

## Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 – Section 6

### The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

Report 2019 (produced in May 2020)

**Name of Public Authority:** Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council

#### Introduction and Context

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council (ALCC) provides a range of services to its local communities, some of which have an impact on biodiversity. These include:

- Responsibility for the site of Abertillery War Memorial
- Responsibility for six allotment sites
- Responsibility for hanging baskets in the town (currently plastic plants)
- Funding: ALCC gives grants to local groups and organisations in the ALCC area, which may include grants to improve the biodiversity and sustainability of various sites
- Funding: ALCC receives a grant of £35,000 per annum (at present) from a solar farm company (Community Green Energy (Wales)) which is based in the local area. ALCC decides every year how to allocate this grant to local community projects which (among other things):
  - involve a lasting legacy and tangible benefits to local communities
  - contribute to sustainability
  - involve links with local schools
  - promote opportunities for local volunteering
  - deliver environmental improvements
  - promote links between different areas or communities within the area
  - meet the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

We promote sustainability and biodiversity by pursuing sustainability goals and sustainable practices wherever possible.

We serve approximately 17,000 residents. The precept for 2019/20 was c£234,000.

#### Action Report

Action carried out to:	Examples of action taken/in progress	Monitored by:
Embed biodiversity into decision making and procurement	Criteria were designed in 2019 to ensure environmental and sustainability issues are embedded in decisions about ward grants, council grants and solar farm grants.  Town in Bloom project added to 2020 budget and Wellbeing Working Group remit.  Contract procured with local grounds maintenance company to maintain the	Various grants criteria published to ALCC website.  Council budget. Terms of reference review Feb 2020.

	<p>Abertillery war memorial site: grass cutting, weeding, litter picking and planting spring bulbs and summer bedding plants.</p>	<p>Contract specification.</p>
<p>Raise awareness of biodiversity and its importance</p>	<p>A presentation was made to the Community Council on 16 January 2019 by Dr David Llewellyn of Cardiff University, entitled “Transforming landscapes and identities in the South Wales Valleys”. This raised awareness of how communities can be transformed through a long-term partnership approach, centred around making the most of the area’s natural resources and landscape.</p> <p>Criteria are now issued to all grant applicants, so they are aware of environmental and sustainability issues and focus their projects on these issues if they want funding from ALCC.</p> <p>Through the projects enabled by funding granted by ALCC to local groups, public awareness of biodiversity and its importance is increased.</p> <p>All ALCC councillors were invited to a “Biological Wildlife Recording Day“, which was run by SEWBReC (South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre) and was hosted by Torfaen &amp; Blaenau Gwent Local Nature Partnership in March 2020. This free training event was designed to turn “wildlife watchers” into “wildlife recorders”. Councillor Bartlett attended. This councillor is now busy linking with the Local Nature Partnerships Co-ordinator for Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen. A presentation to the whole Council has been offered in due course.</p>	<p>Minutes 16 Jan 2019. Learning from this presentation has been applied widely within ALCC and has influenced the solar farm and other grants criteria as well as decision making on awarding grants.</p> <p>Further details in key outcomes section below.</p>
<p>Safeguard principal species and habitats</p>	<p>All planning applications received from the County Borough Council are forwarded to all local councillors for comment, with an opportunity to call for a meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee if desired, to agree a collective response or submission of concern.</p> <p>ALCC was a key opponent of the development of quarrying at The Canyons, Tirpentwys; a key local site for nature and biodiversity. Many of the birds present in this</p>	<p>The application was refused and the appeal dismissed after several years of hearings.</p>

	<p>area are on the endangered or at-risk register.</p>	
<p>Restore and create habitats and resilient ecological networks</p>	<p>£35k solar farm grants were awarded to community groups in 2019 and again in 2020 to deliver environmental and other projects.</p> <p>Other grants given to community groups to help them deliver biodiverse and sustainable projects. Further details in outcomes section below.</p> <p>Town in Bloom added as a project under the well-being remit and added to the Council budget.</p> <p>The potential to submit a funding application to create a Butterfly Garden is currently under discussion (May 2020).</p>	<p>See further details in key outcomes section below of how ALCC grants are helping to restore habitats and ecological networks.</p> <p>Minutes of Council meetings show grants made.</p>
<p>Tackle negative factors, for example reduce pollution, use nature-based solutions, address invasive species</p>	<p>ALCC is not a waste or highway authority. It does not have any direct responsibility for these matters. However its members are active locally and several of them volunteer as litter pickers on a regular basis. They also report any issues of concern about pollution etc to the County Borough Council.</p> <p>ALCC members are keen to improve local spaces and are involved as volunteers in initiatives such as maintaining small areas of land, paths and gardens, including clearing spaces of invasive plant species, removing litter and other pollutants and returning these spaces to nature.</p> <p>ALCC will be looking to use nature-based solutions in its development of the Town in Bloom project.</p>	<p>Blaenau Gwent app</p> <p>Green Walk clean up project</p>
<p>Use, improve and share evidence</p>	<p>This action report has been produced and all ALCC members have been asked to contribute and get involved. The report will be published online. This heightens awareness among communities and promotes the use and sharing of evidence.</p> <p>Evidence of outcomes of grants is shared with the solar farm company and with all ALCC members. Key outcomes will be reported to the Council later in 2020.</p>	

