

Penrice Community Council Report 2019

The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 - Section 6

Context

Penrice Community Council covers a small community of about 450 residents and raises a precept of £11,000. The principal authority is the City & County of Swansea.

It is located on the south coast of the Gower Peninsula within Britain's first designated AONB.

The landscape is diverse with bays and sea cliffs, narrow coastal fringe and coastal marsh, cliff top plateaux and rolling fields and woodland. A National Nature Reserve covers a significant area, which is itself diverse, and there are other protected areas, including much of the woodland.

Settlement is in several villages which are, in the main, clearly defined with significant open country between. The main land use is farming, both arable and livestock, and some land has been given over to tourism and hospitality in the form of caravan & camping sites and venues.

Penrice Community Council owns two green spaces and supports managed mowing and sowing of wildflowers. It does not own or lease any buildings and its annual procurement is very limited but where relevant sustainable practice is followed.

There is strong support within the area to maintain and enhance the natural environment.

Summary

The PCC has embedded biodiversity into decision making and procurement through its Policy on Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems. This will be monitored through minutes of Council.

The PCC has informally raised awareness of biodiversity and its importance through initiating or supporting litter picking on beaches and in villages, inviting speakers on environmental matters and making the Council website and noticeboards available for sharing relevant information. These types of activities will be built into and monitored against its plan.

The PCC has helped safeguard local species and habitats by good land management, protecting and sowing wildflowers, actively identifying issues in the area through the community and by Councillor inspections and addressing those issues directly or through relevant organisations. This will be built into and monitored against its plan.

The PCC is developing its capacity to use, improve and share evidence and to support and engage with the public and other organisations. This will be built into and monitored against its plan.

Council Engagement

- Council has adopted a Policy on Biodiversity & Resilience of Ecosystems to give a framework to relevant decision-making.
- All Councillors have demonstrated (in considering planning applications, land management and other Council matters) that they are committed to preserving and where possible enhancing the habitats of our area.

In line with the PCC policy there is an opportunity to consider these matters in a more systematic way.

- Though procurement is limited Council strives to make the most appropriate choice of material when repairing or replacing its facilities such as benches, noticeboards and signs.

Council Awareness

- Many Councillors are lifelong or long-term residents of the area with significant knowledge of local landscapes and habitats, of local businesses and organisations, and of people with local expertise.

In line with the PCC policy there is an opportunity to collate and share some of this information and to look for and fill gaps in the knowledge base.

- Councillors have a varied level of understanding of wider issues of Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems but have been actively researching topics relevant to the Council's areas of responsibility - such as managing grasslands.

In line with the PCC policy there is an opportunity to further these researches to feed into relevant policies and decisions.

Council Actions

- Council has arranged the sowing of wildflowers on its land both directly and through the local authority. This has been successful and popular. An annual bonfire scar has proved a fertile space.
- In the mowing of two green spaces owned by the Council care is taken not to disturb hand-sown or self-propagating wild flowers, the later including pyramid orchids and bloody cranesbill. Vehicles are not permitted.
- Horton Green is used for community events on the precondition that it is safeguarded with volunteers supervising its use and ensuring it is cleared of debris.

There are opportunities in the green spaces to provide niche habitats to support biodiversity and encourage public engagement.

- Council has sourced recycled plastic for bench slats and noticeboards.

Engagement

- Council supports a local church which in turn organises a series of lectures every year exploring all aspects of Gower - the landscape, wildlife, history, community, arts.

There may be an opportunity to create a more specific tie-in to biodiversity and resilience.

- Council invites representatives from organisations to speak to the Council and members of the public. This year a speaker has introduced the Gower Trail into Badger Innoculation against Tuberculosis. A speaker from Natural Resources Wales has deferred to next year. NRW manage an important coastal nature reserve adjacent to a local village where even small changes in the water table can have a significant impact on both the reserve and residents.

There may be an opportunity to have routine reports from NRW.

- Council maintains its own website where it shares information about the Council and the locality. Council also maintains 6 public noticeboards for use by Council and by other organisations.

In line with the PCC policy there is an opportunity to be more systematic in sharing information on local biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems.

- Council recognises local people provide habitats and resources for wildlife through their gardens and through active feeding in the winter. Council also recognises local land owners (such as farmers, caravan parks and camping sites, churches) provide habitats and sources of food either deliberately or as a by-product of their business.

In line with the PCC policy there are opportunities to monitor and support this.

- Council also recognise other significant organisations in the area: the local authority which owns, manages and supervises land; NRW who manages a coastal reserve; and the Gower Society.

In line with the PCC policy there are opportunities to formalise engagement with these organisations.

What has worked well?

- With the limited resources available to the Council it is most effective to build up capacity gradually - identify a task, work through issues and continue with successful approach. It took some time to establish effective sowing of wildflower seeds but this is now a successful annual activity.
- Impact on the natural environment has always been part of Council consideration of planning applications, land management, procurement, etc, and this will continue.

What have the barriers been?

- Routine regulation involves a huge commitment taking resources away from practical planning and activities.

What will change?

- In line with PCC policy the Council will be more proactive in seeking opportunities for diversity and resilience of ecosystems and more systematic in its assessments.

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

- Whilst s6 considerations are embedded in routine Council activities, in line with PCC policy the Council will review its overall s6 duty and its s6 plan every six months. Monitoring will be achieved by inspections on the ground and by cross-checking through source material (both carried out by designated Councillors & reported back to Council). Reviews will be carried out by the full Council.

This Report was agreed by the full Council on 18th December 2019.

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Report listed on PCC Website at:

www.penricecommunitycouncil.org.uk/biodiversity

Report Direct Link:

www.penricecommunitycouncil.org.uk/fileuploads/pcc-report-on-biodiversity-&-resilience-of-ecosystems-2019.pdf