

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 – Section 6

The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

Biodiversity Action Plan for Town and Community Councils

Name of Town or Community Council:	Cyngor Dinas Llanelwy St Asaph City Council		
Council type (Group 1, 2 or 3 for NRAP Objectives):	Group 3		
Introduction and Context			
<i>St Asaph electoral area is situated in Denbighshire and is the second smallest city in Wales. It has a St Asaph has a resident population of 3485 (2021 census) and is within the parliamentary constituency of Clwyd North. St Asaph City Council's electoral area is split into two wards, East Ward and West Ward, which lie on either side of the River Elwy. The City Council manages 40-50 acres of open spaces, mostly lying along the banks of the River Elwy. The Council manages its land as sympathetically as possible to the biodiversity, while allowing open access to the public for much of its land.</i> <i>The city is believed to have developed around a sixth century Celtic monastery founded by St Kentigern and is now home to the 14th century cathedral dedicated to St Asaph. As the seat of a medieval cathedral and diocese, St Asaph was historically regarded as a city, but only officially received city status in 2012 during the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.</i> <i>Development of the St Asaph Business Park and crowded roads in St Asaph in recent years with large volumes of traffic on the A525 which links the A55 with the Vale of Clwyd resulting in congestion in the city at peak times.</i> <i>The Council has a precept of £169,940 and is not subject to the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.</i> <i>The City Council works with a number of other bodies and organisations to ensure its land is managed as sympathetically as possible. These include Wales Government, Natural Resources Wales, Denbighshire County Council, Afon Elwy Environment Group, Keep Wales Tidy.</i>			

Council Services

The Council delivers a variety of services which have a direct impact on local biodiversity:

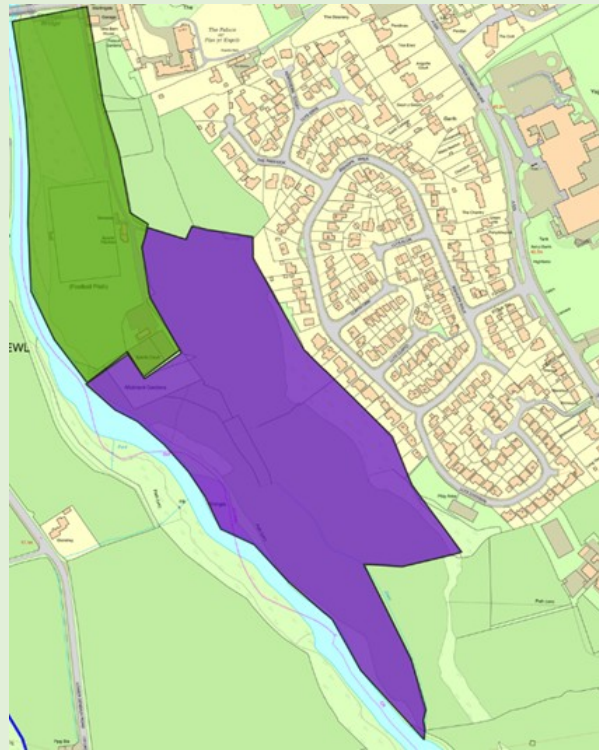
- *Planting and maintenance of floral planters in the city centre;*
- *Planting trees on its land;*
- *Granting permission to Denbighshire for “Let’s Play Out sessions” on city council land;*
- *Grant funding to environmental groups to support their activities in the city.*
- *Planting pollinators in raised beds on the Common to attract bees and butterflies.*

Full details of the Council’s main duties and responsibilities can be found in the Annual Report, published each year.

The City Council’s land includes the following:

Mill Race Meadow, which was purchased by the City Council in 2008. *(Shown in purple on the plan below)*

This is private property as it is leased to a local farmer for grazing. A public footpath runs through the field. The land is left to grow naturally and is grazed by a large flock of sheep so that no pesticides or herbicides are ever used. One third of an acre has been set aside for use as a community orchard and some twenty fruit trees of different heritage varieties were planted. Jubilee Copse was added in 2021-2022 when 30 deciduous broadleaf trees were planted. A further section of the field is leased to the St Asaph Allotments Association and provides some twenty allotment gardens for local residents. The field has a large amount of gorse growing along the riverside which is left to grow naturally and only occasionally is this cut back to prevent over-intensification.



