to quickly and easily identify the types of species that are within the vicinity of a proposed planning application. It could also be used to check / verify independent ecological reports that developers commission as a part of the planning process. Access to the SEWBRcC database would provide the Council with the most comprehensive source of information on biodiversity in Wales (and Cardiff). Better understanding how and where there are biodiversity issues would provide the Council with an opportunity to direct its limited resources to areas that most need / benefit from support.
86. **SEWBRcC Presentation (03/07/2019)** - A full SLA with SEWBRcC would cost the Council between £8,000 and £10,000 per annum. This should be a

long-term, sustainably-funded arrangement. Cardiff is the most reported against area on the SEWBRc system - the Council doesn't currently subscribe to or use the service.

87. **SEWBRc Presentation (03/07/2019)** - SEWBRc is the best evidence source for biodiversity and the natural environment in the South East Wales region, therefore, it is the best tool to establish a baseline for biodiversity and the natural environment in the area.

▪ **Baseline & Focus: Recommendation 15 – SEWBRc Service Level Agreement**

The Council should enter into a service level agreement with the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) for 2019/20 and beyond. This would provide the Council with the best available data on local biodiversity, so that the Council is better informed about the natural resources that it has, and at the same time is in a good position to allocate its limited resources into the area of most need.

▪ **Baseline & Focus: Recommendation 16 – Ward Based Mapping**

Complete and publicise a ward mapping exercise. This would provide each ward and the Councillors with information specific to that ward. It would include information about important species, protected sites and other relevant ecological information as well as potential opportunities for improving biodiversity within the ward. This could be developed using information from the SEWBRc database.

Section 6 – Best Practice & Practical Applications

During the 8 meetings and 14 witness presentations the task group was provided with some information on best practice and practical applications that can be used to support biodiversity and the natural environment. Some of the key points of that relate to best practice and practical application are set out in this section.

❖ **Connectivity**

88. Several organisations stressed the importance of maintaining and supporting connectivity; this would allow the movement of wildlife and plant life between areas and support diversity and growth. Comments made in relation to connectivity included:
- **Councillor Comment** – A Councillor provided information on a seven-mile long “bee corridor” of wildflowers that Brent Council is growing in an effort to boost the numbers of pollinating insects. They are sowing 22 wildflower meadows in the borough’s parks and open spaces, which together will form 50,000sq m of new flowering spaces and stretch seven miles in length. It is the first initiative of its kind in London. Brent council announced its bee corridor plans just after a major UN report detailed the devastating impact humans are continuing to have on the natural world. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) said wild mammals had declined by 82 per cent since 1980, space for natural ecosystems had halved, more than 97 per cent of the UK’s wildflower meadows had disappeared and one million species were now at risk of extinction because of human action. Insect pollinators are vital for the maintenance of ecosystem health and for global food security. Insects are required to maintain the existence of 75 per cent of crop species, 35 per cent of global crop production and up to 88 per cent of flowering plant species.

- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The Giving Nature a Home group stressed that the connectivity of habitats and sites across Cardiff (and wider) was essential for many species as it provides dispersal routes and access to areas to breed, shelter, over-winter and forage. This is particularly important in cities and other built up areas where roads, building and other infrastructure can pose barriers for wildlife. They suggested that making connectivity corridors created opportunities including: i) promoting the growth of wildflower verges; ii) protecting and creating connected areas of habitat; iii) building wildlife friendly measures into new and renovated building developments.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The Giving Nature a Home group suggested that the Council and its partners should investigate where there may be disused space in the form of disused railways, roads or even private back gardens that can be used to ensure that Cardiff's green spaces are well connected. This would involve a mapping exercise.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The Giving Nature a Home group suggested that the Council should adopt a landscape-scale approach to pollinator conservation. In 2012, Buglife and a range of partner organisations established the 'B-Lines' initiative. B-Lines are effectively opportunity maps, identifying key areas where habitat connectivity can have the greatest impact for pollinators. B-Lines have been mapped for all of Wales and could be utilised by Cardiff Council to identify and prioritise areas for habitat connectivity across the city.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - Hedgehog Highways - The Giving Nature a Home group felt that it was important that all new builds and existing properties should create hedgehog highways by cutting a small 13cm x 13cm hole in garden fences to allow hedgehogs to travel to feed and mate.

