Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 - Section 6

The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

Report 2022

Flintshire County Council

Introduction and Context

Flintshire County Council is a Local Authority in North East Wales. Flintshire is set between the rural counties to the west and the more developed areas of Cheshire and Merseyside, land use varies from intensive industrial development along the Dee estuary through to remote and wild areas on the Clwydian range. Over the decades, Flintshire has undergone significant transformation. The impact of development from agriculture, housing, industry and mineral extraction is significant, yet Flintshire still retains many areas that are of importance for wildlife, both urban and rural. Flintshire contains a high number of international, national and local nature conservation designations. The saltmarsh, sand dune and mudflat habitats of the Dee Estuary are not only important in their own right, but host internationally important populations of wildfowl and waders and are designated a Special Protected Area (SAC), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and RAMSAR wetland site of international importance.

The priorities for Flintshire as a County are set by the Council and its local public sector partners. We work together as a Public Services Board (PSB) combining our resources for the benefit of Flintshire

Flintshire County Councils' Biodiversity duty plan "Supporting Nature in Flintshire" has been produced in response to the enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Act requires that Public Authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.

A public authority, in complying with the Section 6 duty, must have regard to:

- The Section 7 list of habitats and species of principle importance for Wales
- The State of Nature Report published by Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
- Any area statement which covers all or part of the area in which the authority exercises its functions, once these are produced.

There are strong links between the Environment Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Complying with the Section 6 duty will help Public Authorities subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to maximise their contributions to the Well-being goals.

"Supporting Nature in Flintshire" our current biodiversity plan, outlines how, as an organisation, we plan to address our biodiversity duty. "Supporting Nature in Flintshire" is a stand-alone plan which links to action in the Council Plan, Climate change strategy, Tree and urban woodland plan and Wellbeing plan. Commitment to progressing the biodiversity plan is outlined throughout these council documents. Delivery of the plan will also support achievement of outputs across these areas. Performance against the plan is monitored by the Biodiversity Officer and reported regularly to programme board and to the Council's Cabinet and scrutiny committees.

All actions in the plan are in line with the sustainable development principles, also known as the "5 ways of working" outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. All major threats to nature including climate change, over-exploitation, habitat loss, and invasive species can be addressed by living more sustainably which is why action for biodiversity and the wellbeing of future generations should go hand in hand. The 'Well-being Plan for Flintshire 2017-2023' reports that those living, working and visiting Flintshire have said that: *'they place a high value on the natural environment and want to use it more for their own well-being'.*

Flintshire Biodiversity Officer collaborates with Conwy, Denbighshire and Wrexham to coordinate the regional nature partnership (Bionet). This partnership works closely with national biodiversity initiatives and regional policies including Natural Resources Wales' Area Statements.

Like other Local Authorities, Flintshire County Council are under extended and continued financial pressure. It is essential that environmental initiatives are viewed holistically for the multiple benefits they provide, embraced as an opportunity to improve County wide well-being and contribute where possible towards financial resilience.

Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

Our 20 key actions for nature are set out over 6 objectives. Of the 20 actions 65% are categorised as having Some progress with 35% as having Good progress and 0% having No progress at all. Although categorisation has varied slightly, this compares favourably with 33% of action in the 2016-2019 plan as having Poor or No Progress.

Key Biodiversity Highlights:

Changes in management to our estate has been a key highlight since 2019. We have put the right management in place for a number of our longstanding florally diverse verges. We have created new wildflower sites through installing wildflower turf and seeding and we have increased areas of reduced mow. Perception has changed with general widespread desire for wildflower areas and specific targets in political manifestos to increase the provision. This project was initiated originally through direct member engagement with the Streetscene head of service and has successfully grown as a result of this high level commitment, strong Streetscene/Biodiversity staff collaboration and regular and effective cross department communication. There will be challenges as the project continues to expand but these are being discussed and options to ensure expansion is achievable alongside increasing resource pressures for both departments are being explored.

Our links with other groups; Since 2019 we have worked with numerous proactive community Town and community councils, environmental and community groups. We have built up good links between numerous communities and are able to plan project support as well as providing opportunistic and ad-hoc guidance, practical and financial assistance where needed. This encourages proactive community involvement in environmental initiatives and ensures communities are leading on locally desired action. A recent example of this was supporting a community age friendly and dementia group progress a native bulb and wildflower campaign within their community. Provided the increased biodiversity staffing continues we plan on working with these key proactive community members/groups further in 2023 to provide a support network and enable maximum mutual benefit from action for nature.

Integration with the Climate Change Strategy: Significant integration of biodiversity priorities within the climate change strategy has supported furthering action and helped shine a light on key internal action needed to support biodiversity. The land use theme is particularly relevant and has helped initiative conversations internally about changes in practice and land use. (detail provided under Action 16)

Benefits through social value: New social value requirements across the procurement process have been used to identify opportunities for biodiversity opportunities. Effective use of the social value requirement by FCC officers has enabled the inclusion of biodiversity feature provision by contractors within the capital building maintenance programme.