***Roe Plas**, which was given to the Parish Council (now St Asaph City Council) in 1946 as a celebration of the victory of the Allied Forces in the hostilities of 1939-1945, for recreation and leisure. (Shown in dark green on the plan above)*

Half of the land is set aside as a football facility and this grassed area is cut and treated as necessary by personnel from the Football Club.

The remaining area is a mixture of open grassland and woodland. The grass is trimmed to a height of 65mm eight times a year and the woodland is tended to ensure safety of members of the public.

Tree planting in this area includes the Millennium Wood, which was planted in 1999 to mark the new millennium. Roe Plas is home five rare black poplars, which are the only black poplars of the St Asaph variety in the United Kingdom.

Approximately 100 whips were planted on a small bund near the car park and along the hedge line adjoining Mill Race Meadow in 2023.

The Afon Elwy Environment Group has worked with the City Council for many years to improve and enhance biodiversity. The Group plants bulbs on the City Council's land. The AEEG was awarded the green flag in every year from 2020 onwards.



***St Asaph Common**, which is almost entirely grassland and has been managed by the Council since 1897. (Shown in dark green on the plan above)*

The grass is cut to a height of approximately 65 mm eight times a year to enable the public to enjoy the space. It provides a home for St Asaph Bowling Club. On the West of the river there is a seating area and a wildflower garden, which includes a small area of woodland.

All three of the above areas are bounded by River Elwy.

***Land Behind the Library**, which has been in the ownership of the City Council since 1981.*

This provides an informal parking area. Denbighshire Library Services are managing a project to provide a wildlife garden in this area.

River Elwy

Like all landowners whose land adjoins the river, the City Council is responsible for the river where it meets its property, to halfway across, as riparian landowner. In practice, however, NRW deals with much of the maintenance for the river and the bunds as they form an important part of the flood defences.

Various

In addition to the above, the City Council manages other small pieces of land which include facilities such as seating, bus shelters, floral planters and play areas.

What do we do?

- Maintain footpaths and kissing gates on the City Council's land.*
- Provide litter bins on the City Council's land.*
- Leave the woodland wild and do hedge layering.*
- Sections of the flood bank have been seeded with wildflower mixes, which include clover, yarrow, and meddick. We have developed a bee and butterfly garden.*
- Frequently plant new trees at various locations on the City Council's land.*
- Most of the hedgerows are planted with tree which bear berries. These attract large numbers of Winter migratory birds.*
- Each year our contractors strim any Himalayan Balsam along the riverbank and dispose of the arisings.*
- Some areas of dead wood are left for wildlife.*
- We encourage other organisations, such as the WI, local schools and Afon Elwy Environment Group to participate in our endeavours.*
- In 2020, approximately 64 Sakura cherry trees, gifted by the Japanese Consul, were planted on four sites across the city.*

→ Provide noticeboards, strategically sited, to give information about flora and fauna on our land.

Flora and Fauna

- We have identified five different species of Winter migratory birds which roose along Roe Plas and Elwy Meadow.
- At lease one otter holt has been identified on the riverbank.
- Native bluebells and other spring flowering bulbs have been planted in several different areas.
- We have several badger setts.
- Along the riverbank there are herons, dippers, kingfishers and goosanders.
- The river is populated by salmon, sea trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, lamprey, eels, minnows and bullheads.

Special Projects

Wildflowers

We have created a wildflower area on the west side of the Common, opposite the Doctors' surgeries, which is called the wildflower garden. This area is left uncut, with cut and collects undertaken at the end of March, June, and August. This is the fifth year for the wildflower garden. In Spring 2021 a Denbighshire Biodiversity Officer conducted a species count on our behalf and identified:

Ribwort Plantain, Daisy, Dandelion, White Clover, Yarrow, Common Mouse Ear, Creeping Buttercup, Ivy-leaf Speedwell, Germander Speedwell, Forget-me-not, Lords and Ladies, Garlic Mustard, Nettle, Spear Thistle, Dock, Herb Roberts, Common Mallow, Meadow Buttercup, Primrose, Shining Crane's Bill, Hawkweed, Foxglove, Lesser Celandine, Bluebell and Apiaceae spp.

