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## ***Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 - Section 6***

### ***The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty***

#### ***Report 2019***

**Name of Town or Community Council: PONTYPOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

#### **Introduction and Context**

- Pontypool Community Council has been in existence since 1985. It is one of the largest Community/Town Councils in Wales with a population exceeding 37,000 and a budget in excess of £650,000.
- The Council is made up of 21 elected members that represent the community on a ward basis. These members make decisions on the services and activities provided throughout the town and liaise with Torfaen County Borough Council officers when any other issues of interest or concerns arise.
- In order for the Community Council to run smoothly and efficiently, a small and dedicated team of 7 members of staff under the direction of the Clerk Mrs. Ruth Tucker, work tirelessly to produce all the necessary administration, organisation and financial tasks that are demanded of them. Together with members all the hard work goes to making a difference in the Pontypool community.
- Our mission statement:  
‘Pontypool Community Council striving to promote a Positive, Cohesive Community’
- The Community Council provides grants specifically for projects and initiatives that promote or support the environment, sustainability and biodiversity.
- Under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Council has to provide a plan for the future and explain what has been done in the past. The first is to be published in 2019 and then every 3<sup>rd</sup> year thereafter. Pontypool Community Council has to report on how it meets the objectives of the Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015 and it will do this alongside its reporting on its Biodiversity Plan.

#### **Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues**

- In 2019, Pontypool won the National Tree of the Year competition which was organised through The Woodland Trust. This was an amazing award to be granted to Pontypool for its 400 year old Sweet Chestnut tree located in Pontypool Park. It has helped to raise environmental awareness throughout the Community.
- The Woodland Trust has given the Community Council a £1000 award to be spent in relation to the Tree of the Year. It is proposed that the money be spent to improve access to the tree so that more members of the public are able to enjoy it. Also it is suggested that an interpretation board be displayed within Pontypool Park with details of the tree and history of the surrounding woodland area.

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<b>Action Report</b>		
<b>Action carried out in relation to:</b>	<b>Action to be carried out in the future:</b>	<b>Monitored by:</b>
<p><b>NRAP Objective 1a:</b> -embed biodiversity into decision making &amp; procurement</p>	<p>All planning matters must now consider biodiversity management. This is to ensure that the environmental impact of each planning application is considered and concerns raised.</p> <p>A biodiversity champion will be nominated by the Council to address biodiversity in relation to planning applications received.</p> <p>For the future, Biodiversity including Well-being will be added as a standard agenda item for every meeting held by the Community Council. This will ensure that these topics are incorporated into every meeting.</p>	<p>Community Councillors and Biodiversity Champion</p> <p>This will be the Council's first formal commitment to a planned future course of action that will help the Council take biodiversity matters into account as part of its work programme.</p>
<p><b>NRAP Objective 1:</b> -raise awareness of biodiversity &amp; its importance</p>	<p>Each Year the Community Council holds an Environmental Quiz for the local schools. This is helping to raise environmental awareness within school age children. In 2019, a special round was added to the quiz with questions specifically related to Biodiversity. There is also a round which supports s7 of the Act having regard to the habitats and species of principal importance for Wales, as listed by Welsh ministers.</p> <p>Environmental Grants are handed out to local schools who apply for them. This supports schools and encourages them to pursue environmental projects that they might not have funding for.</p> <p>The Community Council support and pay for Forest Schools in conjunction with Greenmeadow Community Farm during the spring. The Council pay for the transport for the Children to Pontypool Park and for the Forest School Tutors. This is helping to raise awareness of the environment with young children where they can be fully immersed in the outdoors.</p>	<p>Community Councillors, Events Manager and Chair of Planning and Environment</p>

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<p><b>NRAP Objective 2:</b> -safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management</p>	<p>The Community Council own and lease a small parcel of land within the Pontypool area and this has been identified as having diverse habitats as listed in Section 7 biodiversity lists. A Management plan for this parcel of land is in place and is being improved upon.</p>	<p>Clerk – to ensure a management plan is in place and routine monitoring by Councillors</p>
<p><b>NRAP Objective 3:</b> -increase resilience of our natural environment buy restoring habitats and creating habitats.</p>	<p>On a yearly basis the Community Council help to plant Daffodils throughout the town. For future bulb planting schemes it is minuted from a full council meeting that more diverse flowers should be planted. For example wildflowers rather than daffodils to help with biodiversity and wildlife. Also planting in more diverse areas.</p>	<p>Community Councillors</p>
<p><b>NRAP Objective 4:</b> -tackle key pressures on species and habitats</p>	<p>Within the offices at the Community Council we are aiming to reduce/reuse and recycle as much as possible. Recycling occurs through the local recycling schemes and we have also started to collect items for recycling through local TetraCycle schemes.</p> <p>We have also started looking into eco-friendly (nature based) solutions for cleaning and this is something we hope to pursue in 2020</p> <p>It has been suggested that the office goes paper free- this would be a huge task to undertake so for the future we are aiming to decrease paper use.</p>	<p>Community Councillors and Office Staff</p>
<p><b>NRAP Objective 5:</b> -use improve and share evidence</p>	<p>In relation to this report and The Tree of the Year Pontypool Community Council has been working in partnership with Torfaen County Borough Council Ecologists.</p> <p>With Biodiversity being added as an agenda item to all meetings it is ensuring that information is passed between Councillors.</p> <p>Information is shared through Social media and the Community Council website. Also the Council has close links with Friends of Pontypool Park, Friends of the British and Friends of Pontypool Town. These groups have all been involved with biodiversity projects</p>	<p>Community Councillors</p>

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<p><b>NRAP Objective 6:</b> -support capacity for biodiversity and support its delivery</p>	<p>Each Community Councillor has a Local Voluntary Fund. They are able to choose different local projects to award grants from their fund. It has been suggested that the form used to gather information about the grant receiver be amended to include a section on how the money will be used to support or promote biodiversity and well-being. This will be a great source of gathering information from the local community on how biodiversity can be improved and for monitoring the grant use. For example some of the beneficiaries of the grants include Allotments and Sports groups, and we could encourage the use of the grant towards biodiversity such as bee hives in allotments and grassy areas left uncut for sports pitches</p>	<p>Community Councillors and Office Staff</p>
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### **Review of s6 duty**

- What has worked well? What have the barriers been? What will you change?

With regard to winning the Tree of Year award for the Old Sweet Chestnut tree located at Pontypool Park, this has raised interest in the environment within the Community and Borough Councils and the general public. It has been stated that a sum of money be put aside to ensure the tree remains accessible to all and a notice board with its details be erected. This ensures that it is an ongoing project promoting the environment.

There are a number of points that the Community Council have identified as positive steps that can be introduced in the future. These can be monitored through the regular meetings held at the Council.

Identifying that Torfaen County Borough Council has a Biodiversity champion has been helpful as the Community Council can now seek advice as and when necessary. Also this has highlighted the need for a Biodiversity champion within the Community Council who will raise concerns during meetings especially with regard to planning applications.

- How and when will the s6 duty be monitored and the s6 plan reviewed?

This plan will be monitored during Full Council meetings on a monthly basis and be reported on at the end of 2022.

The format of the report does not have to be specific and can be incorporated into existing reporting publication such as the Councils annual report.