Any key enablers to biodiversity action:

Additional biodiversity staff: Revenue grant funding received in 2022 to allow increase in hours of the part time Biodiversity officer and recruitment of two additional biodiversity positions (on a 12 month fixed term basis) has been welcomed and essential. Staff provide internal guidance, prepare and deliver grant funded projects, enable statutory action, survey and monitor sites and species and educate, publicise and promote around the environment. This additional capacity will enable a proactive approach to biodiversity conservation in Flintshire.

Local Places for Nature grant funding: The Local Places for Nature programme has significantly supported and contributed to action for biodiversity across public areas managed by the Local Authority. It has facilitated initial steps to move away from a reliance on chemical pesticides and investment in machinery to support new approaches in management reducing the risk associated with these changes and facilitating behaviour transformation. Most recently it has provided revenue grant opportunities to

allow for increased staff capacity, albeit on a short term basis, which has been essential to effectively address the nature crisis, deliver grant funded projects and take a proactive approach to local nature conservation.

Statutory duty; Understanding and awareness of the duty is increasing internally and externally and with local authorities under increasing financial pressure going forward the statutory nature of the duty will be key to continued action to address it.

Notable or continuing negative impacts, and any barriers to action?

Status quo bias and endowment: Widespread concern regarding lifetime costs of natural assets, perceived associated risks, maintenance, and potential conflicting priorities are all regularly stated barriers to action and have recently resulted in significant biodiversity project failure. Existing practice, and process are consistently overvalued without consideration of the wide ranging costs of inaction and the multiple and wide ranging benefits of environmental action.

Public attitudes: Despite general approval of action for nature, there is still significant opposition to local enhancement projects due to aesthetics, personal opinion, perceived conflicts, misunderstanding or miseducation.

Short term grant funding: Whilst the significant increase in grant funding available for biodiversity projects has been welcomed, the short term timeframes are not fit for the purpose of delivering long term biodiversity impact or projects which are required to go through Local authority processes.

Statutory duty: There is a raft of legislation Local authorities must comply with. It is evident that penalties for non-compliance dictate the level of priority given to these various duties. The lack of penalties associated with the Biodiversity duty are complicit with lowering its priority across Local authorities with significantly challenged budgets.

Action Report

NRAP[1] Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.

Action 1. Engage key departments across the Council to support implementation of the Section 6 duty

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

Engagement faced some delays due to the need to the focus of council operations on Covid response between 2020/21. However, the plan and an update on biodiversity action was taken to Informal Cabinet in May 2021 and Environment Scrutiny in June 2021 and supported. The 2022 report and biodiversity project progress will also be taken to Informal Cabinet, Environment Scrutiny and Full Cabinet between Oct and December 22. This process ensures an increased level of awareness of the duty and biodiversity action across the council and confirms high level scrutiny and support.

Since 2019 there has been progress in engaging some key departments across the Council. Work has expanded with our Streetscene department (additional detail in Action 13), we have worked closely with our Regeneration team to support development of linked green infrastructure projects, in particular. We are working with our capital housing projects team, have ongoing communication with social value and impact assessment staff and most recently we have engaged with staff developing and delivering the Climate Change Strategy and additional officers within forums for this programme.

[1] Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales

Action 2 Assess existing Council plans and policies for impact on biodiversity and influence where possible

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

The integrated impact assessment process now fully considers biodiversity and environmental impact, guidance documents and staff contacts accompany the assessment forms to provide additional guidance if needed by project managers.

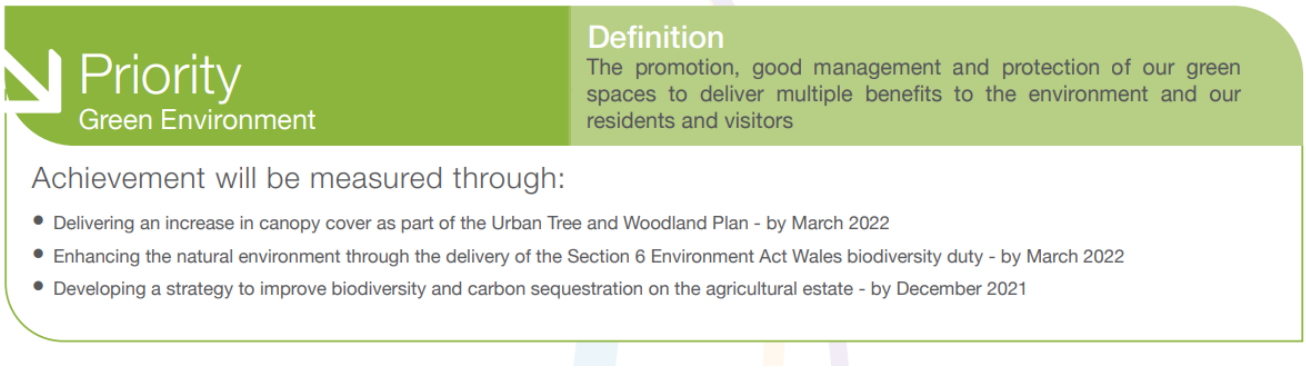
The Biodiversity Officer attends the integrated impact assessment board as required and provides guidance as necessary. Biodiversity officer and natural environment staff attend a number of the Climate Change Strategy officer forums. Within these forums there is ongoing work to consider scope and possible impact of various internal policies on the environment, seeking opportunities to review and amend where a positive change can be made.

