

## ENVIRONMENT



The quality of the local environment affects all our citizens. A clean, healthy and safe environment improves quality of life, while problems such as pollution, noise, litter and dog fouling can detrimentally affect health, communities, wildlife and the local economy.

As Local Agenda 21 has highlighted, every community is also part of the global community and each must play its part in tackling worldwide environmental problems such as climate change, the depletion of natural resources, chemicals in the food chain and the destruction of natural habitats. Local Agenda 21 meetings held across Neath Port Talbot have identified the very real and different challenges faced by our communities, which are spread from the mountains to the sea.

The external perception of the county borough as a highly industrial area belies the reality that more than 40% of our land is dedicated to forestry and another 45% to farming. This coupled with several river and canal systems, more than 600 ponds, an extensive coastline, 135,332 residents and their workplaces mean that the

local environmental issues of Neath Port Talbot are many and varied.

Improving air quality is an important local issue. Local air quality depends on how we all run our lives and the choices we make. All sections of the community have their part to play: public, commerce and industry alike.

The consultation with local residents on forest design plans gives communities new opportunities to restore natural habitats and the landscape around them, while encouraging walking, cycling and riding, thus improving the health of individuals. Our countryside is gradually recovering and being restored from the industrial and mineral disruption of the past by innovative projects such as the mine water treatment schemes and is to be opened up for public access by changes instigated by national legislation.

Both locals and visitors must be made aware of the countryside code and their responsibility to landowners, their stock and, of course, resident wildlife. Our urban areas are also receiving attention in exciting regeneration and greening schemes where residents are more and more involved in the design of the projects.

Difficult decisions have to be taken when dealing with waste disposal across South Wales, yet households continue to generate an increasing amount of waste. Raising awareness of the steps we can all take, whether at home, in work or school to reduce

our impacts on our environment must be one of the top priorities over the life of this Plan. As with other themes within the document, empowering local people to “do the right thing” by providing them with the information and user-friendly services has to be the way forward.

This Community Plan will have a key role in delivering sustainable communities and in improving everyone’s quality of life through working to protect and enhance the quality and diversity of the natural environment. Indeed many of our local jobs are dependent on aspects of our local environment and businesses are being encouraged to move into and adopt environmental technologies.

The Community Plan partners will adopt an integrated sustainability approach to project planning and environmental health activities in endeavouring to meet communities’ aspirations. Development should not necessarily be considered to be in conflict with nature or landscapes. Imaginative and sensitive compromises will be found.

Our environment is a major influence when attracting visitors, new business and opportunities to the area. It also engenders pride and a sense of belonging amongst our residents.

## KEY PARTNERS

The Neath Port Talbot Environmental Forum consists of 89 environmental partner groups, organisations, experts, landowners and businesses, several of whom, have committed themselves to targets in this Plan. It is the intention that this collective Forum will drive the environmental vision forward into the future, but it must be emphasised that the most important partnership is that with each individual within our communities. Without their involvement and commitment the environmental vision will fail.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is that by 2015 we will have:

- Progressed our commitment to make our communities healthier and more attractive places in which to live, work and visit.
- Measurably improved the environmental quality of our communities and the surrounding countryside.
- Increased people's understanding of our environment and how to improve our respective impacts upon it.



Sand Dunes at Baglan

## OUR AIMS

This is what we do together:

1. Tackle local environmental problems, address local concerns, protect and improve the quality of the natural environment and make our contribution to tackling global environmental problems.
2. Improve air quality throughout the county borough.
3. Improve the water quality of our rivers, canals and coastline.
4. Address the issues of waste, litter and flytipping to provide cleaner communities and engender civic pride. Promote waste minimisation and participation in re-use and recycling initiatives.
5. Guide new development in ways that meet high environmental standards, promote good environmental practice and contribute to more sustainable communities.
6. Identify and encourage exemplar initiatives, both as new developments and the restoration and conversion of existing structures and sites.
7. Show great prudence in the use of Neath Port Talbot's natural resources, both through conservation and the use of renewable alternatives.
8. Encourage more sustainable farming practices through participation in agri-environment schemes such as Tir Cynnal, Tir

## OUR AIMS (continued)

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| <p>Gofal and the Organic Farming Scheme.</p> <p>9. Conserve and enhance the area's landscape and encourage positive community engagement in landscape design consultations.</p> <p>10. Conserve and enhance significant buildings, character features, landmarks and trees across our towns and villages. Conserve and care for local wildlife and their habitats.</p> <p>11. Improve access to the countryside and urban green spaces with provision of good interpretive information. Encourage walking, riding and cycling, reduce car dependency and reduce pollution.</p> <p>12. Encourage sustainable tourism for visitors to appreciate the county borough's wonderful natural assets.</p> <p>13. Encourage business to embrace environmental objectives as part of their corporate responsibility through their purchasing, transport, waste and energy management.</p> <p>14. Increase local involvement in environmental organisations and caring for local sites. Strengthen voluntary environmental organisations by encouraging partnership initiatives.</p> <p>15. Raise awareness and the understanding of local and global environmental issues amongst adults as well as children.</p> | <p>Encourage, facilitate and reward the reporting of environmental incidents and crimes.</p> <p>16. Maintain the Neath Port Talbot Environmental Forum to drive the environmental commitments of the Community Plan and contribute to the delivery of sustainable, environmental benefits.</p> |
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## OUR TARGETS

### By 2009

1. Reduce air pollution PM10 (dust particles) levels within the Margam/Taibach Air Quality Management Area, as set out in the 'Airwise' Air Quality Strategy.
2. Reduce air pollution and monitor air quality levels across the county borough and provide assurance that national agreed target levels of pollution are not breached.
3. By 2006/07 achieve at least 25% recycling/composting, with a minimum of 10% composting (with only compost derived from source segregated materials counting) and 10 % recycling.  
  
Then, by 2009/10 achieve at least 40% recycling/composting, with a minimum of 15% composting (with only compost derived from source segregated materials counting) and 15% recycling.
4. Establish and increase participation levels by residents in the door-to-door recycling collections. These will be monitored annually.
5. Reduce the incidence for tonnage of flytipping on private and public land across the county borough and reduce the incidence of flytipping by 5% per annum through statutory enforcement and community engagement.
6. Maintain and enhance river water quality to achieve 83% of sampled

stretches falling within the Very Good Class and 17% in the Good Class.

7. Achieve and maintain Blue Flag status (or equivalent) for the Aberavon Seafront.
8. Build at least 60% of new housing on previously developed land per annum.
9. Undertake investigations on at least 4 potential contaminated land sites per annum and instigate remediation proceedings on all those found to require them.
10. Improve the coverage of flood warning services to 78% of properties in flood risk areas.
11. Prevent all inappropriate development inside floodplains.
12. Achieve at least a 50% take up of agri-environment schemes by land area by 2015.
13. Over the period of the Plan an average of 20 hectares per annum will be converted from conifer plantation to broad leaved woodland/open space.
14. Proactively survey for and serve a minimum of 4 new (non-emergency) Tree Preservation Orders per annum.
15. Contribute to the regeneration of our communities by undertaking at least 4 new schemes per annum that improve and visually enhance the physical environment.

## OUR TARGETS (continued)

16. Ensure that 2.8 hectares of open green space is made available per 1000 population by 2015 (an action plan be produced for consideration by 2007) and that no person lives more than 400 metres walking distance from their nearest area of natural green space.
17. Achieve 5 Local Nature Reserve designations within the county borough by 2009.
18. Reduce carbon emissions that result from the operation of the Council owned buildings by 12% per annum over the next 3 years.
19. Reduce housing sector carbon emissions by reducing the number of households in fuel poverty in the county borough by applying energy efficiency measures to 80% of the fuel poor homes by 2009.
20. Generate 15% of all domestic electricity used in the county borough from renewable sources within the county borough by 2009.
21. Oversee the implementation of at least 40 Green Dragon Environmental Management Systems for various small and medium sized businesses and groups by 2009.
22. Organise an environmental conference or festival at least once every 2 years within the county borough.
23. Implement at least 15 activities from the Green Office Checklist within local voluntary organisations each year.
24. All Neath Port Talbot schools will be part of the Eco-Schools programme.
25. Halt the loss of UK and local priority habitats and species as identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
26. Achieve 1 example per year of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan habitat restored or managed to a favourable condition.
27. To have 85% of the features of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the county borough in favourable condition or recovering towards favourable condition by 2013.
28. Survey the highway verges of the county borough to bring at least 1 additional hectare per annum of appropriate species-rich hedgerow or grassland into management for conservation.

## RELATED STRATEGIES, PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

- Neath Port Talbot Local Air Quality Strategy - Airwise - the way forward to clean air 2000
- Neath Port Talbot Contaminated Land Strategy 2002
- Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Action Plan 2000-2005
- Aberavon Seafront Strategy 2003
- South West Wales Regional Waste Plan
- Neath Port Talbot Unitary Development Plan
- Agenda 21 Strategy for Neath Port Talbot 2001-2006, incorporating Agenda 21 Tawe Afan Nedd
- Making it Happen - Environment Agency Wales, South West Area - Local Contribution 2003-2007
- National Assembly for Wales Strategy for Trees and Woodlands - Woodlands for Wales 2000
- A Better Wales - Vision for the Natural Environment for Wales 2010, Countryside Council for Wales
- Environmental Strategy for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council 2002