

time to change



SWANSEA ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY SUMMARY

Swansea Environmental Forum

Foreword & Introduction



Foreword

Those who live or work in the City and County of Swansea have access to some of the most amazing coast and countryside in the UK and our urban areas are dotted with outstanding parks and green spaces. Exciting new developments are taking place in and around the city and renewal schemes are bringing improvements to our local communities.

However, Swansea is well placed to learn the lessons of its industrial past and recognise the damage that can be done in the name of progress.

The whole world now faces immense challenges as the environment on which life itself depends is threatened

by climate change, biodiversity loss and the over-consumption of natural resources. We must all do our bit to ensure that decisions made now do not create problems for future generations.

Our vision is ambitious and presents a Swansea where the natural environment we inherited is safeguarded for the future; where local people have better opportunities for work, learning and leisure; but where the quality of life of others around the world is also respected and everyone understands and values the environment and tries to live more sustainably.

Steve Brown, Chairman
Swansea Environmental Forum



Introduction

Swansea's first environment strategy, prepared by Swansea Environmental Forum, provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment in the City and County of Swansea for everyone's benefit.

We are all totally dependent on our environment. It provides the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. It also supports many aspects of our society and economy.

The greatest challenge we face in the world today is to ensure that the impact of our actions does not threaten our environment or the welfare of others around the world or put at risk the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The Environment Strategy builds on the vision and principles of Swansea's community plan and seeks to raise the profile of environmental issues and influence decisions made about Swansea.

This Summary presents a '2020 vision' and priorities for each of five key themes. These have been agreed in consultation with a wide range of partners. The final pages of this booklet provide ideas for how individuals and organisations can take positive action to improve their environment, with useful contact details for further information, advice and support.

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For full Strategy or other formats contact:

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tel: (01792) 480200 email: sefstrategy@environmentcentre.org.uk

or downloadable at www.environmentcentre.org.uk

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The Natural Environment and Biodiversity

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2020 vision Swansea's unique and diverse natural environment will be protected, enhanced and promoted to maximise social, economic and environmental well-being.



Swansea's natural environment is of outstanding quality and the diversity of habitats and species makes it one of the most 'biodiverse' counties in the UK. Swansea also has a wealth of important geological and archaeological sites and highly attractive landscapes and seascapes that are a valuable part of our heritage and contribute to the economy through tourism.

Gower was the UK's first designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in recognition of its wonderful landscapes. With some of the most beautiful beaches and most important limestone cliffs and saltmarshes in the country, Gower currently attracts about 2 million visitors each year.

Priorities

- Establish and maintain data on the natural environment and monitor change
- Protect and safeguard our valued natural assets and halt loss of biodiversity
- Maintain and enhance the quality and diversity of the natural environment
- Promote awareness, access and enjoyment of the natural environment

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All green areas in Swansea have the potential to become richer in wildlife through appropriate habitat creation and management. Gardens, parks, school grounds, highway verges and other green spaces can be managed to increase biodiversity (the variety of life and the habitats in which it lives).

It is both our responsibility and in our own interest to look after the natural environment, which can improve our quality of life and support good health. Improving access to the countryside, raising awareness and involving communities in managing green spaces are all essential if Swansea's natural assets are to be successfully safeguarded and improved for this and future generations.



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2020 vision Swansea will have strong, sustainable and distinctive communities where everyone can enjoy a clean, safe and high-quality built environment with affordable housing, public spaces and considerately-designed and resource-efficient buildings.

The quality and attractiveness of our neighbourhoods and town centres can have a major and direct impact on our health, sense of community, and the economy. Regenerating areas that have suffered from decline and combating problems such as litter, dog-fouling, graffiti, fly-tipping and excessive noise, can help make Swansea a more pleasant place to live, work and visit.

Swansea's population is expected to grow and change and the need for additional housing, workplaces, services and facilities is expected. All developments should be sensitive to local distinctiveness and wider environmental and social concerns.

Homes and other buildings should be built or renovated with efficient use of energy and resources in mind, both during construction and in their long-term use.

How we generate the energy for use in homes, buildings and for industry can have a major impact on the environment and climate change. If Swansea is to play a full part in moving our dependence away from fossil fuels, we must support alternative and renewable energy generation schemes both large scale and at the domestic or community level.