Action 3. Ensure high level consideration of duty in Council documents

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

The Biodiversity officer and Natural Environment Department staff provide comment and input into higher level plans. Implementation of the duty now features within the Council plan and the Climate Change Strategy, in addition to the departmental service plan. The full Council Plan 21-23 can be viewed here https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Council-Democracy/Council-Plan-2021-23-Final.pdf

Figure 1. Green Priority Council Plan 21-23



Biodiversity action features significantly within the Climate Change Strategy and work within the strategy involves the review of plans and policies to assess environmental impact and opportunities, this work is ongoing. The strategy can be viewed here https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Climate-Change/Climate-Change-Strategy-2022-2030.pdf

Action 4. Ensure that environmental impact is considered through the procurement process

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

The Council has a strong methodology established through our own TOMs (Themes, Outcomes & Measures) framework which uses social, economic and environmental factors within procurement operations. The joint procurement service with Denbighshire County Council allows collaboration to maximise cost and efficiency savings, this has been used within this reporting round to purchase cut and collect equipment jointly with Denbighshire.

The required social value element within the procurement process now provides an opportunity for environmental considerations and has successfully been implemented for biodiversity benefit and consistency and ensure social, economic and environmental factors are not compromised.

Additional environmental impacts and opportunities within the procurement process are being considered in detail through a specific officer group implementing the climate change strategy. This work is ongoing.

Action 5. Continue to work in partnership to coordinate the regional nature partnership (Bionet)

No Progress | Some Progress | **Good Progress**

Work to develop the nature partnership (Bionet), maximise its effectiveness and support collaborative conservation action across north east Wales was undertaken through the Local Nature Partnerships Cymru project (2019 – 2022). The project funded Biodiversity officer time to develop joint projects including species monitoring, conservation through spatial data use and collection and promotion/publicity activities for nature recovery including the creation of a partnership website.

In 2022 the addition of grant funded biodiversity staff across the region has allowed continued progress in terms of collaboration including; species and habitat monitoring, spatial data collection, publicity and events (social media content, greener development conference, Bionet awards, resource development). North east Wales Local authorities have also collaborated to grant fund a regional local nature partnership officer post which should be in place by 2023. This position will work across the region and lead on the coordination of the partnership, landscape scale conservation projects, develop the nature recovery action plan further and actively explore grant funding.

Action 6. Continue to develop and deliver projects with partner organisations

No Progress | Some Progress | **Good Progress**

This is a dynamic area of action with regularly changing grant funding opportunities and a varied range of possible project partners. We regularly have multiple projects with a variety of partner organisations. Supporting and developing these mutually beneficial partnerships is vital for successful local action for nature.

A wide range of our regional partnership projects are displayed on the Bionet nature partnership website at https://www.bionetwales.co.uk/projects/ .

Partner organisations we've collaborated with include: Groundwork North Wales (Our Backyard, Quayscapes), North Wales Wildlife Trust (More meadows, Fruit routes, Swift recovery, Orchard projects) Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (Habitat creation). And a range of local Town and Community Councils, community and conservation groups (Habitat creation, Events)

Action 7. Continue to develop and deliver internal communication and training

No Progress | **Some Progress** | Good Progress

Following on from the generic biodiversity training held within the previous reporting round.

Progress has been made developing internal communication. The Biodiversity officer works closely with specific staff from Streetscene, Regeneration, Energy and Climate change and is building stronger working relationships across Capital maintenance, Education, Aura and Housing. This has provided opportunities to highlight areas where practice can be changed to benefit biodiversity for example biodiversity enhancement within play areas, biodiversity incorporation into school design and biodiversity enhancement alongside maintenance.

Training and demonstrations in specific systems and machinery have been provided to Streetscene and Countryside staff including non-chemical weed control, various cut and collect machinery and electric grounds management equipment. Communication regarding tree protection has also been circulated internally.