We continue to work with the Denbighshire Biodiversity team who are advising us on the best way to manage this site. At Jubilee Copse and in the Community Orchards, we have the grass strimmed back just once or twice a year to ensure the trees have enough nutrients and water to thrive.

Trees

In common with other responsible landowners, the Council has had an inspection of its mature trees in 2024-2025 and remedial work is currently in progress. We are especially proud of our mature black poplars, which are the only ones in the UK of the St Asaph variety.

In 2020, we were delighted to receive a gift of 64 Sakura cherry trees from the Japanese Consul. These were planted on four

sites across the city:

- “ By the Seating Area, Common West*
- “ In the Wildflower Garden*
- “ At Roe Plas*
- “ The avenue across the Common*

Sadly, some of the trees have been vandalised and we have had tree guards constructed on the Common avenue to protect the trees. This year we will take delivery of further trees to replace those which have not survived.



Jubilee Copse

Approximately a third of an acre adjoining the community orchard has been fenced off and planted with native trees to form Jubilee Copse. It was a fitting way to participate in the Queen's Green Canopy and to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.

Planting included quercus rober, field maple, red maple, copper beech, wild cherry, holly, red hawthorn, rowan and pandora cherry trees

Thanks to a generous donation of twenty Denbigh Plum trees from one of our residents we are delighted to include these heritage fruit trees.

National Forest

The City Council is currently preparing to apply to have its land at Roe Plas included in the National Forest. Preparation of a woodland management plan is in progress.

Other

- The Clerk works from home, which reduces travel to work. Councillors share travel when attending events outside St Asaph.*
- As far as possible, we compost our green waste.*
- Where appropriate, the Council supports improvements to sustainable travel networks to encourage active travel.*
- The Council's Environment Policy is published on its website.*

NRAP Objective	Biodiversity objectives	Action planned	Time scale	Monitored by:
1	Embed biodiversity into decision making & procurement	• The City Council has an Environment Policy, which is published on its website. • The Council's Environment & Assets Committee considers environmental issues and ensures that the City Council manages its land sympathetically. • Planting projects are designed with the local ecosystem in mind. • The Clerk has attended One Voice Wales and Local Places for Nature training sessions. • A City Councillor attends the Clwyd River Catchment Forum and Vale of Clwyd AONB meetings. • The City Council works with Denbighshire Biodiversity Officers, NRW Officers and Wales Government. • Environmental concerns are considered by Council when responding to planning applications and footpath diversion orders. • An Environmental Impact and Climate Change/biodiversity impact section has been added to the standard agenda item report for Council. • The City Council formed a Flood and Community Emergency Working Group to ensure the city's flood defences were strengthened and enhanced. The Group is still in existence, in case of future need. • St Asaph has a volunteer Floodwardens' Group, which is held in high regard by Denbighshire and NRW. • The City Council liaised with NRW in 2016-2018 when the flood defences were constructed. It continued to meet with NRW to ensure its land was restored afterwards and that	2023-2025 & ongoing	Environment & Assets Committee

		trees were planted to replace those removed during the construction works. • The City Council's land at Roe Plas forms part of the flood defences for St Asaph. • When the City Council commissions grounds maintenance services, biodiversity requirements form part of the decision making. This includes reducing the use of harmful herbicides and pesticides. • Councillors and staff will continue to attend training sessions to gain knowledge and understanding of the links between biodiversity, climate change, flood resilience and community wellbeing. • The City Council gave grants to cover the cost of public liability insurance for two community groups.		
1	Raise awareness of biodiversity & its importance	• The City Council has appointed councillors as its representatives on the Boards of Governors at St Asaph VP Infants School and Ysgol Esgob Morgan. They encourage biodiversity projects through their role as governors. • Bird and bat boxes were donated to Ysgol Esgob Morgan. • Details of biodiversity projects are shared with the schools, as appropriate. • The Library Garden project has involved Ysgol Esgob Morgan in the project. • The primary schools and Brownies participate in community litter-picks organised by Afon Elwy Environment Group. • Environmental considerations and sustainability are included in the City Plan, which is being developed. • City Councillors have visited the Denbighshire Tree Nursery site and nature reserve to learn from best practices.	2023-2025 & ongoing	Environment & Assets Committee