Easy access to the wonderful network of green spaces and parks that are characteristic of Swansea should be ensured.

The historic environment also adds an important dimension to the places where people live and work. Historic buildings and heritage sites should be protected and made easier to enjoy.

Priorities

- Improve the quality and attractiveness of the city centre, other settlements, neighbourhoods and streetscapes
- Promote sustainable homes and buildings, and more efficient use of energy
- Ensure the supply of high-quality, affordable and social housing within mixed, settled and inclusive communities
- Protect and promote historic buildings and heritage sites



2020 vision Swansea's water resources, land and waste will be managed sustainably to maximise benefits for everyone and minimise risks to the environment and human health.

We depend on natural resources such as clean air, water and land to meet our basic needs and ensure good health. They are needed to enable food production, provide raw materials for building and manufacturing and to support recreation. However, many human activities cause the depletion and degradation of these resources. Economic growth and prosperity have historically been linked to both the increased consumption of natural resources and the production of pollution and waste; this link needs to be broken.

Swansea's industrial past and population growth have put pressure on natural resources locally and though most of our watercourses and coastal waters and much

previously contaminated land have been dramatically improved in recent years, more work is still needed.

We must also continue to monitor and maintain vigilance against new sources of pollution and prepare for the likely effects of climate change on water supply, flood risk and soil erosion.

Most manufacturing processes and the use of everyday resources inevitably create waste and unwanted by-products. If not dealt with effectively, these can have detrimental and long-term effects on our environment.

We must find ways to use resources more efficiently, to recover and reuse whatever we can and to dispose of what is left safely and with minimum impact on the environment and human health.





Priorities

- Protect and improve river and ground water quality
- Maintain and improve bathing and drinking water quality
- Restrict development on flood plains, reduce flood risk and improve flood awareness
- Restore contaminated land ensuring minimum risks to the environment and public health
- Reduce waste going to landfill and increase reuse, recycling and composting
- Identify suitable sites and sustainable technologies for dealing with waste

Sustainable Transport and Air Quality

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2020 vision Swansea's citizens will live near to work opportunities, leisure facilities and essential services, have access to a choice of convenient and efficient transport options, and enjoy clean air.



Increased car use in recent decades has contributed to greater road congestion, poorer air quality and more noise. It has also led to more out-of-town shopping and an increase in the frequency and distance people travel. Transport emissions affect people's health and contribute to climate change.

People can travel more sustainably by walking, cycling, using public transport or car-sharing. Improvements to the bus station and bus services, additional park and

ride facilities and the new Swansea Metro all aim to reduce car use in and around Swansea and make alternatives more attractive and efficient. Public facilities, schools and work places should promote more sustainable travel options to workers, students, visitors and customers.

Reducing the distances people need to travel in order to get to work, shops and services can lead to even more significant improvements. Home working, flexi-hours and improvements in communication technology can also help reduce the number and length of journeys we need to take. Effective public transport, cycle routes and footpaths should be included in all new developments and by supporting local shops and facilities we can bring environmental, social and economic benefits to our communities.

Priorities

- Promote more sustainable forms of travel and transport
- Improve access to services, workplaces and community facilities
- Improve air quality and reduce air pollution
- Improve air quality monitoring and reporting mechanisms

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Air quality in Swansea has greatly improved over the last century with the reduction in heavy industry and the introduction of smokeless fuels. Reducing traffic congestion and its associated poor air quality, particularly in residential areas, must now be a priority.

The link between air pollution and ill health has become increasingly clear. Monitoring a range of pollutants can help to provide better information to the public and more effective control of pollution.



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2020 vision All people living in, working in and visiting Swansea will understand, respect and appreciate our environment and will participate in positive actions towards sustainability.

Education, training and access to good information are key to achieving long-term benefits for Swansea's people and environment.

But education is not an end in itself but a means to an end: it is only really effective if it provides the knowledge, skills and inspiration for taking action towards a more sustainable future.

Every child should leave school with a thorough understanding of environmental issues and the belief that they can help improve the world. Good quality environmental education can have a long-lasting affect on the way future generations choose to live.



Schools and colleges should not only teach about the environment but should also demonstrate good practice in the way they are managed.

Throughout life, we all have opportunities to improve our understanding and there is an increasing number of training courses and events in Swansea that focus on environmental issues and sustainable development. Becoming more active citizens and being involved in our local communities can also help ensure that more sustainable decisions are made about our future.