The re-scheduled Greener development conference coordinated by the Biodiversity officer and colleagues in the regional nature partnership will be hosted on 24th November 2022 with attendance of staff from various departments across Flintshire County Council. The conference is expected to attract 150 delegates and will promote biodiversity within design and development.

Action 8. Continue our role in educating residents and future generations about the importance of our natural environment

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

Educating residents and future generations about the importance of nature is undertaken in a variety of ways.

We host a wide range of activities and events with our countryside service and conservation partners. Over the reporting period this has included bat walks and talks, site bioblitzs, recorder days, woodland and tree days, meadow events, plant walks and talks and more. Despite the disruption caused by Covid between 2020 and 2022, the Access and Natural Environment department held 114 events with 8840 beneficiaries and ran education programmes with schools engaging over 1500 pupils.

In addition to physical events which were impacted throughout Covid we have built on our virtual promotion and publicity through the Flintshire County Council Nature webpages which have been updated and the nature partnership website and social media platforms.

Within the reporting period we ran our first Flintshire Eco Champions schools programme which was completed in 2022 after facing delays as a result of Covid. The programme visited a total of 20 primary schools across the communities of Mynydd Isa, Flint, Penarlag, Lixwm, Sealand, Gwernymynydd, Brynford, Nercwys, Flint, Ewloe, Gronant and Pen -y-fford. Schools were particularly keen to take part in the programme and received 4 led sessions covering climate change, biodiversity and sustainability including a school environmental audit and pledges to take forward. Feedback from schools involved was overwhelmingly positive. The programme is a collaboration between our Energy department and Biodiversity and we will be looking to continue the programme following review in 2023.

Action 9. Continue to provide and expand our environmental volunteering opportunities

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

Restrictions as a result of Covid greatly impacted on volunteering opportunities throughout 2020/2021.

We have been able to re-establish some of our volunteer species monitoring programmes but there is still work to do in expanding this. Through the nature partnership website we can now link into project volunteering opportunities with our conservation partners and we regularly promote volunteering opportunities through the nature partnership social media platforms.

Internal corporate volunteering opportunities (which are currently significantly undersubscribed) are being considered within the Climate change strategy work programme, this work is ongoing.

Objective 1: Supporting Nature in Flintshire stated:

Where we need to be in 2023:

- *Considering the impact of decisions on the natural environment across all departments as standard and ensuring that decisions seek to promote and enhance nature wherever possible.*
- *Coordinating an influential and effective Regional Nature Partnership and creating opportunities for partnership working.*
- *Our staff understand the impact they can make on the natural world and are confident to suggest change to support continual improvements towards a sustainability.*
- *Supporting and promoting a strong understanding of the importance of nature across our communities.*

Objective 1: 2023 Reporting comment

- *There is still a need to increase environmental awareness across our departments and build on our provision for departmental and role specific training. E.g. incorporating nature into all design projects at early stages.*
- *While communication and engagement internally across departments has greatly increased there is still a critical need to increase the weight given to environmental impact (and the associated multiple benefits) when assessed against other factors. There is a need for a wide range of successful case studies to demonstrate success in changes for environmental benefit and emphasise the multiple direct and indirect benefits of such projects to ensure biodiversity is valued more effectively and for the longer term in decision making.*
- *The time restricted nature of grant funding must be emphasised and appreciated when working on cross departmental grant funded projects to avoid loss of funding.*
- *There is still a significant work to do in educating our communities, dispelling myths and promoting the value of nature.*

NRAP Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management

Action 10. Publish a Local Nature Recovery Action Plan for North East Wales



In consultation with the Regional Nature Partnership (Bionet) the first three priority habitats for our area have been outlined on the nature partnership website with short, medium and long term targets. This document will evolve online and provide evidence of change and guidance for regional conservation project priorities. It can be viewed here https://www.bionetwales.co.uk/nature-recovery-plan/

In addition we have created an online downloadable resource which provides project case studies which are delivering the plan.

Objective 2: Supporting Nature in Flintshire stated:

Where we need to be in 2023:

- *Have an effective, innovative and collaborative Regional Nature Recovery Action Plan*

Objective 2: 2023 Reporting comment

- *We are working to the broad targets in the regional Nature Recovery Plan. However there is a need to develop the plan further.*
- *By 2023 we will have a grant funded regional nature partnership officer in place, the position will cover our Bionet area of Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham and will lead on the coordination of the regional partnership and development of the regional nature recovery plan and progress against the plan.*
- *A range of additional action is undertaken by the County Ecologist through planning consultation, protected habitat and species licencing and ecological mitigation and compliance which protects Sect 7 habitats and species. Our Countryside Services are also actively involved in the management of numerous designated sites which are managed for conservation. Going forward it would be useful to capture this information under objective 2 in addition to the Nature Recovery Action Plan work stream.*