<p>Support capacity and/or other organisations</p>	<p>ALCC's various grants streams are designed to help build capacity in local communities, so they themselves can deliver improvements in the local environment, biodiversity and sustainability of communities.</p>	<p>See key outcomes section below for evidence of how ALCC grants are helping build local community capacity.</p>
<p>Key outcomes: use narrative and metrics where possible</p>	<p>A solar farm grant of £35k was given by ALCC for the Cwmtillery Project in May 2019 to deliver lakeside, path and fishing platform improvements, community café, memorial garden, hedge planting, ecological surveys and increased fishing and fish stock at Cwmtillery lakes, among other things.</p> <p>This funding has enabled members of our community to take a proactive approach to reduce the amount of silting up of the lake. If unchecked the lake could eventually become a marsh. Whilst this might not cause an adverse effect on amphibians and invertebrates it would significantly reduce wild fowl habitat.</p> <p>The lakeside path, memorial garden and community café improvements will encourage more visitors to the site and thereby increase awareness of the biodiversity of the site. Visitor numbers have been affected by the Covid-19 outbreak but are significantly increased and a footfall counter will be used to monitor visitor numbers going forward.</p> <p>The Cwmtillery lakes scheme involved planting of new hedgerows, which will attract and encourage native bird, mammal, insect and other animal species in greater numbers going forward.</p> <p>The lower lake is now stocked with many more fish and the fishing club's membership has gone up from 6 members to 70+ members in a matter of weeks. Again, this improves footfall at the site and people's awareness of nature. It will also attract herons and other wading birds to the site.</p> <p>A council grant of £300 was given to the Men's Den in 2019 to deliver a community garden/allotment project. This project has been delayed due to the Covid-19 outbreak but will be resurrected as soon as possible.</p> <p>A solar farm grant of £5,000 was given by ALCC to the Friends of Six Bells Park in January 2020 to deliver path improvements at the park, to enable greater public access and enjoyment of the park and its biodiverse environment. More people visiting and enjoying the park means more public awareness of species and habitats and builds the capacity of the Friends to apply for more funds and make further improvements to the Park.</p> <p>A grant of £5,000 was given by ALCC to the Roseheyworth and Bourneville Community Woodlands Association in January 2020 to pay towards improving public access to the woodlands and creating</p>	

	<p>a space for local school children to undertake woodland-based education and learning. This will encourage more people to visit the woodlands and raise awareness of its biodiversity. The project also involves cutting back overgrown wooded areas and thereby enhances the site for wildlife.</p> <p>ALCC is aware that bodies which are grant funded may also seek additional funding from elsewhere, thereby helping communities build further on the schemes and projects enabled by ALCC funding to create lasting legacies and more biodiverse sites which are sustainable for years and potentially generations to come.</p> <p>This is community capacity building, improving biodiversity and promoting sustainability in action.</p>
<p>Review points, for example enablers and barriers to action, improvements to forward plan</p>	<p>The Community Council is able to address biodiversity further by ensuring applicants for and recipients of funding from ALCC address biodiversity specifically in their projects.</p> <p>“Improving biodiversity” needs to be added to the ward grants, council grants and solar farm grants criteria, so that this issue is even more explicitly considered and focussed on in future.</p> <p>Evidence of outcomes of grants needs to be reported to the Council in a future meeting and published on ALCC’s website.</p> <p>The Wellbeing Working Group and the Council need to consider biodiversity and sustainability specifically in the further development of the Town in Bloom project. They should also consider replacing plastic plants with real plants in hanging baskets.</p> <p>The Council needs to look for further training and development opportunities, to increase the awareness of its members in relation to biodiversity and sustainability.</p> <p>Barriers to direct action by ALCC include the Community Council’s lack of direct control over land and biodiverse assets.</p> <p>The Community Council will need to consider the implications for biodiversity and sustainability in any future consideration of potential community asset/land transfers.</p> <p>The Community Council will need to consider whether to have a presentation from the Local Nature Partnerships Co-ordinator for Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.</p>
<p>How and when will the s6 duty be monitored and the s6 plan reviewed?</p>	<p>This report was prepared by the Clerk to the Council in liaison with councillors and published in June 2020.</p> <p>The Council will monitor action against the objectives set out above and the plan will be reviewed in Autumn 2022.</p>