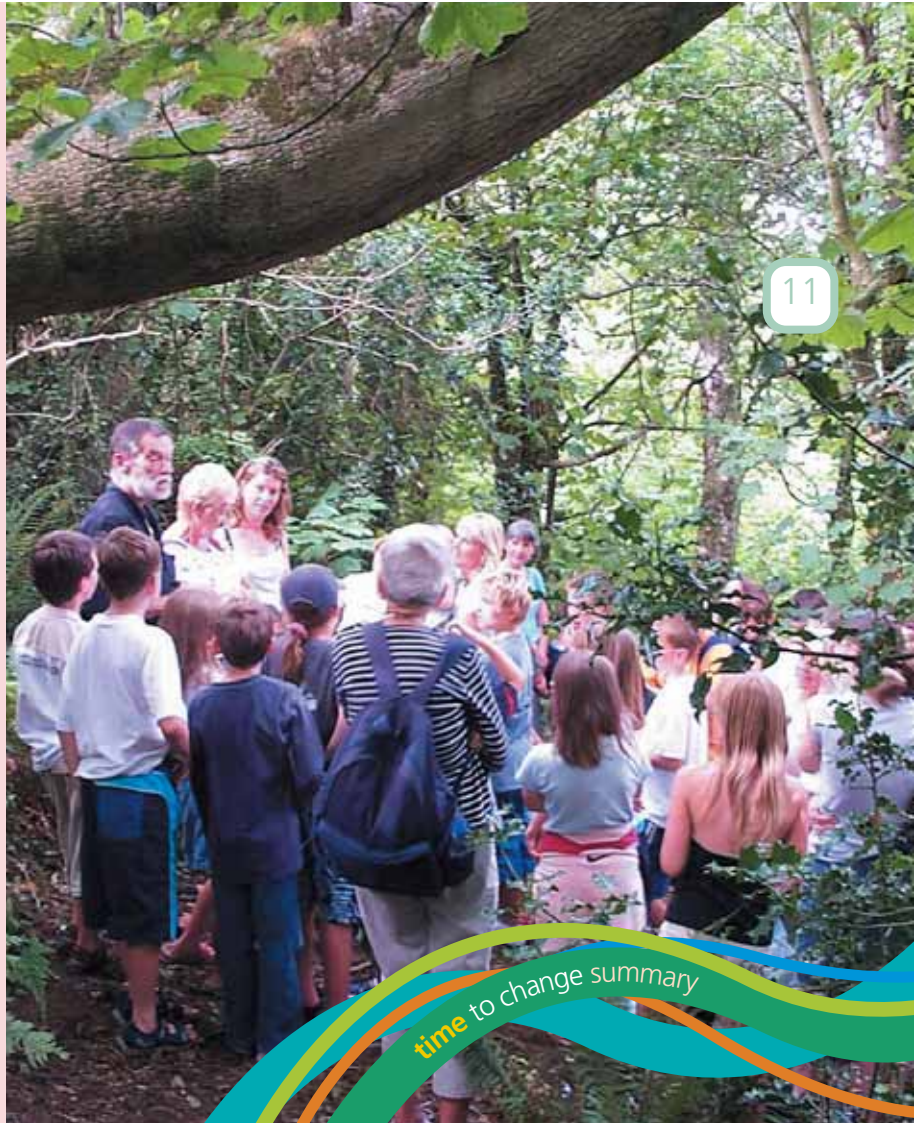
We make choices every day about what we eat, how we travel, what we buy and so on, and the effect we have on our environment can depend on the decisions we make. We should continually seek ways to reduce

Priorities

- Encourage and support good practice in education for sustainable development and global citizenship in local educational establishments
- Actively promote sustainable living
- Promote active citizenship and increased participation in decision-making processes
- Encourage good environmental practice amongst organisations and businesses

our waste and energy use. Buying local food, for example, reduces transport and the associated air pollution, and also supports the local economy.

Businesses and other organisations can also improve the impact they have on the environment by introducing schemes to reduce waste, save energy and water, safeguard biodiversity and demonstrate care for local communities.



Taking Action: Individuals and Families

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Everyone in Swansea can help to improve the environment. Here are some ideas for how individuals and families can do their bit.