NRAP Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation

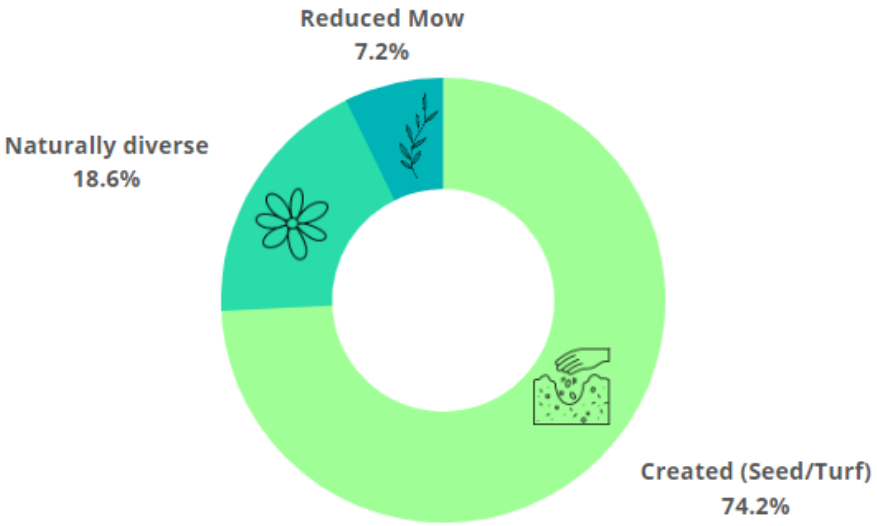
Action 11. Green our Council estate and improve accessible green spaces for wildlife and people

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

Grant funding has enabled good progress to increase wildflower areas and tree planting across our council estate, between 2019 and 2023.

This shift from conventional mown management benefits both nature and carbon emissions/sequestration while helping to improve local urban conditions through increased absorption of pollution, reducing surface water flooding, providing noise and visual barriers, increasing the value of properties and providing shade and urban cooling.

Figure 2. Shows the types of different wildflower sites we are managing, there is scope to increase reduced mow sites in particular going forward.



Action 12. Achieve Bee friendly status

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

Key supporting action to work towards bee friendly status include, reduced use of chemical weed control and investment in the Foamstream system. Reduced areas of mowing, installation and continued management of wildflower areas. Incorporation of green infrastructure into new design and retrofitting into existing.

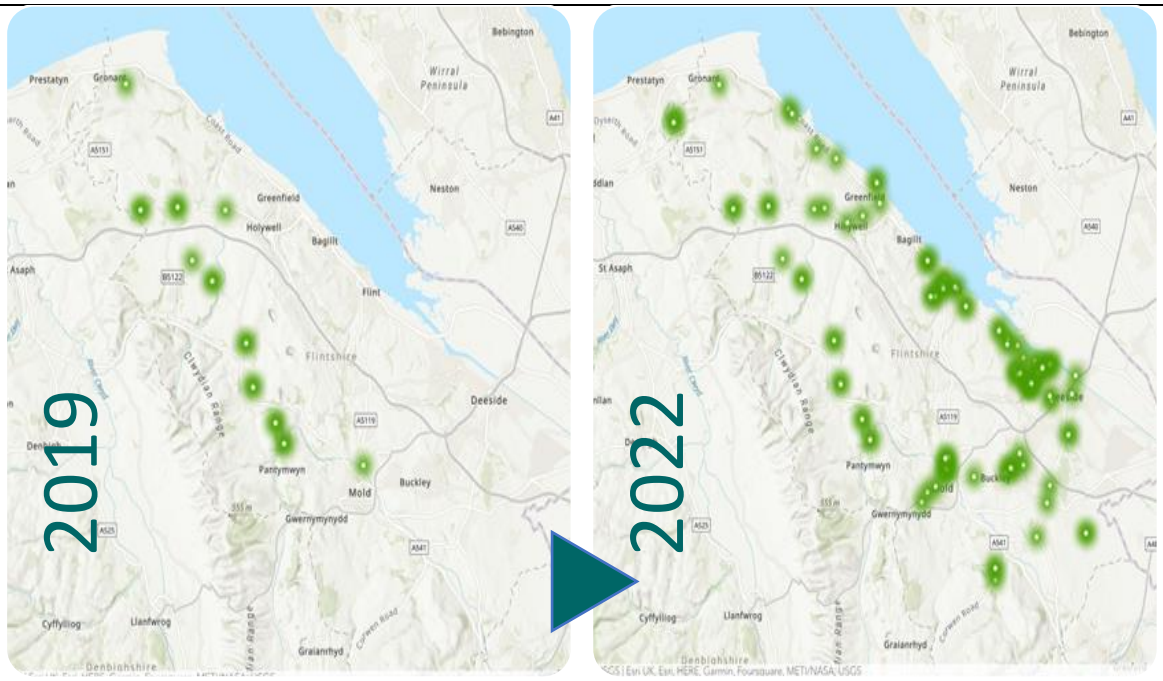
Applications for Bee friendly status were submitted for Wepre Park, Greenfield valley Heritage Park and Flintshire County Council in 2022. The applications were provisionally approved pending some further action which is in progress. We are aiming to complete this work by 2023.

