

Progress Review 2010 Summary

The second Action Plan listed over 150 specific actions. During the review, it was found that 61% of these actions were completed. The main reason for actions not being achieved was a lack of resources or changes in circumstances, though some were possibly too ambitious to start with.

Shared Priorities

In 2008, SEF identified five shared priorities (or Big Issues) which it felt could not be progressed by the environmental sector alone but needed wider support from partnerships and organisations involved in health, education, regeneration, etc.

These shared priorities are:

- improving air quality
- preparing for climate change
- energy and carbon management
- bathing water quality in Swansea Bay
- protecting and promoting biodiversity

The progress review confirmed that progressing these shared priorities is difficult and more collaboration and decisive action is needed.

How we did the Review

The review focussed on what progress had been made since 2006 towards achieving the 22 strategic priorities (or strategic aims) set out in the Strategy. Data was collected for a previously agreed set of indicators and the achievement of actions listed in the Action Plans was assessed. Information on additional actions and other data that came to light during the review was also taken into account.

A set of 51 indicators had been agreed for the Environment Strategy but just 35 of these provided suitable data during the review – the remaining 16 proved inadequate or provided insufficient data to enable progress to be assessed. Some further work is needed to ensure that the indicator set is suitable for future reviews. Other information that proved useful in the review came from discussions with various organisations and surveys such as Swansea Voices.

Foreword

The Swansea Environment Strategy was published by Swansea Environmental Forum in September 2006 to help us improve Swansea's natural and built environment. The latest review shows that good progress is being made in most aspects of the Strategy but also suggests that much more still needs to be done.

The condition of our environment should not only be a concern for environmentalists – it is inherently linked to economic and social issues. For example, poor air quality can affect our health, the loss of our natural assets can impact on tourism and predicted changes to our climate could have far reaching implications for every aspect of our lives. With determination and collaboration we can address these issues and continue to improve our environment and our quality of life which depends so heavily upon it.

We would like to thank the many individuals and organisations that have been putting the Strategy into practice and, as we publish our third Environment Strategy Action Plan, we look forward to their continued support in really moving this forward with positive actions!

**Reena Owen, Chairperson of Swansea Environmental Forum,
Director of Environment for City and County of Swansea, May 2010**

Our Vision for Swansea

Swansea's first Environment Strategy – *Time to Change* – set out an ambitious vision for a sustainable Swansea where: the natural environment we inherited is safeguarded and improved for the future; local people have better opportunities for work, learning and leisure, but the quality of life of others around the world is also respected; and where everyone understands and values the environment and tries to live more sustainably.

The Strategy covers a very broad range of environmental issues and is organised around five themes – The Natural Environment and Biodiversity; The Built Environment and Energy Use; Water, Land and Waste Management; Sustainable Transport and Air Quality; and Environmental Awareness and Action – each with its own set of strategic priorities.

Swansea Environmental Forum (SEF) made a commitment to review progress in 2009/10 and publish its findings. This document provides a summary of the main progress report and highlights some of the key issues facing Swansea's environment in the coming years.

Our Plan of Action

There have been two Environment Strategy Action Plans produced so far: the first was published with the Strategy and covered the period 2006-8; the second covered the period 2008-10. These Action Plans showed how local organisations would help to progress the 22 strategic priorities outlined in the Strategy.

The first Action Plan included approximately 140 specific actions of which 57% were completed by the end of March 2008. Many of the incomplete actions were rolled over.

This table provides a summary of progress for the 22 strategic priorities identified in the Swansea Environment Strategy.

