

CYNGOR CYMUNEDOL CEFN CRIBWR CEFN CRIBWR COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT (WALES) ACT 2016 PART 1, SECTION 6 BIODIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE OF ECOSYSTEMS DUTY REPORT 2025-26 **Biodiversity Forward Plan**

Background

All local Councils in Wales have a duty to prepare and publish a Biodiversity Forward Plan, setting out its proposals to comply with the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Section 6, duty in the exercise of the Council's functions, and in doing so, to promote the resilience of ecosystems.

What is Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth. It includes all animals, insects, plants, fungi and bacteria and the complex habitats and ecosystems which they form. It includes the life in the soil as well as the life we see above ground. Biodiversity is everywhere: in gardens, fields, hedgerows, mountains, rivers and in the sea. Biodiversity represents quality of life.

The Biodiversity Forward Plan looks at how the Council manages and improves natural resources to ensure that biodiversity and sustainability are considered in all areas, becoming a natural part of the decision-making process.

Biodiversity - why we should conserve it

Biodiversity is important to all of us for a number of reasons, the most significant of which are: Many people appreciate biodiversity for its own sake, for the opportunity to see wildlife, or walk in attractive or 'natural' places. An environment that is rich in biodiversity is therefore important for our quality of life. The ability to experience nature enriches our lives on a daily basis, whether we are watching the birds in our garden, looking outside our office windows, or walking across a heather clad mountain side in mid-summer listening to the bees amongst the flowers.

Biodiversity provides us with many useful things

Plants and animals provide food, timber and building materials. They provide material for clothing, and many of our most effective medicines have come directly from the organisms in our natural world. Studies are increasingly demonstrating that contact with the natural world not only provides us all with a genuine sense of wellbeing, but also helps us to relax, concentrate and deal with stress and anxiety - it generally improves our mental health (Bird, 2007). Environments which support a wide range of natural species and habitats are typically attractive ones that people want to visit, relax and take exercise in. Recreation in the outdoors has been shown to reduce obesity, aid mental health recovery and support a healthy immune system (Tzoulas K et al, 2007; Thompson Coon J, 2011)

Action

The actions in this plan, will be reported on every three years in accordance with statutory requirements, and reviewed and updated at the end of each 3-year period.

The Biodiversity seeks to improve the environment for all to benefit, and with the aim that results in biodiversity enhancement and conservation, and a more sustainable way of living, to protect our resources and ensure that future generations have the same or better quality of life.

Actions resulting from this plan to meet the Council's obligations under Section 6, of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 will need to be funded from existing budgets, with grant sources sought.

About Cefn Cribwr Community Council Area

For many centuries before it became the site of the present, almost continuous linear village, Cefn Cribwr was no more than a narrow-crested ridge formed by the Millstone Grit, severed in remote geological time from its 'twin' to the east, Cefn Hirgoed, and virtually devoid of human habitation. During much of the last millennium the long ridge was mainly pastureland and woodland, exploited as such by the burgesses of Kenfig or the monks of Ewenny, and parochially associated with churches and settlements to the south, Tythegston, Laleston and Newcastle.

Industry brought the first significant changes. John Bedford came to Cefn c.1770 and built his still surviving Ironworks at the foot of the northern slope of the ridge, a site taken over by Williams Bryant in the early 19th century. By about 1840 another, larger ironworks had been built on the Cwsc, a little to the north-east. Collieries like that at Ffos Pit, first regarded as ancillary to the iron works, soon became important in their own right. The horse-drawn Dyffryn Llynfi Porthcawl Railway, opened in 1828, provided for a while an adequate means of transporting the products of local industries, but it was superseded, in the middle of the 19th Century, by the more efficient steam-drawn railway, connecting the works north of Cefn first with the dock at Porthcawl then with that at Port Talbot.

As a result of these developments Cefn's population began to grow, and from about 1825 there appeared the first modern housing developments – not, significantly, in the fields along the sides of the ridge but along the narrow crest itself, with its through road. Overt Row is a typical mid-century development of this kind. The usual public buildings accompanied the increase in population: chapels, entirely Welsh at first like Siloam (1827) and Nebo (1848) but later English like Wesley (1886) and Calvary (1907) to accommodate a large influx of people from the West Country; public houses like The Three Horse Shoes, The Farmers Arms and The Star; a village school in 1894 and a Public Hall in 1924.