Action 13. Progress our cross department Wildflower campaign

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

Work with Streetscene has been positive, initial grant funding enabled additions to our historical sites in 2021 and sites have increased since then.

Figure 3. Below demonstrates the increase in sites managed for wildflower diversity across the County between 2019 and 2022

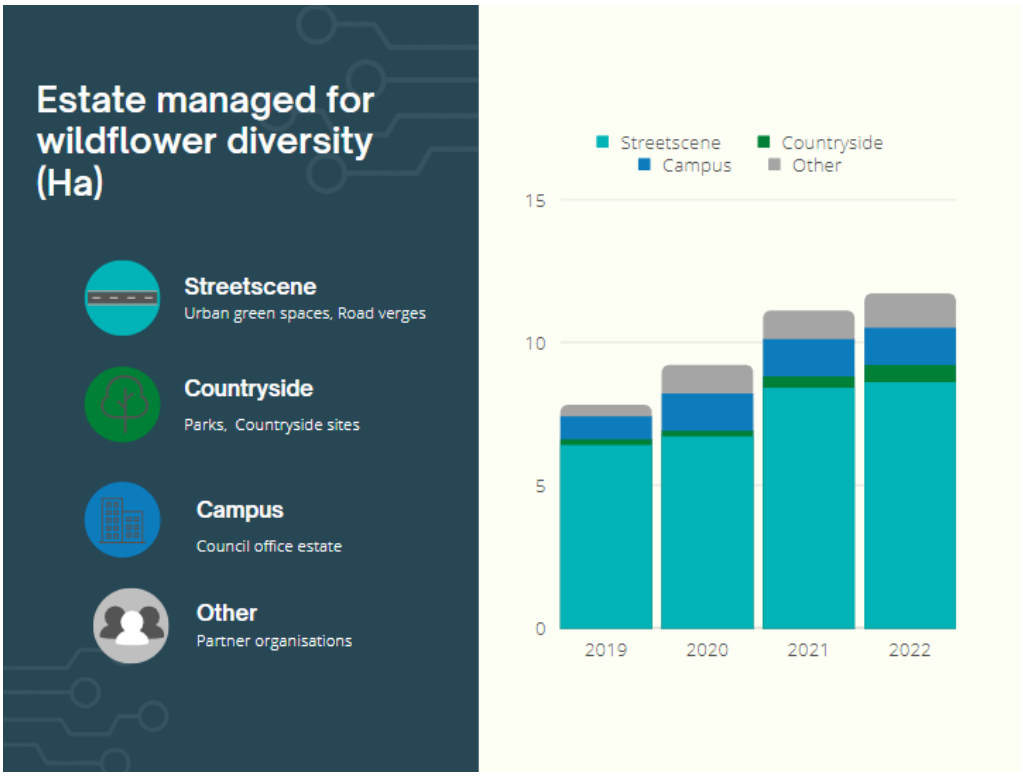


We now have 157 Wildflower sites mapped. This includes 97 sites in active management (this equates to 11.8 Ha/29 Acrs) with 43 going through consultation or installation and another 7 which are proposed.

We have also included and are expanding sites at burial grounds, contaminated land sites, active travel routes and play areas within this project. Grant funding has been instrumental in the installation and/or ongoing management of these sites with investment in required machinery to support the change in management.

The majority of our sites will not require annual re-creation as we have focussed on the creation of perennial meadows through improved management or seeding but for the small number of urban sites where we will need annual re-seeding we are exploring sponsorship options to ensure we have a sustainable funding model into the future.

Figure 4. Chart showing the increase in area of sites managed for wildflower diversity and associated departments.



View publicity created about our wildflower work here;
https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ea6c55e884b444f8995e45bd2406f2fa

Action 14. Progress our "Mapping to support nature recovery" project

No Progress | Some Progress | **Good Progress**

We started using ArcGIS mapping for internal biodiversity projects in late 2020 working collaboratively with Denbighshire County Council to target and evidence conservation action.

The mapping allows much greater functionality and efficiency in the field and has proved invaluable in mapping and recording project progress. We now have the majority of our ongoing projects mapped and have used the platform for requesting biodiversity enhancement suggestions, maps are also shared across departments to work efficiently and the platform has been used to create a range of innovative engagement and communication tools.