		• Seating is provided on the Council's land and throughout the city to provide resting spots for residents and visitors, encouraging people to spend more time outdoors. • Information boards and noticeboards have been installed to inform the public about the local environment. • Publish details of Council Environmental initiatives on the website and in the annual report.		
2	Safeguard principal species and habitats	• Denbighshire Biodiversity Officers collected offcuts of trees to propagate during tree surgery work. • Rocks have been installed at the edge of the green spaces at Roe Plas to protect and safeguard the park. • Trees were planted in 2018-2019 on the City Council's land to ensure the land was restored after the construction of the flood defences. • The City Council is applying to the National Forest Scheme to register Roe Plas as a woodland. • The wildflower garden is subject to a cut & collect three times a year to encourage native wildflowers to flourish. This is with the advice and support of Denbighshire Biodiversity Officers, who do species counts to monitor progress. This provides a safe habitat for small mammals and birds. • Careful use of herbicides and pesticides. • Retention of bird and bat boxes. • Grass around trees is not cut to a radius of one metre. • The community orchard and Jubilee Copse have reduced grass cutting and are strimmed twice a year. This provides many of the same benefits as for the wildflower garden. • Denbighshire Biodiversity Officer is progressing the City Council's application for Bee-friendly status.	2023-2025 & ongoing	Environment & Assets Committee

3	Restore & create habitats and resilient ecological networks	- Public right of way across Mill Race Meadow has been marked out to encourage the public to stick to the official footpath, thus reducing the traffic across the grazing field. - The Afon Elwy Environment Group organises bulb planting, tree planting and hedge layering on the City Council's land. These initiatives improve the appearance of these sites and provide vital support for pollinators and other wildlife. - A wildlife garden project has been managed by Denbighshire Library Services on the City Council's Land behind the Library. Together with the young trees on this site, this has provided crucial food sources and habitats for local wildlife. - Considering use of native pollinator friendly flowers on open spaces where appropriate. - Planting the community orchard and Jubilee Copse have established small native woodlands to foster local wildlife.		Environment & Assets Committee
4	Tackle negative factors: for e.g. reduce pollution, use nature based solutions, address invasive species	- Tree surveys are conducted at three-yearly intervals to ensure the City Council's trees to monitor and maintain the health of the trees. - The City Council has appointed one of its councillors as tree warden. The Tree Warden monitors the health of the trees in the interim. - The City Council employs a litter-picker each week to collect litter on its land. It also encourages the activities of the AEEG who conduct regular litter-picks across the city. - The City Council recycles its waste from its buildings.	2023-2026 & ongoing	Environment & Assets Committee
5	Use, improve, and share evidence	The City Council works with the Denbighshire Biodiversity Officer, who advises on best practices. Site meetings are arranged to survey the Council's land and improve biodiversity practices.	2023-2026 & ongoing	Environment & Assets Committee

6	Support capacity and/or other organisations	• The City Council has worked with the Denbighshire to support their wildlife garden project. • The City Council supports the Elwy Invasive Plants Group by providing grant funding to cover the Group's insurance costs. • The City Council supports the Afon Elwy Environment Group in its activities and provides grant funding to cover the Group's insurance. • The City Council has had links with Co-Options Ltd for thirty years, and employs two of their operatives to provide litter-picking and gardening services.		Environment & Assets Committee
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Annual review of the Biodiversity Action Plan		Date reviewed:	
What has worked well?	St Asaph City Council has been successful in several areas where it has supported environmental initiatives and promoted community involvement: • Planting Jubilee Copse has provided a native broadleaf woodland. Installation of a bench in the copse provides seating for the public to enjoy watching nature in this peaceful spot. • Planting the community orchard has provided a source of fresh fruit for the community. Although not yet mature, this will encourage healthier eating for the community. • Planting the cherry tree avenues on the Common and at Roe Plas, and in the seating area on the Common will provide a beautiful vista for the public and will be a natural landmark for residents and visitors alike. • Development of the wildlife garden has been a great success, with an increase in species of native wildflowers. • Reducing grass-cutting in the selected areas has allowed native wildflowers to thrive. The public has been very supportive of the initiative.		