The beginning of the 20th Century saw further important industrial developments with the opening of Aberbaiden / Pentre and other new collieries. Council housing estates extended the size of the village in the 1920's and again in the 1950's (by which time the Abbey Steel Works had become a major local employer). For all that, Cefn's population has not gone on increasing and now in the early 21st Century, is probably not materially larger than it was in, say, 1850. Perhaps this is one reason why (many people feel) Cefn Cribwr has managed to retain a sense of community and of its own distinctness from neighbouring communities – helped no doubt, by a sense of elevation on the crest of the long ridge, which was where we began!

Operational matters:

Paperless office:

The Council has a duty to ensure sustainable and environmentally friendly operations. At present, Cefn Cribwr Community Council is not a paperless office. As a statutory authority, Cefn Cribwr Community Council is obligated to retain certain documentation for variable amounts of years, so it may be that operations cannot be fully paperless with regards to archive material. However, operationally, moving to be paperless going forward can still be an ambition for Cefn Cribwr Community Council. One of the areas with high costings and a significant environmental footprint is our printer network. Therefore, by reducing

the number of printed agendas will support the Council's environmental, efficiency and cashable savings objectives by reducing the Council's use of paper, toner, electricity and officer's time.

The Council also has a duty to ensure carbon footprint friendly operations. At present the majority of meetings are in person, however, some Council meetings are held remotely. To continue to reduce emissions Cefn Cribwr Community Council should consider reducing travel and meeting costs by continuing to hold all or some of the meetings electronically which has worked well historically. By continuing to promote flexible working for staff long-term would also further reduce co² emissions. A Flexible Working Policy should be adopted by Council.

Decision making and procurement

Working to protect our natural resources and wildlife is a key objective for Council and will be reflected in the Council decision-making process. Contracts that are entered will adhere to the provisions of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and take opportunities to enhance biodiversity in the area. Council will also seek other opportunities, through its other activities to promote biodiversity and engage the community in this action, where possible.

Planning

All planning applications submitted to Cefn Cribwr Community Council for review will continue to be scrutinised with due consideration for any adverse impact on the environment. Consistent with objections and observations made over a number of years, the Council will take particular care to ensure that any developmental impact on surface drainage, tree cover and impact on existing resources such as educational provision is duly notified to the Planning Directorate of Bridgend County Borough Council.

Rights of Way

Cefn Cribwr Community Council will liaise with Bridgend County Borough Council Rights of Way Department to monitor the footpaths and rights of way which are recognised and established within its area of jurisdiction, and ensure that they continue to provide access and amenity to residents and visitors alike.

Raising awareness

Cefn Cribwr Community Council will seek to raise awareness of the importance of this work by sharing updates with the public via our website. Over this three-year period, Council will seek to liaise with other organisations in the area who have land to encourage them to take small steps to promote and maintain biodiversity.

Safeguarding principal species and habitats

Cefn Cribwr Community Council currently have no direct responsibility for land. However, should the Council be authorised to undertake any particular works on Bridgend County Borough Council owned land whereby principal species and habitats are identified safeguarding measures to protect wildlife will be put in place.

Tackling negative factors

Communication is key to engaging the public in positive behaviour to look after their community. Work with young people is especially important and will be addressed as opportunities arise. By informing the public and promoting positive action, the Community Council hopes to contribute to the slow change in behaviours and attitudes that can cause problems.

Use, share and improve evidence

The collection in a scientific rather than anecdotal manner is beyond the current capability of the Community Council. However, during the next period of this plan, the Community Council will seek, in partnership with other organisations such as Natural Resources Wales to establish mechanisms to collect evidence to demonstrate the positive (or otherwise) impact of the work carried out. At the end of the next reporting period (February 2025), it is hoped that some initial evidence will have been acquired that will be a baseline from which to measure improvement.

Support capacity and/or other organisations

Any local organisations that are looking for support or would like to involve the Community Council in their efforts to promote biodiversity should contact the Clerk for more information.

Key outcomes

The key outcomes for the next three years include, but are not limited to: -

- Revision of Council contracts to include clauses to promote biodiversity.
- Promote the work in the community alongside organisations.
- Engage with key partners to work together to make changes and gather evidence.

Review points 2027 Points for review in 2027 will be:

- Increased use of technology to reduce Co2 emissions.
- How can the community be further educated and voluntary actions on homes be encouraged?
- Review working arrangements with key partners to assess the need for improvement.

How and when will S6 duty be monitored and plan renewed

This is a live plan that will evolve during the three years. It will be monitored by the Community Council. The next formal report and renewal of the plan will be published no later than October 2027.