View a storymap about our Colour Our County project here;
https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/36f5c2af7c604c339f5c06c9b7941376

Action 15.Continue to implement the FCC urban tree and woodland strategy

No Progress | **Some Progress** | Good Progress

A winter programme of tree planting has been undertaken since the launch of the Urban tree and woodland plan in 2018. Although there was impact on community planting events due to Covid, business sponsorship, grant funding and partnership working enabled some progress towards increasing canopy cover in 2020.

A WG grant obtained for tree planting in 2021 supported tree planting in 2021/22 on urban greenspaces across Flintshire. An additional TWIG grant supporting the tree planting to create an extension to our largest country park, Wepre Country Park and additional grant applications are ongoing.

We have used the Outdoor Recreation Valuation tool (ORVal) to value the welfare and recreational value of habitat changes. The web application provides natural capital accounting and can be used to derive monetary measures of the value households attach to the recreational opportunities provided by those sites. Here we used it to estimate the changed value of a site after biodiversity enhancement. The tool was used for a12ha site for grant funded woodland and grassland habitat creation. Site values before and after habitat creation were compared and demonstrated the addition of young woodland, wood pasture, grassland and orchard increased the welfare and recreational value of the site by almost £250,000. There may be opportunities to expand use of this tool in the future.

Tree planting projects directly deliver themes within the NRW Area Statement including; Develop and improve urban and rural green infrastructure (and specifically increase urban tree canopy) and Increasing woodland cover for social, environmental and economic benefits for North East Wales. They also address medium and longer term targets set out in the Nature Recovery Plan targets; To Increase the extent of native broadleaf and mixed woodland and trees under favourable management and Increase native broadleaf and mixed woodland, canopy cover, connectivity and resilience in North East Wales, while contributing towards resilient ecological networks.

Objective 3: Supporting Nature in Flintshire stated:

Where we need to be in 2023:

- *Have a greener more biodiverse council estate which is well used and appreciated by residents.*
- *Using accessible and efficient mapping technologies to inform action, evidence change and engage residents.*

Objective 3: 2023 Reporting comment

- The success of our wildflower project is demonstrated above however, with only 1 % of our traditional UK meadow habitat left we are looking to increase the proportion of our sites which have reduced mow to support native wildflower and meadow restoration. This is more challenging in terms of public perception and aesthetic appeal but of higher biodiversity value.
- To date tree planting and wildflower area creation has focussed on generally smaller accessible sites across the highly visible soft estate within the public realm. There will be greater opportunity going forward to target larger less obvious areas of FCC landholdings but substantial work is required in identifying this land and gaining high level approval for a focus on management which will provide biodiversity and climate benefit across appropriate sites.

NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

Action 16. Continue to work with key departments to reduce the impact of climate change

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

Flintshire County Council has a published Climate Change Strategy available to view here https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Climate-Change/Climate-Change-Strategy-2022-2030.pdf

Biodiversity staff and members of the Access and Natural Environment Department were fully involved in the development of the strategy and are now represented on the various officer forums for plan delivery.

A key land use ambition within the strategy is to increase carbon absorption and maintain biodiversity within our land assets. Areas of work covered in the strategy include; Increase the proportion of council land managed for biodiversity, Undertake a study identifying land for habitat restoration and tree planting schemes within land assets to mitigate climate change and enhance biodiversity, Audit the amount of herbicide and pesticide use on Council land assets, Increase proportion of Council land with reduced mowing, Support the increase of tree canopy cover across the county in line with the Urban Tree and Woodland Plan, Assess impacts of Ash Dieback and tree planting within Flintshire assets on canopy

cover and net carbon sequestration, Increase area with reduced mowing regimes to enhance biodiversity and increase carbon storage, Strengthen the monitoring of sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) installation and quality in new developments. Work is ongoing across these areas and biodiversity staff will be actively involved in the delivery of actions within the strategy which will deliver for climate change and biodiversity.

The many areas of work outlined throughout this report will support enhance and deliver for the Climate Change Strategy in addition to the Section 6 duty.

Action 17. Promote and enable greener development

Our County Ecologist works to enable greener development across the council and ensure that important species and habitats are protected. The Ecologist is an internal consultee on developments which may impact on local biodiversity and works closely with statutory external consultees including Natural Resources Wales to implement national and local planning policy. Latest guidance for biodiversity enhancement is implemented through Planning Policy Wales 11 (PPW11). PPW11 sets out that “planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity”.

The Ecologist has standard protected species methodologies in place to ensure consistent and appropriate process is applied to ensure ecological compliance.

Our first Local Nature Partnership regional conference on greener development was postponed in March 2020 due to Covid. This has now been re-scheduled for Nov 2022 with speakers from Welsh government and national experts on Green infrastructure.

As a collaborative piece of work with the nature partnership we are exploring how else we can support greener development across the north east Wales region.

Action 18. Work in partnership to limit the impact of INNs on local biodiversity

Non-native species impact and control is a significant and increasing area of work.