	• Installation of raised beds for pollinators in the seating area and near Lower Street play area have supported biodiversity. • Planting Millennium Wood has been a great success, with the trees now semi-mature. The woodland has recently been thinned out to ensure competition for sunlight has been reduced. • The Denbighshire Library Wildlife Garden project is now complete and provides a more attractive space for the community. The primary school and youth services have been involved in the project. This provides a shared green space for the community to enjoy and learn about gardening. • The Allotments site provides twenty plots for local residents enabling them to enjoy growing food and promoting healthy living. • The use of Mill Race Meadow for grazing has provided a naturally managed meadow with little human intervention. • Planting young trees behind the library has worked well and in years to come will provide good tree cover. • Working with NRW to have the flood defences constructed has provided security to the community when adverse weather is expected. • Working with Denbighshire Biodiversity Officers to enable them to collect and propagate the offcuts when tree surgery is planned has resulted in new St Asaph Black Poplars being grown. This is a source of great pride to the City Council.
What have the barriers been?	• Financial Constraints – the City Council manages a lot of land for its size. This puts inevitable strain on its budgets. The Council is ever mindful of the fact the financial cost is shared amongst just 1680 households. • Although grant funding is available for some projects, where the Council must pay first and claim later, this creates a strain on its cashflow. As for the point above, due to the Council's large landholdings, its cashflow is also fully committed. Funding projects will inevitably lead to increased precept. • The City Council has in excess of sixty mature trees, and tree surgery and inspection is a major cost. The Council is ever vigilant about future maintenance costs when planning projects particularly tree planting.

	• Reliance on volunteers creates a risk as the Council relies on a small group of dedicated volunteers. As some groups become older, they struggle to recruit younger members to continue the work. • Lack of specialist knowledge and expertise within the Council. One Councillor is a qualified horticulturist and has an in-depth knowledge of tree cultivation and management. Although Denbighshire Biodiversity Officers will support the Council, we are aware that this is a shared resource.
What will you change?	• Creation of wildlife corridors could be considered. • Arrange up to date site visit from DCC Biodiversity Officers to monitor progress and seek advice. • Include biodiversity in the City Plan. • Consider planting native species in floral planters. • Clerk to attend more biodiversity training sessions when offered.
How and When will the s6 Duty be Monitored	• The duty will be monitored by Full Council. • The s6 report and other evidence to be reviewed by the Environment & Assets Committee and further actions considered. • The s6 report to be reviewed by full council at least three-yearly to comply with the duty of subsection (1) of the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty; Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Next review due:	
Approved by Council on:	



Group	Description of organisation relative to biodiversity. Organisations:	Minimum Actions	Examples	NRAP objectives for Action Reporting (see template Annex 1)
1	- that own or occupy an office building only and - whose functions are not directly connected to biodiversity and/or land management.	Actions related to buildings management, procurement, sustainability, awareness raising, training, or in partnership with other organisations	Commissions, DVLA	NRAP objectives 1, 4, 6
2	- that own, occupy or manage land their own buildings and grounds, - whose functions are connected with biodiversity and/or land management, or - that can influence those who own or manage land.	As per Group 1 above PLUS grounds management, cascading funding criteria, providing education and training	Public Health Wales, Universities, Sport Wales	NRAP objectives 1,4,6 as above NRAP objectives 2, 3, 5 relating to own grounds
3	that own or manage land beyond their own grounds, whether their functions are connected with biodiversity and/or land management or not.	As per Groups 1 and 2 above PLUS land management to maintain and enhance biodiversity, and promote the resilience of ecosystems.	Dŵr Cymru, Local Authorities, NRW, Welsh Government	All NRAP objectives

The **Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales (NRAP)** sets out six objectives for reversing the decline of biodiversity which should be used to help develop and guide actions to comply with the section 6 duty:
The 6 objectives to maintain and enhance biodiversity are:

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

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

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

Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

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