- **Cardiff Council Presentation (23/04/2019)** - In complying with subsection Section 6 of the Environment Wales Act, a public authority must take account of the resilience of ecosystems, in particular the following aspects:
 - Diversity between and within ecosystems;
 - The connections between and within ecosystems;
 - The scale of ecosystems;
 - The condition of ecosystems (including their structure and functioning);
 - The adaptability of ecosystems.

- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** – Identified protecting and creating connected areas of habitat as a quick win opportunity that could be achieved with limited resources.

❖ **Supporting & Developing Habitats**

89. Some of the witnesses emphasised the importance of protecting existing and developing new habitats in Cardiff. Comments and suggestions relating to protecting and developing new habitats included:

- **Welsh Government Presentation (18/06/2019)** - Support the creation of new habitats, such as local orchards, native hedges, wildflower meadows or other areas of wildlife-friendly green space that is accessible to local communities – either on your own land, or in partnership with others – this could be linked to green infrastructure strategies.

- **CLAS Cymru (03/07/2019)** – Explained that it was important for the Council to provide support for the development of community managed spaces. If the Council did this then CLAS Cymru could provide policy perspective and a link to the type of tools that can be accessed to develop such schemes. 90% of the schemes that they support rely on wildlife to make them work.

- **CLAS Cymru (03/07/2019)** - ‘Social Farms & Gardens’ describe creating ‘a haven for wildlife’ as a priority in most schemes. They made reference to ‘The Earth Friendly Garden’ which explained that *‘our gardens can be a haven for wildlife, provide food, reduce carbon emissions, bring people together and make us healthier and happier!’* They identified a number of features that they like to see in gardens, including: rain water harvesting; composting; healthy no dig soil; mulch; plants for pollinators; bees; insect hotel; compost loo; a pond; forest garden planting; wild edges; people working, relaxing and playing together; growing from seed in peat free compost; reusing pots; fresh organic local food; permaculture principles; reusing pallets; natural predators controlling pests.
- **CLAS Cymru (03/07/2019)** – They provided information on pocket parks and made specific reference to Northampton’s Pocket Parks. Pocket Parks are local public green spaces that are owned, looked after and cherished by local communities for peaceful enjoyment and the protection of wildlife. From the early 1980s to 2015 Northamptonshire County Council worked in partnership with other organisations and local authorities to help local volunteer groups create over 70 Pocket Parks across Northamptonshire for people to enjoy. The pocket parks can vary in size from 0.04 hectares to 35 hectares and are found in all types of locations from town centres to quiet villages.
- **CLAS Cymru (03/07/2019)** – They provided the task group with a case study that looked at Newtown Green Spaces. Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Town Council transferred 130 acres of land into community ownership in a 99-year lease to community land trust Open Newtown. Town Councillor Richard Edwards, said: *"This project started after a consultation with residents that highlighted how important the green spaces and parks are as a place for leisure and recreation; a space for nature and a means to promote health and wellbeing, with most residents saying they made use of green spaces frequently. Wishing to protect and enhance the open spaces the council led a call for action, enabling the community to come together to form Open Newtown."*

- **Wildlife Trust Presentation (18/06/2019)** – Wild Gardening - Witnesses explained that Cardiff's private gardens were an excellent resource for nature. Members were told that if the Council and its partners could help to promote wild gardening and its benefits to the public, then this would be a big boost to biodiversity and the natural environment in the city.

❖ **Community Growing**

90. **Community Growing Policy** - Some witnesses mentioned the benefits that could be produced by developing a community growing policy. The comments and suggestions that relate this are set out below:

- **CLAS Cymru (03/07/2019)** – Provided the 'Monmouthshire Community Growing Policy' as an example of good practice in terms of getting the community to grow more produce whilst supporting nature. The Monmouthshire policy was created to allow the Council to make underutilised land in its ownership available for the community to grow food. This demand has been created through the lack of available allotment space, prevailing economic conditions and the need to develop more resilient communities. Monmouthshire County Council developed a policy and license that allows the use of small bits of council owned land to grow food on. They have done this to support and promote the 'Incredible Edible' movement. This is where groups of people get together to grow produce on easily accessible land – then the produce can be taken away freely by anyone not just those who have worked to make the produce grow. Monmouthshire is the first Council in Wales to have such a policy. There are hundreds of groups doing this throughout the world.

