

Place, Sustainability & Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

30th January 2024

Subject:

**Carmarthenshire County Council Environment Act Forward Plan Jan 2023
– Dec 2025**

Purpose:

To advise the Committee on the progress of the implementation of CCC's 3-year Environment Act Forward Plan, which runs from Jan 2023 to Dec 2025

THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO:-

Review and assess the information contained in report and provide any recommendations, comments, or advice to the Cabinet Member and / or Director.

Reason(s)

The annual review of the delivery of CCC's Environment Act Forward Plan Jan 23- Dec 25 by Scrutiny provides an opportunity to advise Scrutiny Committee of the progress being made in the delivery of this plan and for Cabinet and officers to receive Scrutiny's comments on the plan delivery.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Cllr. Aled Vaughan Owen - Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability

Directorate

Name of Head of Service:

Rhodri D Griffiths

Report Author:

Rosie Carmichael

Designations:

Head of Place and Sustainability

Rural Conservation Manager

RDGriffiths@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

RACarmichael@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Place Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee

30th January 2024

Carmarthenshire County Council Environment Act Forward Plan

Jan 2023 – Dec 2025

1. **BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT**

Background: The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires that all public bodies in Wales, such as local authorities, publish and deliver an Environment Act Forward Plan. These Plans run for periods of three years. Their purpose is to set out how the public body will deliver what is referred to as the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty.

Section 6 under Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the S6 duty) for public authorities in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales:

Section 6. Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty

(1)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.'

This duty is consistent with the Resilient Goal set out in the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

Consistent with this legislation, it is a statutory requirement that every three years Carmarthenshire County Council prepares, and at the end of the three-year period, reports to Welsh Government on the delivery of its Environment Act Duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience.

Scrutiny are now being consulted on the CCC's third Environment Act Forward Plan which covers the period Jan 23 – Dec 25.

The actions set out in CCC's Environment Act Forward Plans are monitored in June and December each year via the Council's Performance Improvement Management System.

It has been Council procedure that the progress in delivering the Forward Plan is reported to Scrutiny Committee every year.

The Rural Conservation Manager has been responsible for producing and reporting on the delivery of the Council's Environment Act Forward Plan.

Summary:

Delivery of the actions set out in the Forward Plan evidence that CCC is responding to the Nature Emergency it and Welsh Government have declared. They also reflect the Council's Well-being Objectives, and its Cabinet Vision Statement (Environment and Transport) 2022 - 2027:

“Increase the biodiversity of all Council owned land, and recognise the strong interrelationship between climate change, the loss of biodiversity and human wellbeing. Consider the use of CCC land for creating havens of wildflowers and pollinators, including roadsides and verges. We cannot solve the threats of human induced climate change and loss of biodiversity in isolation. We either solve both or we solve neither”.

The actions are also consistent with the aspirations of the IUCN Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework which includes the following target:

“Ensure that at least 30 per cent globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.”

<https://www.cbd.int/article/draft-1-global-biodiversity-framework>

The plan includes actions which will be delivered and reported on by several service areas, these actions are summarised in appendix A. Ideally actions included in the Forward Plan should be included in the relevant department business plans.

CCC’s Environment Act Forward Plan Jan 23 to Dec 25. The following actions will be reported on via the PIMS system every 6 months. The Dec 23 update has been provided where this is available when this report was compiled.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED ?	Appendix 1
-----------------------------------	-------------------

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: **R Griffiths** Head of Place & Sustainability

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets	Bio-diversity & Climate Change
NONE	YES	YES	NONE	YES	NONE	YES	YES

2. Legal

The delivery of CCC's Environment Act Forward Plan evidences its delivery of the S6 Biodiversity Duty placed on all public bodies in Wales under the Environment Act (Wales) 2016. Delivery of the actions set out in the Report evidences the Council's commitment to this duty and its compliance with this Act. It is also consistent with its responsibilities under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in particular the Resilient Wales goal.

3. Finance

While the action plan identifies actions that will result in costs, these costs will be met by the budgets linked to these projects e.g., the costs of delivering the Caeau Mynydd Mawr Marsh Fritillary project and the cost of delivering biodiversity on development sites is funded via S106 agreements with developers. In several areas cost associated with delivering these actions will be met by grant aid, e.g., the cost of planting trees on Housing or Education managed land will be met via CCC's Local Places for Nature grant from Welsh Government.

5. Risk Management Issues

Failure to publish and deliver its Environment Act Forward Plan places a reputational risk on the Council and risks its compliance with its S6 Biodiversity Duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, a legal duty.

7. Physical Assets

Delivery of the Environment Act Forward Plan will have an impact on how the Council manages some of the assets for which it is responsible e.g., In managing our land for pollinators, grassland management at amenity sites, around property and housing area will change.

8. Biodiversity and Climate Change

The purpose of the Council's Environment Act Forward Plan Jan 23 – Dec 25, which is the focus of this report, is to set out how CCC intends to demonstrate that it is delivering its S6 Biodiversity Duty as set out in the Environment Act (Wales) 2016. All the actions in the report, and which will be monitored, have been designed to deliver benefits to biodiversity.

The focus of the Forward Plan is biodiversity, however, in many instances actions that will enhance biodiversity will also help to mitigate climate change. E.g., managing more of our amenity grassland for pollinators with less frequent cutting will encourage the development of grass swards with deeper roots which will, in turn, lock more carbon in the soil. Tree planting on Housing and Education sites will similarly help mitigate climate change. Enhancing biodiversity often goes hand in hand with mitigating climate change.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED YES

It is a privilege to present Carmarthenshire County Council's recent Environment Act Action Plan to members. This plan is a crucial step in addressing our commitment to combat the climate and nature emergencies we face. The Environment Act holds immense significance in guiding our aspirations, emphasizing sustainable practices, and fostering a holistic approach to environmental responsibility. We are dedicated to mainstreaming the principles of this act, ensuring its integration into all departments across the authority. This comprehensive strategy reflects our unwavering commitment to creating a more environmentally conscious and resilient county.

Cllr. Aled Vaughan Owen 18/01/24

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
N/A	N/A	https://www.cbd.int/article/draft-1-global-biodiversity-framework