Theme	Strategic Priorities
<p>The Natural Environment and Biodiversity</p>	NE1: Establish and maintain data on the natural environment and monitor change
	NE2: Protect and safeguard our valued natural assets and halt loss of biodiversity
	NE3: Maintain and enhance the quality and diversity of the natural environment
	NE4: Promote awareness, access and enjoyment of the natural environment
<p>The Built Environment and Energy</p>	BE1: Improve the quality and attractiveness of the city centre, other settlements, neighbourhoods and streetscapes
	BE2: Promote sustainable buildings and more efficient use of energy
	BE3: Ensure the supply of high-quality, affordable and social housing within mixed, settled and inclusive communities
	BE4: Protect and promote historic buildings and heritage sites
<p>Water, Land and Waste Management</p>	WM1: Protect and improve river and ground water
	WM2: Maintain and improve bathing and drinking water quality
	WM3: Restrict development on flood plains, reduce flood risk and improve flood awareness
	WM4: Restore contaminated land ensuring minimum risks to the environment and public health
	WM5: Reduce waste going to landfill and increase reuse, recycling and composting
	WM6: Provide and develop suitable sites and sustainable technologies for dealing with waste
<p>Sustainable Transport and Air Quality</p>	ST1: Promote more sustainable forms of travel and transport
	ST2: Improve access to services, workplaces and community facilities
	ST3: Improve air quality and reduce air pollution
	ST4: Improve air quality monitoring and reporting mechanisms
<p>Environmental Awareness and Action</p>	EA1: Encourage and support good practice in ESDGC in local education establishments
	EA2: Actively promote sustainable living
	EA3: Promote active citizenship and increased participation in decision-making processes
	EA4: Encourage good environmental practice amongst organisations and businesses

GREEN = good progress has been made towards achieving the strategic priority

AMBER = some progress has been made but the breadth or rate of progress could be improved

RED = insufficient progress is being made and more decisive action is needed

Summary of Progress

Priority habitats have been mapped, some species surveys are being undertaken and a map of green spaces in Swansea is almost complete. A more co-ordinated approach to monitoring change & better use of recording systems is now needed.

Swansea has many sites designated for the protection of wildlife. Measures are being put in place and training is being provided to ensure that these are safeguarded and managed appropriately.

The area of land in Swansea managed under agri-environment or organic farming schemes has significantly increased. Swansea's parks and green spaces have a high approval rating and some have attained Green Flags and Green Pennants.

Evidence suggests that more people are accessing the natural environment in Swansea and that more information and interpretation is available to help people make the most of their experience.

There has been a significant amount of redevelopment in Swansea City Centre and around the riverside and waterfront areas. Street cleanliness has improved and public satisfaction with local neighbourhoods remains high.

The number of new developments built to BREEAM standard in Swansea is increasing. Carbon emissions from council properties are reducing. However, more needs to be done across all sectors if carbon management reduction targets are to be achieved.

There has been progress with affordable housing provision, improvements to private & social housing, & dealing with problem buildings but the big challenge facing social housing providers is how to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

Some work has been done on surveying and interpreting historic buildings and heritage sites in Swansea but progress is slow and resources for this work are very limited.

Increased collaboration between key organisations involved in the improvement of river and ground water quality is helping to maintain high standards, deal with pollution sources in Swansea and ensure good progress towards new EU targets.

Compliance with guideline standards for bathing water quality has varied in recent years. Collaborative working has enabled some progress but more effort and resources will be needed to prepare for and comply with future requirements.

Awareness of flood risk is improving but some developments are still being permitted on flood plains. Climate change is expected to increase river flooding and cause sea level rise, which would increase flooding risk and coastal erosion.

Restoration of contaminated land in Swansea is being achieved as part of development and regeneration schemes but there is currently no proactive restoration programme in place and a map of contaminated land is still incomplete.

The increase in recycling, composting and reuse in Swansea continues and fly-tipping incidents have reduced. If future targets for the recycling and composting of household waste are to be met, household participation rates will need to improve.

Facilities at civic amenity sites in Swansea have improved and a new bulky household waste collection, reuse and recycling centre has been set up. Talks on developing regional waste management or resource recovery facilities are ongoing.

Public transport facilities and services are being improved in Swansea but car use is at present largely static. Though the strategic Cycle Network in Swansea is well used, urban cycle routes and cross-city links remain underdeveloped.

More organisations, businesses and schools are preparing travel plans and promoting sustainable travel to staff, students and customers. Accessibility to key services and facilities in Swansea is good but car use remains the most popular mode of transport.

Poor air quality in Swansea is primarily due to vehicle emissions and is getting worse in some areas as car use and congestion continue to increase. Greater collaboration between council services and other bodies is crucial if progress is to be made.

Air quality monitoring stations and equipment in Swansea have continued to improve and detailed air quality data is available via a comprehensive website but proposed personal alerting systems have not yet been fully developed.