❖ **Verge Cutting & Wildflower Planting**

91. **Roadside Verge Cutting & Wildflower Planting** - Witnesses emphasised the importance of proper roadside verge cutting and wildflower planting. Some of the comments and suggestions that relate this are set out below:

- **Councillor Comment** – A Councillor provided information on a seven-mile long “bee corridor” of wildflowers that Brent Council is growing in an effort to boost the numbers of pollinating insects. They are sowing 22 wildflower meadows in the borough’s parks and open spaces, which together will form 50,000sq m of new flowering spaces and stretch seven miles in length. It is the first initiative of its kind in London. Brent council announced its bee corridor plans just after a major UN report detailed the devastating impact humans are continuing to have on the natural world. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) said wild mammals had declined by 82 per cent since 1980, space for natural ecosystems had halved, more than 97 per cent of the UK’s wildflower meadows had disappeared and one million species were now at risk of extinction because of human action. Insect pollinators are vital for the maintenance of ecosystem health and for global food security. Insects are required to maintain the existence of 75 per cent of crop species, 35 per cent of global crop production and up to 88 per cent of flowering plant species.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The Giving Nature a Home group stressed the importance of promoting wildflower verges and creating designated wild areas. They explained that globally we need to help create and protect pollinator friendly habitats to reverse the monumental decline of insect populations. A recent and high-profile report, found that more than 40% of insect species are declining and the rate of extinction is eight times faster than that of mammals, birds and reptiles.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The Giving Nature a Home group explained that the Council needed to reduce the amount of mowing of verges and other areas where possible. Verges should only be cut in the early spring and in the early autumn, after the seeds have dispersed.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The Giving Nature a Home group suggested

that the Council should consider investing in cut and collect machinery to reduce fertility, reduce the amount of vegetation and its composition. This could be enhanced further by seeding with Yellow Rattle to reduce dominance by grasses and produce lower and more floristic swards.

- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - Plant Life has been asked to re-write the highway verge cutting process and approach for Cardiff's Highway Asset Management Plan. Members thought that this was a positive thing and asked if they could see a copy of this once it is completed. Dorset Council is an example of a local authority that has taken the verge cutting approach advocated by Plant Life, i.e. they have stopped cutting verges intensively. This change was described as relatively straight forward.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The Giving Nature a Home group explained that it was important to restore meadows or create new ones. They then referenced the Cardiff Meadows Project that aims to provide essential habitat for threatened pollinators and declining mammals such as hedgehogs. The Cardiff Civic Society is running the scheme in partnership with Cardiff Council.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** – Identified promoting the growth of wildflower verges as a quick win opportunity that could be achieved with limited resources.

❖ **Biodiversity Friendly Buildings**

92. **Biodiversity Friendly Buildings** - Witnesses emphasised the importance of biodiversity friendly buildings. Some of the comments and suggestions that relate this are set out below:

- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - The Giving Nature a Home group stated that

a range of buildings infrastructure would support biodiversity in Cardiff and make the city a more pleasant and innovative city. For example, green roofs, green walls, sustainable urban drainage, planting more trees and creating low nutrient habitats that avoid the use of imported topsoil would make Cardiff a more pleasant and innovative city. Green roofs act as a carbon sink and helps a property adapt to weather in the winter and summer. They can be used to foster quite important habitats.

- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** – The Council should promote the retro-fitting of existing buildings to install green roofs and ensure that, where possible, all new builds should have a green roof incorporated. Bug Life has produced a comprehensive guide of how to install a green roof called ‘Creating a Green Roof for Invertebrates – A Best Practice Guide’.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** - Ensure that building new homes need not to be at the expense of the natural world by ensuring that all new builds retain greenspaces, allow for habitat connectivity, for example, through hedges, trees and hedgehog highways, water, installing bat and swift boxes as standard.
- **Giving Nature a Home (RSPB, Bug Life & Plant Life) – Joint Presentation (04/07/2019)** – Identified building wildlife friendly measures into new and renovated building developments.as a quick win opportunity that could be achieved with limited resources.