Biodiversity staff work in partnership across the authority particularly with Streetscene, Rights of Way, Housing and Customer services to provide advice and guidance with regard to invasive species as appropriate. Where invasive species are identified on Flintshire County Council land we will work with departments to undertake the appropriate control which is often long term treatment.

The majority of additional invasive non-native control work relies on volunteer involvement and events, these events faced cancellation and major disruption in 2020/21 due to Covid. Through collaboration with

the North Wales Wildlife Trust, some management for key projects (E.g. Controlling Himalayan balsam along the River Alyn) was undertaken by their staff when it was safe to do so.

Objective 4 Supporting Nature in Flintshire stated:

Where we need to be in 2023:

- *Climate action is led, coordinated and supported by a cross departmental group*
- *Improved levels of nature consideration and inclusion across all new development*
- *We are involved in effective partnership work to minimise the impact of invasive species*

Objective 4: 2023 Reporting comment

- We have successfully integrated biodiversity action within the Climate Change Strategy, it will be essential to have widespread and high level ambition and support to ensure successful implementation of the strategy.
- While we have had historical and long term active and effective partnerships to control inns, this is an area which requires further input , the North Wales Wildlife Trust have a large regional grant funded project for INNS and it will be important to strengthen those links going forward.

NRAP Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

Action 19. Monitor and evaluate action

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

Action to date has been recorded through internal plan reporting and grant funding reports.

We also monitor biodiversity on the ground. Flintshire County Council is part of the North East Wales Great Crested Newt monitoring program, monitoring 104 ponds for their populations of Great Crested Newt annually working in partnership with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Natural Resources Wales.

In 2020 we began to use interactive mapping to track and evidence change in addition to the above reports. This will allow a more effective level of post project monitoring. Through 2022 we have been developing our use of mapping platforms to monitor and evaluate action.

There is also a requirement to report on actions in the Council Plan through the internal system InPhase And through the Climate Change Strategy groups.

For Objective 5 Supporting Nature in Flintshire stated:

Where we need to be in 2023:

- *We will have a platform where we can share appropriate environmental data across the regional nature partnership.*
- *We will be able to evidence change and understand what the best action is and where and when to undertake it to focus resources we have.*
- *We will be using a spatial nature recovery action plan to inform action*

Objective 5: 2023 Reporting comment

- We have created a regional information platform through the nature partnership website, it now hosts information about the partnership, our nature recovery action plan and targets, the wide range of projects being delivered across the region and mapped habitat data. There is still work to do to broaden the spatial data available on the site. It is anticipated that the regional officer will progress this work when they are in post before 2023.
- We have seen the benefit of monitoring project progress using our spatial data, as we go forward we will be able to use this data to compare and evidence habitat change.
- Increased capacity as a result of additional biodiversity staff will allow for increased project evaluation and monitoring.

NRAP Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

Action 20. Ensure sufficient capacity and resources to comply with the duty

No Progress | Some Progress | Good Progress

In 2022 the nature partnership completed a 3 year project to improve its effectiveness, visibility and sustainability. This provided the regional network needed to support local authority and other member action. Through this project the Biodiversity officer obtained grant funding to increase hours to full time. In 2020/2021 this was complimented by additional grant funding to contract temporary part time support to deliver specific grant funds. While this is not a long term solution it provides a short term structure for effective delivery of commitments in Flintshire.

In 2022 WG grant funding provided additional revenue funding to continue the uplift in hours of the Biodiversity officer and recruited two additional Biodiversity officers on short term temporary contracts. The key role for these positions is delivering projects under the Local Places for Nature funding plan but they will also support outcomes to fulfil our statutory duty, undertake survey and monitoring, publicity and promotion and events.

Grant revenue will also contribute towards a regional nature partnership officer who will be able to lead on regional conservation collaboration.

Objective 6 Supporting Nature in Flintshire stated:

Where we need to be in 2023:

- *Have a strong and effective local and regional network which has well-coordinated and effective communication with national forums.*
- *We need a local structure which is effective, stable and supports our commitment to continued action to halt nature loss and creates a workplace where environmental consideration and nature based solutions are mainstream.*

Objective 6: 2023 Reporting comment

- Whilst we have successfully recruited two additional biodiversity members of staff, these positions are grant funded and fixed short term.
- It will be essential to extend this support and build on it through the 2023 reporting period to ensure effective delivery of growing environmental commitments for biodiversity staff.
- The recruitment of a regional nature partnership officer before 2023 will improve the regional network.

Review of s6 duty

Key issues regarding the operation of the s6 duty in your organisation, and the change this has engendered in delivery of biodiversity action, are outlined in the notable or continuing negative impacts, and any barriers to action section within Highlights, Key outcomes and Issues earlier in this report.

Update and review of the Section 6 plan will follow the 2023 reporting round and take into account issues and possible additions which will be reflected in an updated version published within 2023.