



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 OCTOBER 2022

‘ACTION FOR NATURE’: THE LOCAL NATURE PLAN FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Author: Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the progress of the ‘Action for Nature’ plan by the RCT Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Scrutinise the progress made by the RCT Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and determine whether further information and/or further progress updates are required.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The ‘Action for Nature’ plan has been developed to benefit the wildlife and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and to assist the Council in meeting its Biodiversity Duty obligations under s.6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Nature Partnership (originally called the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership) provides a forum for expertise and community knowledge relating to wildlife in RCT. The LNP has continued to meet regularly since 1998, and although the membership has changed over the years it has been fundamental in developing our understanding of the natural history of RCT and the changes it is undergoing.

- 4.2 The LNP includes representation from Natural Resources Wales, the statutory body for nature conservation, the Council's ecologist, local representatives of major conservation organisations such as the Wildlife Trust, Rivers Trust and Butterfly Conservation, as well as local groups such as the Glamorgan Bird Club and the Colliery Spoil Initiative. In addition, the Partnership includes representatives of much more local community groups with an interest in wildlife or associated with a particular location (examples include Cynon Valley Organic Adventures and the Beddau and Tynant group). Other partners include Wales Biodiversity Partnership, Southeast Wales Biodiversity Record Centre, the Health Service, FUW, staff and students from colleges and universities. Most importantly, the LNP provides a forum for local naturalists to share their knowledge and skills, whether they are paid experts or self-taught observers. This wealth of accumulated evidence is hugely beneficial in ensuring that nature conservation action is effective and successful.
- 4.3 The Partnership was originally set up in response to the UN Earth Summit and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan process. In Wales, each Local Authority or National Park was charged with producing a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and the first RCT plan 'Action for Nature' was published in 2000. The Plan set out actions for all the national 'priority' habitats and species found in RCT, plus actions for habitats and species considered locally to be important. The partnership has been leading and co-ordinating work to progress these actions ever since.
- 5. 'ACTION FOR NATURE' – LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY PLAN FOR RCT**
- 5.1 In 2018 a further review of the RCT biodiversity/nature plan was proposed, and this coincided with a three-year funding bid by the Wales Biodiversity Partnership to Welsh Government for financial support for LBAP partnerships (The Local Nature Partnership Cymru project, funded by the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being Grant, April 2019 to March 2022). The project funded the RCT LNP co-ordinator for 1.5 days per week and supported the Partnership's review of the Action for Nature plan. The 'rebranding' of the LNP and the Local Nature Recovery Plan reflect this Wales-wide grant support. The review also provided an opportunity to consider the Welsh Government's Nature Recovery Action Plan (Welsh Government 2015) and guidance from the Wales Biodiversity Partnership.
- 5.2 Pre-covid, a programme of engagement events across 2 summers were planned to engage wider audience with the content and priorities for the new plan. Unfortunately, this had to be replaced with an on-line co-production process and a wide range of individuals and organisations were involved. It was agreed, at an early stage, that the plan should continue to be 'action' focused, drawing on the best evidence available.
- 5.3 The format of the new Plan has changed from the three-part pdf document produced in 2000 to a website <https://rctlnp.wixsite.com/rct-actionfornature>.
- 5.4 The design chosen has focused on 11 specific groups (including novice naturalists to wildlife enthusiasts, families, public bodies, etc) but there are also

a series of specific habitat actions (grasslands, woodlands, freshwater, ffridd, urban) and a number of generic actions that apply to all habitats (raising awareness, recording and monitoring, site protection and site management). In addition, there is a huge amount of information about the habitats and species of importance in RCT and case studies of a wide variety of local projects. The table below gives a few examples of the many actions in the plan.

How can I help?	Families and Children	Become a Spotter: Want to learn the names of some of our most common minibeasts, birds, plants and trees? Take a look at these spotter sheets from the RSPB and become a spotter! Keeping a notebook is a great way to keep track of what you've seen.
How can I help?	Public bodies	'Sustainability helps wildlife: Taking steps to become more sustainable e.g. through energy and water efficiency, reducing transport, waste etc. all help wildlife locally and globally'
General	Recording and Monitoring	'Promote participation in national surveys: For example, BTO Breeding Bird Surveys, BBCT Bee Walks, Garden Dragon Watch or swift surveys. These surveys increase our knowledge and understanding of nature in RCT and help local people to get involved.
Habitats	Freshwater	Biosecurity: Raise awareness of the importance of biosecurity for preventing spread of INNS e.g. plants and invertebrates
Habitats	Heathland/colliery soil/cliffs and scree/ ffridd	Heathland Assessment: Undertake an assessment of the ecosystem resilience of Heathland in RCT.

- 5.5 This sub-committee received a report on the work of the [RCT Local Nature Partnership](#) in November 2021 and Scrutiny Committee was advised of the formal '[Action for Nature](#)' consultation in February 2022. This closed in March this year and a report of the consultation has recently been completed (Appendix 1) and circulated to the LNP and to all the respondents. Following completion, the next step is to undertake the translation of the website and to promote it to benefit wildlife and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7.0 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The Action for Nature website has been developed by the Local Nature Partnership through a two-year long co-production process, followed by a formal consultation. A report of the process, responses and changes is appended.

8.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no Welsh Language implications as a result of the recommendations set out in this report.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Action for Nature takes into account the current legislation relating to wildlife. The information and action it contains will support the Council in implementing its responsibilities relating to wildlife issues, and in particular, to meeting the requirements of the Biodiversity Duty as set out in s6 Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

11.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 This report contributes to a wide range of the Council's priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2020 to 2024. Specifically, it contributes to investing in our greenspaces and to delivering natural carbon storage solutions such as those provided by trees, peat bogs, marshy grassland and other natural habitats across the County Borough to enhance air quality and reduce the impact of greenhouse gasses.
- 11.2 The Action for Nature plan reflects the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Biodiversity work must be based on long-term considerations and is focused on preventative and precautionary action. It seeks to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem resilience into projects to realise multiple benefits for local residents and wildlife. The Local Nature Partnership provides a valuable mechanism for involving all the relevant stakeholders and promoting collaboration.

11.3 Biodiversity work contributes specifically to the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the Act, but in the longer term it could have implications for all the goals.

12.0 STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

12.1 Successful implementation of the Action for Nature' plan will be of significant strategic importance.

13.0 CONCLUSION

13.1 Action for Nature provides the Council with a very useful, up to date resource relating to biodiversity action and information, based on the expertise and evidence collated by the RCT Local Nature Partnership.

Other Information: -

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Simon Gale (01443) 281114