❖ Tree Planting

93. **Councillor Peter Jones** – Tree Planting - Provided an example of when they door knocked in a relatively affluent area in his ward – they offered residents an opportunity to have a mature tree planted outside their property for £56, and a staggering number of people agreed to pay up. They are trying to use the community budget to plant trees in less affluent areas.

- **Best Practice & Practical Applications: Recommendation 17 – Connectivity** – Improving connectivity of habitat across Cardiff represents a big step towards enhancing biodiversity in the city. Section 6 of the Environment Wales Act states that a public authority must take account of the resilience of ecosystems, and makes specific reference to maintaining '*connections between and within ecosystems*'. Organisations such as the RSPB, Bug Life and Plant Life also advocate enhancing connectivity, while Councils such as Brent are running projects to improve nature connectivity. Members support this idea and recommend that the Council works with partner organisations and volunteer groups to:
 - **Recommendation 17 (a)** - Adopt a landscape-scale approach to pollinator conservation, i.e. to look at the challenges that biodiversity and supporting ecosystems face across a wide area. This should involve working with partner organisations and volunteers to map nature connectivity so that it can identify how best to improve connectivity across the city. A good starting point would be to use the Cardiff 'B-Lines' data that was established in 2012, and to map out disused space, for example, abandoned railway lines.
 - **Recommendation 17 (b)** - Where connectivity gaps are identified, the Council should work with partners and volunteer groups to establish localised projects to bridge the gaps. Suggested projects or approaches include promoting the growth of wildflower verges and building wildlife friendly measures into new and renovated building developments.
 - **Recommendation 17 (c)** - The Council should work with property developers and the wider community to better support hedgehog highways. This would involve cutting 13cm x 13cm holes in garden walls and fences to allow hedgehogs to travel, feed and mate.
- **Best Practice & Practical Applications: Recommendation 18 - Supporting & Developing Habitats**

The task group received lots of evidence that highlighted significant habitat decline, which in turn has had a negative impact on ecosystems and biodiversity. Reversing this trend requires developing more and supporting existing habitats, and witnesses such as the Welsh Government and CLAS Cymru identified a number of practical actions that they felt would help enhance natural habitats in Cardiff. Based on the comments made during the task & finish exercise the task group recommends that the Council:

- **Recommendation 18 (a) - Create Accessible New Habitats** – The Council should support the creation of new habitats, such as local orchards, native hedges, wildflower meadows or other areas of wildlife-friendly green space that is accessible to local communities. This can either be done on Council land or in partnership with other organisations. This approach should be built into Cardiff’s Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- **Recommendation 18 (b) - Community Managed Spaces** – The Council should provide support for the development of community managed spaces. If the Council did this then CLAS Cymru could provide policy perspective and a link to the type of tools that can be accessed to develop such schemes. 90% of community managed spaces that are supported by CLAS Cymru rely on and support wildlife. Features that are common to community managed spaces include rain water harvesting; composting; healthy no dig soil; mulch; plants for pollinators; bees; insect hotels; compost toilets; ponds; forest garden planting; wild edges; fresh organic local food and natural predators for controlling pests.

▪ **Best Practice & Practical Applications: Recommendation 19 - Community Growing**

The ‘Monmouthshire Community Growing Policy’ was cited to Members as an example of good practice in terms of getting the community to grow

more produce while supporting nature. It was created to allow the Council to make underutilised land in its ownership available for the community to grow food. This demand has been created through the lack of available allotment space, prevailing economic conditions and the need to develop more resilient communities. Monmouthshire County Council developed a policy and license that allows the use of small bits of Council owned land to grow food on. The creation and roll out of this policy has supported the 'Incredible Edible' movement, i.e. where groups of people get together to grow produce on easily accessible land and the produce can be taken away freely by anyone not just those who have worked to make the produce grow. The task group like this policy, and feel that the community growing approach produces added benefits for local biodiversity. They recommend that Cardiff follows suit by creating and publishing a community growing policy.