1. Save energy at home:

- Insulate your loft and walls
- Switch off lights and appliances when not in use (don't leave equipment on standby)
- Fit low energy light bulbs

2. Save water in the home:

- Fit a hippo bag in your toilet cistern or install a low flush toilet
- Take a shower rather than a bath
- Fix leaks and dripping taps

3. Be a greener gardener:

- Install a water butt and use rain water on your garden
- Compost your garden and kitchen waste
- Grow your own fruit and vegetables

4. Travel more sustainably:

- Walk or cycle for short distances
- Use public transport or share lifts
- Avoid travelling by air



5. Be a green shopper:

- Choose low energy and recycled products
- Choose products from ethical and sustainably managed sources (e.g. Fairtrade and FSC wood)
- Buy local goods and services to reduce food miles and transport

6. Waste less:

- Choose products with less packaging and say no to plastic carriers
- Repair and re-use clothing, furniture, etc. (support local charity shops)
- Use the kerbside recycling scheme and local recycling centres

7. Improve your local environment:

- Don't drop litter and be a responsible dog owner
- Report fly-tipping, graffiti and vandalism
- Respect your neighbours – avoid excessive noise or garden burning

8. Support renewable energy:

- Change to a green tariff for your electricity supply
- Install a solar panel to heat water for your home
- Use rechargeable batteries rather than disposables

9. Support wildlife:

- Avoid using pesticides and herbicides
- Create a wildlife area or pond in your garden and install a nest box or bat box
- Choose environmentally-friendly washing detergents

10. Get more involved:

- Join a local environmental or community group
- Volunteer to help manage a local nature reserve or park
- Find out more about the environment and sustainability (e.g. visit the Environment Centre or join a training course)



Taking Action: Organisations and Businesses

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Here are ten ideas for how organisations and businesses can support the Environment Strategy's priorities and do their bit to improve the environment in Swansea.

1. Recycle as much waste as you can (paper, card, toner cartridges, etc.)
2. Buy local, environmentally friendly and ethical products (including Fairtrade goods, FSC wood, low energy equipment, etc.)
3. Promote biodiversity on and around your property with appropriate landscaping and by installing nest or bat boxes
4. Switch to a green electricity (renewable energy) tariff





5. Produce an environmental policy and establish an environmental management system such as the Green Dragon Award

6. Ensure lights, computers and other equipment are switched off when not in use

7. Monitor and look for ways to reduce your use of energy, water and other resources

8. Provide training and information to all staff on how they can improve the environment in the workplace and their homes

9. Devise a travel plan to minimise the environmental impacts of transporting staff and products

10. Support community initiatives to clean-up and improve the local environment



There are many good sources of information and help on environmental issues, events and good practice. Here are some useful starting points.



The Environment Centre is a focal point for environmental information and education in Swansea with information on a wide range of topics and a large selection of leaflets, periodicals and books. Its small green shop and café sell Fairtrade goods and ethical products.

Many local environmental groups use the Centre as a base or meeting place and it is a venue for exhibitions and events all year round.

The Centre is open to the public Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm.

For further information visit www.environmentcentre.org.uk or telephone (01792) 480200.

Sustainable Swansea aims to help the City and County of Swansea become a more sustainable place to live, work, and visit through a range of awareness-raising projects and by supporting good practice. *Swansea Green Map*, available as a leaflet and interactive website, provides details of over 200 sites, projects and services in and around Swansea that support sustainable living.



Swansea Sustainability Trail highlights good practice taking place in communities across Swansea that demonstrates sustainability in action.

Visit www.sustainableswansea.net or contact the Environment Centre.

Swansea Environmental Forum (SEF) is an association of organisations and individuals working together to initiate, develop and coordinate environmental action in the City and County of Swansea. SEF has organised many events, produced publications, including this Environment Strategy, and initiated several projects, such as the Environment Centre and Sustainable Swansea.

SEF is the lead strategic partnership for all aspects of the natural and built environment in Swansea's community planning process.

For further information on SEF activities or membership contact the Environment Centre (see page 1 for details).

Other Key Contacts

City and County of Swansea
Environment Department:
(01792) 635600
www.swansea.gov.uk

Countryside Council for Wales:
08451 306 229
www.ccw.gov.uk

Environment Agency Wales:
08708 506 506
www.environment-agency.wales.gov.uk

Swansea Environmental Education
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