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship is becoming mainstreamed within most educational establishments in Swansea and participation in Eco-Schools and other environmental education activities has increased.

Events, training opportunities and access to information about sustainability and environmental issues in Swansea continue to improve. The number of organisations arranging activities and providing resources for these issues has also increased.

Opportunities for people of all ages to get involved in community activities and environmental projects have improved but many community groups and environmental organisations remain dependent on short-term funding.

Good environmental practice in Swansea continues to be highlighted and promoted through the Sustainable Swansea Awards and Swansea Sustainability Trail but there has been a significant drop in participation in the Green Dragon Awards scheme.

How are we Doing?

The findings of the review point to clear improvements in each of the five themes of the Strategy but much work remains to be done.

The Natural Environment and Biodiversity

Evidence suggests that more people are using the natural environment in Swansea for leisure or learning. More information, activities and facilities are becoming available to help people make the most of the countryside, parks and other green areas.

A lot of work has been done to map natural features and green spaces in Swansea, and to survey protected species and sites. However, more decisive and collaborative action needs to be taken to ensure that Swansea's wonderful natural assets are safeguarded from the pressures of development, climate change and inappropriate management.

The Built Environment and Energy Use

Large parts of Swansea continue to be redeveloped, particularly in and around the City Centre. Many new developments meet high standards of environmental design. However, greater account should be taken of the impact that redevelopment can have on flood risk, water quality, access to services and biodiversity.

The renewal programme in Hafod is nearing completion and access to social and affordable housing across Swansea continues to progress. Much more will need to be done to improve existing properties if the Wales Housing Quality Standard and carbon management targets are to be met.

The review suggests that the protection and promotion of historic buildings and heritage sites in Swansea needs greater attention and better resourcing.

Water, Land and Waste Management

Water quality in local rivers and around some of our coast has been improving. However, maintaining a high standard for bathing water quality in Swansea Bay remains elusive and it may take considerable effort to ensure compliance with new regulations due to come into force.

Though some contaminated land is dealt with as regeneration takes place across Swansea, there is currently no proactive programme to deal with this legacy of Swansea's industrial past.

In recent years, there have been major improvements to the way waste is managed in Swansea. The total amount of waste that we throw out has started to fall and the number of fly-tipping incidents in the area has dropped significantly. Improvements to kerbside collections, local amenity sites and reuse schemes have helped to increase the proportion of waste that is recycled, composted or reused. But if future targets are to be met, households and businesses that currently don't recycle will need to be encouraged to participate.

Sustainable Transport and Air Quality

Public transport facilities and services are being improved in Swansea. The number of people using Swansea's park and ride facilities is increasing and more organisations are producing travel plans to promote sustainable travel options to their staff, volunteers, students or customers.

However, car use is still the dominant choice for many people in Swansea and remains the main cause of poor air quality and road congestion problems in and around the City. Though there is a high level of monitoring and reporting on air pollution in Swansea, air quality is not improving.

Environmental Awareness and Action

In the past few years, Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) has become a feature of most education and training in Wales. Public awareness of environmental issues and active involvement in community projects has also increased, supported by a wide range of activities and events offered by local and national organisations.

Nevertheless, environmental sustainability is still not a high priority in many of the decisions we make at home or in work and most people are still reluctant to undertake the significant lifestyle changes needed for a sustainable future.

Where Next?

Swansea Environmental Forum will continue to take a lead on all aspects of the natural and built environment in the City and County of Swansea.

The third Environment Strategy Action Plan will be published soon and further work will be undertaken to progress the shared priorities.

The tightening of regulations and the raising of national and international standards should help to drive forward change but current economic constraints may make it increasingly difficult for government bodies, businesses and voluntary organisations to prioritise and resource the necessary environmental actions.

The progress made to date has been largely due to the hard work of committed individuals and groups, supported by the strong partnerships and networks that exist in Swansea. If we are to make further progress in improving our environment and dealing with environmental problems, it is crucial that we encourage collaboration between a wider range of organisations and more effective engagement with communities.

For a copy of the full progress review report or for further information about the aims and activities of Swansea Environmental Forum please visit www.swanseaeenvironmentalforum.net or call 01792 480200.