▪ **Best Practice & Practical Applications: Recommendation 20 - Verge Cutting & Wildflower Planting**

The task group received evidence on the importance of proper roadside verge cutting and wildflower planting. They provide a much needed space for nature, enhance local ecosystems, support connectivity, are very beneficial to pollinators and can be very cost effective to deliver. Based on the evidence provided the task group recommends that:

- **Recommendation 20 (a) - Highway Verge Cutting Process – Plant Life** explained that they have been asked by the Council to re-write its Highway verge cutting process. This has worked well in Dorset where they have stopped cutting verges as intensively, and has benefited local biodiversity. The task group recommends that the Council follows this approach, ensuring that service areas and contractors are made to follow the new process.
- **Recommendation 20 (b) - Highway Verge & Wildflower Areas Connectivity** – In conjunction with Recommendation 17, the task group recommend that highway verges and wildflower areas should be

included into connectivity mapping. Where possible, the Council should also identify new pieces of land that are suitable for wildflower planting and work with volunteer or community groups to develop these areas, for example, in a similar way to the scheme that is being developed with the Cardiff Civic Society.

▪ **Best Practice & Practical Applications: Recommendation 21 - Biodiversity Friendly Buildings**

During the task & finish exercise witnesses emphasised the importance of biodiversity friendly buildings in urban areas. They provide a valuable habitat for nature, are able to act as a carbon sink, help buildings adapt to seasonal weather changes and are generally cost effective to deliver. It is also felt that they can make cities feel more pleasant and innovative. Examples of features included in biodiversity friendly buildings include green roofs, green walls, sustainable urban drainage and planted trees. Given the wider decline in natural habitats, Members recommend that the Council should do more to encourage the development of biodiversity friendly buildings in Cardiff. This could be done by:

- Talking to developers, local architects and surveyors about the benefits of the features of biodiversity friendly buildings;
- Promoting the approach and providing advice through the planning process;
- Documenting good practice and advice on delivering such schemes into planning guidance or policy, for example, including relevant information into supplementary planning guidance;
- Taking a lead in developing biodiversity friendly features on Council buildings and promoting the benefits of this approach.

▪ **Best Practice & Practical Applications: Recommendation 22 - Tree Planting**

Tackling climate change means that we will have to find effective ways of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The simplest and most

effective way to do this is to plant trees, as they store carbon dioxide naturally. When Councillor Peter Jones from Swansea addressed the task group in July, he explained that he and a few colleagues had decided to knock some doors in the ward that he represented to find out if local residents would like the opportunity to have a mature tree planted outside their property for £56. He was staggered by the response, with a large number of people agreeing to pay for a tree. Members were encouraged by this proactive approach, and felt that there was merit to replicating a similar scheme in Cardiff. The task group recommends that the Council works with Elected Members, partner organisations, volunteer groups and the public to develop a 'Plant a Tree Scheme'. The scheme could encourage the public to buy trees, and help to identify funding to pay for or offset the cost of the trees. In turn this would reduce Cardiff's carbon footprint, contribute to Cardiff's climate change emergency agenda and help increase tree coverage across the city.

WITNESSES TO THE INQUIRY

94. During the inquiry the task group was grateful to the following witnesses who provided support, verbal evidence or written contributions:
- Councillor Michael Michael - Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment
 - Councillor Caro Wild - Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Transport
 - Councillor Peter Bradbury - Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure
 - James Clemence - Head of Planning
 - Simon Gilbert - Operational Manager, Development Management (Strategic & Place Making)
 - Caryn Le Roux – Welsh Government
 - Geoff Robinson – Welsh Government
 - Matthew Harris – Ecologist, Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate
 - Nicola Hutchinson - Parks Conservation Officer, Parks Services
 - Kerry Rogers - Conservation Manager, Wildlife Trust
 - Mark Tozer, Parks Development Officer, Parks Services
 - Alan Abel - Complete Weed Control Limited
 - Heather Galliford – Natural Resources Wales
 - Geoff Hobbs – Natural Resources Wales
 - Adam Rowe - South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc)
 - Lucie Taylor - CLAS Cymru
 - Colin Cheesman – Plant Life
 - Clare Dinham – Bug Life
 - Jazz Austin – RSPB
 - Councillor Peter Jones – Swansea City Council
 - Siobhan Wiltshire - Welsh Government
 - Jo Smith – Welsh Government

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

95. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without modification. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet / Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal power of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. standing orders and financial regulations; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

96. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

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12 September 2019

Councillor Caro Wild,
Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Transport,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Wild,

Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems (BRED) Forward Plan

As you will be aware the Environmental Scrutiny Committee is currently in the process of finishing off a task & finish exercise titled 'Managing Biodiversity & Natural Environment in Cardiff'. As a part of this work they received a presentation on the 'Cardiff Green Infrastructure Plan' on the 27th June 2019; this document was structured around the 'Green Infrastructure Plan' and the 'Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Action Plan'.

