

Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Board

ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PLAN

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 About the Board

Led by the County Council, the Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Board (EPB) brings together representatives of the key organisations responsible for shaping and delivering the environmental content of the county's Community Strategy.

The member organisations are the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency Wales, the Forestry Commission, the Gwent Wildlife Trust, Monmouthshire County Council (Countryside, Environmental Health, Planning Policy, Sustainability, Transport, Waste), Monmouthshire GreenWeb, Monmouthshire Community Recycling, Rural Community Action, Energy Savings Trust, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations and the Wye Valley AONB.

The Board aims to:

- foster communication between the relevant environmental organisations at a strategic level;
- help make partnership projects happen and to promote working together for the benefit of the county;
- assist the identification of environmental needs and action priorities of the people of Monmouthshire;
- contribute to the environmental aims, priorities and project programme of the evolving Community Strategy;
- monitor performance in delivering the Strategy and other relevant action programmes.

This document is particularly intended to address the third and fourth aims.

1.2 EPB Priorities for Monmouthshire 2006–08

Following a conference in 2006 the EPB provisionally concluded that the county's environmental priorities were:

- To safeguard and improve the global and local condition of the environment by increasing understanding, appreciation and responsible enjoyment of its qualities, and by encouraging contributions to its well being;
- To reduce non-renewable energy consumption through the efficient use of energy and to increase renewable energy consumption;

- To make progress towards making Monmouthshire a ‘zero waste’ county through waste reduction, re-use of waste, recycling and composting;
- To reduce the growth of environmentally damaging vehicle traffic through integrated measures that increase the use of the most sustainable travel modes or reduce the need to travel;
- To maintain, protect and enhance the visual quality, biodiversity and historic value of the urban and rural environments of Monmouthshire;
- To eliminate or reduce other sources of air, land and water pollution in the county.

The EPB has also identified five key project areas in which it hopes to generate increased collaboration and action, all with an emphasis on developing a focus on citizens’ needs and their participation. These are:

- Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship – coordination and information sharing at a county level and joint project development;
- Waste – extending the ‘zero waste’ approach at a community level;
- Energy Efficiency – raising awareness, overcoming barriers and generating community projects;
- Sustainable Transport – better engagement with citizens – e.g. a Transport Forum or events;
- The Rural Landscape – strategic ecological connectivity networks across the landscape.

Work in these key project areas is being progressed variously by sub-groups or Board members. This approach aims to increase collaboration and action within the county.

2 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

The EPB recognises the importance of progressing work within these identified priority areas. The EPB has developed a concise policy framework through which to deliver its focused outcomes, within the context of the Monmouthshire Community Strategy. In addition to tying in with the Community Strategy, the policy framework is allied to the goals of the constituent organisations and to reflect the main strategies and plans of national, regional and local government and environmental organisations.

Thus, this is not a comprehensive evidence-based detailed environmental strategy with targets and indicators. Partners’ own strategies and plans, referenced below, provide more detail; the Board does not at present feel the need to, or have the resources to, assemble and monitor a detailed strategy. However, we will aim to keep this statement up-to-date.

2.1 Community Strategy Vision (2008)

By 2020 Monmouthshire will be a place where, *inter alia*:

- People live in more inclusive, cohesive, prosperous and vibrant communities, both urban and rural, where there is better access to local services, facilities and employment opportunities.
- The distinctive character of its built heritage, countryside and environmental assets has been protected and enhanced.
- People enjoy more sustainable lifestyles that give them opportunities for healthy activity, reduced reliance on private cars and minimised impact on the global environment.

Among the more detailed aspirations:

- *Services will be delivered locally wherever this is possible. People will benefit from good walking and cycling routes and have to use their cars less often.*
- *People are able to choose to live in a sustainable affordable home and are supported by services to do so.*
- *Our community will be clean, safe and cared for. People will make a local contribution to tackling the global issue of climate change and will acknowledge the effects that this has on our local environment.*

Priorities identified by the Local Service Board (2008–11) are:

- Transport/access to services and facilities
- Affordable and sustainable housing for our communities
- Taking local action in response to Climate Change
- More integrated, sustainable and accessible public services

2.2 A Summary of Environmental Objectives for Monmouthshire

This summary is intended to capture the main objectives of those organisations, working individually or in partnership, which are engaged in the protection and enhancement of the Monmouthshire environment. Most are represented on the EPB. It is based largely on the EPB Coordinator's review of the main current relevant plans, available on request. These plans are referred to in italics below.

2.2.1 Sustainability and Resilience

We will:

- ❑ Seek to mitigate and adapt to the global and local effects of climate change and reduced supplies of oil and other resources.
- ❑ Aim to ensure that our actions do not compromise the quality of life of future generations.
- ❑ Aim to maintain and, where consistent with our other aims, to improve the quality of life of our citizens by providing environmental services and by encouraging citizen engagement and self-reliance.
- ❑ Encourage the production or provision of goods and services as closely as reasonably possible to their use by citizens.
- ❑ Encourage all organisations and individuals to make environmental considerations a key factor in their decision-making.
- ❑ Encourage all organisations and also individuals to make sustainability considerations of all kinds a key factor in their planning and decision-making processes particularly by promoting the use of a sustainability checklist.

2.2.2 The Natural Environment

We will:

- ❑ Protect and enhance the quality and diversity of the county's best inland and coastal landscapes and most valuable wildlife habitats, while taking account of the need to manage the countryside as a productive resource.
- ❑ Ensure that opportunities are taken to enhance all landscapes and wildlife habitats, minimising the loss of biodiversity particularly by seeking a mosaic of inter-connected semi-natural habitats.
- ❑ Ensure that national targets for species and habitats, and targets reflecting local values, are translated into effective action.
- ❑ Provide a basis for monitoring progress.

(For more detail refer to Monmouthshire and Brecon Beacons National Park Unitary Development Plans, Brecon Beacons National Park Plan, Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, Severn River Basin Management Plan and Monmouthshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan)

2.2.3 The Built Environment

We will:

- ❑ Promote patterns of development that use the spare capacity of the existing infrastructure and services and enhance the viability of existing towns and villages.
- ❑ Improve the quality and attractiveness of our urban and rural settlements.
- ❑ Promote more sustainable homes and other buildings, particularly by more efficient use of energy.
- ❑ Seek the supply of high-quality, affordable and social housing in locations consistent with sustainable development.
- ❑ Protect and encourage the conservation of historic buildings and heritage sites.

(For more detail refer to Monmouthshire and National Park Unitary Development Plans and local regeneration action plans)

2.2.4 Resource Management

We will:

- ❑ Reduce carbon dioxide emissions through energy efficiency and the promotion of renewable energy generation where appropriate.
- ❑ Seek to ensure clean water in rivers, streams, lakes and groundwater.
- ❑ Promote sustainable use of water.
- ❑ Protect coastal areas and flood plains from flood risk so far as is consistent with economic and social considerations.
- ❑ Restrict development on flood plains.
- ❑ Prevent the pollution of land and soil, and deal with any past contamination.
- ❑ Increase the reuse, recycling and composting of waste material, reducing as far as possible the residual amount going to landfill or incineration.
- ❑ Identify suitable sites and sustainable technologies for dealing with residual waste in the short term, while longer term zero waste strategies are being developed.
- ❑ Plan for the sustainable use of minerals, minimising harm from their extraction, encouraging their reuse, and safeguarding important reserves.

(For more detail refer to Monmouthshire Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Strategy, Severn River Basin Management Plan, Monmouthshire and National Park Unitary Development Plans, Severn Shoreline Management Plan and (to be reviewed) Monmouthshire Waste Management Strategy)

2.2.5 Movement of Goods and People around the County

We will:

- ❑ Aim to reduce the emission of greenhouses gases and air pollution from transport by encouraging more sustainable forms of travel.
- ❑ Reduce congestion.
- ❑ Improve access for all to services, facilities and employment.
- ❑ Improve the quality of our public and community transport.
- ❑ Improve walking and cycling networks.
- ❑ Increase road safety.

(For more detail refer to Regional Transport Plan, Unitary Development Plans, Air Quality Action Plans and (to be reviewed) Local Transport Plan)

2.2.6 Recreation, Tourism and the Local Economy

We will:

- ❑ Maintain, improve and promote access to, and responsible enjoyment of, the countryside.
- ❑ Seek equality of access to the countryside.
- ❑ Aim to maximise the economic and health values of access to the countryside.
- ❑ Encourage economic development that is consistent with environmental objectives, such as green tourism, local food and timber initiatives, and heritage tourism.
- ❑ Encourage the take-up of financial support for land and building management consistent with our environmental objectives.

(For more detail refer to Monmouthshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Wye Waterway Plan, Brecon Beacons National Park Plan and ROWIP, Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, Monmouthshire Economic Development Strategy)

2.2.7 Engaging with Communities

We will work with other partners and the communities of Monmouthshire to:

- ❑ Make urban and rural environments cleaner, greener and more pleasant places to live, work and visit.
- ❑ Deal with local problems such as litter, dog-fouling, fly-tipping, vermin, graffiti, eyesores, vandalism, and noise.

(Ongoing work and programmes such as Environmental Grants and Tidy Towns address these matters)

- ❑ Raise awareness and understanding of the need to care for the environment in all the areas covered by this statement.
- ❑ Encourage and support good practice in education for sustainable development and global citizenship in local educational establishments.
- ❑ Promote sustainable living.
- ❑ Encourage and support citizen engagement in environmental decision-making and volunteering in environmental conservation and improvement.
- ❑ Encourage good environmental practice and, where appropriate working in partnership, by organizations in all sectors.

(For more detail refer to many of the plans cited above)

3 THE EPB ACTION PLAN

The following programme, which will be kept under review and modified when necessary, summarises actions that the EPB will carry out itself or for which the Board will take some responsibility. Our actions are intended to meet needs that we have identified and that are unlikely to happen without our intervention. This is therefore not a summary of the many actions planned by Board partners or others that require no significant action by the Board.

March 2014

Climate Change, Peak Oil and Energy				
Action	Progress	How much are we doing	How well are we doing it (evidence-based)	Who is better off and how
Sharing best practice related to resilient communities (eg energy, food and other local initiatives) between communities and between EPB partners	Publicised via Mon GreenWeb, info circulated to EPB members, presentations to EPB meetings.	Community initiatives publicised by Mon GW as and when material is available On average one EPB meeting per year includes reports from partners on their own carbon-saving work		
Calculate and monitor renewable energy capacity in Monmouthshire with reference to Monmouthshire's carbon footprint. (This action also contributes to the Single Integrated Plan "Our County Thrives" theme)	Successful LSB Kafka project investigating perceived barriers to the process of getting permissions *Energy usage for street lights in Monmouthshire = 4,230,323kWh (2369 tonnes of carbon dioxide) *Estimated CO2 emissions from Monmouthshire's built environment in 2006 = 460,000 tonnes CO2 or 5.25 tonnes CO2 per capita *Fossil fuel consumption in 2006 in Monmouthshire = 1200 GWh.	Small scale RE developments (of some technologies) are generally now permitted development in Wales, so monitoring is not possible through planning permissions process.	Monitor RE generating capacity in Monmouthshire	Continued monitoring is required to assess whether or not uptake of RE development progressively increases, though it is affected by a number of factors, not just the permissions process.

	<p>*Electricity consumption in 2006 in Monmouthshire = 400GWh. *Renewable energy accounted for 1% of consumption in 2010 * Ref CAMCO renewable energy and energy efficiency study for MCC 2011. Monmouthshire's ecological footprint in 2006 was 4.7, the highest in Wales alongside Powys. Renewable energy generation capacity in Monmouthshire to March 2012 was approximately 4422.16 KWh (source OFGEM) (note: 1GWh = 1 million KWh)</p> <p>REGEN SW are (2013) undertaking research for Welsh Government assessing the renewable energy capacity for Wales, which will be analysed down to County level and provide a useful baseline on which the EPB can build and monitor annually. Report to Welsh Government is expected July 2013.</p>			
Ensure that protected species are not harmed by RE developments (ML to provide suitable revised wording)	Little progress achieved and as worded, difficult to monitor success or otherwise. Various scientific/academic studies underway to assess impact of wind turbines on bats, which we are monitoring.	Awaiting various academic and scientific studies investigating impact of wind developments on bats. Arguably there is little more that the EPB itself can do.	Some organisations – eg Wye Valley AONB, MCC and BBNP have now published guidance for developers of RE installations providing information on avoiding conflicts between protected species and RE installations.	Protected species should be at less risk, provided developers have regard to the guidance provided. Note that most domestic scale renewables are now permitted development.
Transport issues remain an important topic to the EPB as CO2 emissions from transport				

<p>contribute to Monmouthshire's large carbon footprint. Providing a viable alternative to the private motor car will be important into the future to support inclusive communities and combat rural isolation as well as ensuring that the cost of mobility is not prohibitive. The EPB will retain a watching brief on transport issues in Monmouthshire and contribute when a partnership approach can provide positive outcomes. A need for a strategic overarching transport group representing all interests has been identified by MCC.</p>				
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Waste				
Action	Progress	How much are we doing	How well are we doing it (evidence-based)	Who is better off and how
<p>Provide an opportunity for networking to resolve issues related to flytipping in Monmouthshire and to act as a sounding board for new initiatives</p>	<p>Various actions completed during 11/12 by EAW in partnership with MCC and Tidy Towns</p>	<p>Vehicle stop-checks carried out in 2011/12 near fly-tipping hotspots.</p> <p>Fly-tipping Action Wales are running a national householder 'duty of care' radio advertising campaign.</p> <p>Valleys Regional Park Fly-tipping project will end on 31st March 2013.</p>	<p>Monitoring of fly-tipping incidents – numbers and types and clear-up costs (available from Welsh Government). Incidents are reducing.</p> <p>2012/13 monthly average flytipping figures down from 50 (2011/12) to 42 (pro-rated April to October)</p>	<p>Environment is improved/protected and local communities protected from environmental degradation</p>

		Hoping to secure funding that will enable the VRP pilot projects to become all Wales. These include a national intelligence database and digital mapping of fly-tipping incidents.		
Support the development of home and community composting in Monmouthshire	Specific action to be decided, following the Dig It Monmouthshire event in March 2013.			

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC)				
Action	Progress	How much are we doing	How well are we doing it (evidence-based)	Who is better off and how
Maintain and support the ESDGC sub-group	The sub-group continues to meet regularly and has provided opportunities for information sharing, networking and starting partnership projects	3 meetings per year.	New partnerships formed and examples of joint working that would not otherwise have happened. Identification of barriers that to school visits to sites	Improved value of INSET training (teaching staff) through partnership working, joint provision of external visits by schools (pupils), sharing of contacts and expertise (benefits to organisations and local contractors)
Publicise and promote ESDGC education provision in Monmouthshire	Mongreenschools website is being revamped and new information and case studies added	Website revamped	Monitoring of web visits to be ascertained	Schools more aware of local environmental education provision and local case studies

Landscape Scale Biodiversity and Land Management				
Action	Progress	How much are we doing	How well are we doing it (evidence-based)	Who is better off and how
Keep a watching brief on local activity and opportunities for partnership working on this theme, and respond accordingly. (ML to elaborate and provide wording)				

Involved and Active				
Action	Progress	How much are we doing	How well are we doing it (evidence-based)	Who is better off and how
Increase volunteer activity in managing the County's green spaces	A public event is planned (April 2013) drawing on the expertise of various partners – part of our commitment to Creating An Active Monmouthshire	Forthcoming public event April 2013, and further work to be identified through this event.		
Organise a biodiversity blitz at Caldicot Castle and Country Park June 2013, Castle Meadow Abergavenny May 16 th and 17 th 2014 and in the Wye Valley AONB in 2015	Bioblitz 2013 at Caldicot Castle and Country Park drawing on the expertise of various part of our commitment to Creating An Active Monmouthshire.	One public event per year 2013, 2014 including a schools day and in 2015	Number of organisations involved, number of people attending. 2013 – 10 partners involved, 206 members of the public attended, 214 species recorded.	Aim is to add value to local visits to public sites by raising awareness of habitats and species, encouraging public engagement in wildlife monitoring and adding to biodiversity records for the sites surveyed.
Assist where possible and expedient, with facilitating volunteer capacity building (precise action to be developed 2014).				

EPB Coordination				
Action	Progress	How much are we doing	How well are we doing it (evidence-based)	Who is better off and how
Hold quarterly meetings which enable networking and information sharing between partners.	achieved	Quarterly meetings	Progress with Action plan achievements	
Responding to appropriate and relevant strategies and initiatives	achieved	Has averaged around 4 per year		
Increase awareness of the EPB and its work	Forthcoming public events will help with this objective, but monitoring awareness is difficult.			