Members are aware that Cabinet is due to receive a paper titled 'Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems (BRED) Duty' at its meeting on the 26th September 2019. As this refers to the 'Cardiff Green Infrastructure Plan' they have asked me to write to you in advance of this meeting to provide feedback, comments and observations on the content of the document. These are set out below:

- Members are supportive of the publication of the 'Cardiff Green Infrastructure Plan'. They believe that it will act as an important co-ordinating document that will help the Council and its partners to deliver a wide range to vital biodiversity projects, and in doing so contribute towards wider well-being objectives. They particularly welcome the introduction of the 'Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Action Plan' that contains information on projects being delivered in Cardiff to help meet this objective.
- The Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems (BRED) Duty Action Plan includes a table called the 'Green Infrastructure Implementation

Programme 2016 to 2019'. This table includes a number of columns including 'Action' and 'Delivery focus' that are designed to explain what the projects are and how they will be delivered. Members agreed that the structure of the table was sound; however, the key columns lacked detail. They felt that each project documented in the table required:

- A detailed explanation of what the project involved;
 - A starting point for the basis of the work;
 - An explanation on reporting and monitoring for the project;
 - The aims and objectives for the project;
 - Who would be responsible for the delivery of the project;
 - Detail of the resources available to support the project.
- After reviewing the 'Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Action Plan', it became clear how important the contribution of volunteers and partnership working was to the delivery of the projects. Volunteer contributions do not happen by accident, they need the Council and other key partners to provide support and resource. It is not obvious from this document how support and resources will be made available to ensure that the projects are delivered. Members believe that if the Council is serious about delivering the volunteer projects, then it needs to confirm the support and resources that will be available to deliver each project.
 - To support the delivery of the 'Cardiff Green Infrastructure Plan', the Members recommend that the Council should re-establish the Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership. This group could be tasked with overseeing the delivery of the projects contained within the 'Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Action Plan', and could provide Cabinet with regular updates. Some Members felt that the title of the group could be changed to 'Partnership for Nature' to better define its purpose, and that the partnership could be chaired by a Council appointed nature and biodiversity champion.
 - Section 3.2.3 of the 'Green Infrastructure Plan' makes reference to urban 'brownfield' habitats and the importance that these can have on supporting

biodiversity in Cardiff. Given the pressure to develop 'brownfield' sites in the city, Members would like to understand what the Council can do in practical terms to support the range of biodiversity that relies upon these sites.

- Section 3.3.4 of the 'Green Infrastructure Plan' makes reference to a various forms of green infrastructure and the mitigating impact that these can have against climate change; this includes an acknowledgement of the contribution that trees can make. Members support this, however, feel that the document should go further and highlight current and potential future policies that the Council can use to protect and enhance tree coverage in Cardiff.
- Section 3.1.1 of the document makes reference to the six objectives of the 'Green Infrastructure Plan', these are:
 - Protecting the natural environment;
 - Protecting people and places;
 - Supporting the local economy;
 - Improving health;
 - Creating opportunities for people;
 - Enhancing local character and sense of place.

Members welcome the creation of these objectives, however, recommend that the document sets out who will be responsible for each of the objectives and supporting actions. The task group would also welcome greater detail on how the supporting actions will be delivered, for example, timescales and actions for each delivery action.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and provide a response to the content of this letter.

Regards,

Handwritten signature of Ramesh Patel in black ink.

Councillor Ramesh Patel

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- Andrew Gregory - Director of Planning, Transport & Environment
- James Clemence – Head of Planning
- Simon Gilbert – Operational Manager - Development Management
(Strategic & Place Making)
- Matthew Harris - Ecologist
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee