

Progress Review 2016 Summary



Words into Action

When the environment strategy was published in 2006, it was accompanied by an action plan which collated the proposed actions of dozens of organisations that wanted to contribute to the environment strategy's priorities.

Following each biennial review, SEF has updated the action plan and this has been used in the assessment process. The 2014-16 action plan included almost 200 different actions of which 74% were achieved by the end of March 2016.

Shared Priorities

In 2008, SEF identified five major issues that it believed could only be addressed effectively with high level commitment and wide collaboration. These 'shared priorities' are improving air quality, managing carbon emissions, protecting biodiversity, improving water quality and adapting to climate change. In response to previous strategy reviews, two further priorities were agreed: safeguarding our built heritage and promoting sustainable transport. SEF and its partners have established projects and task groups to tackle most of these issues and though the latest review points to some progress being made, it also confirms that more effort and resources will be required if significant improvements are to be made to these.

Assessment Process

The review makes an assessment of progress with the 22 priorities presented in the strategy. Data is collected from many sources and information is gathered on the achievement of actions in the last action plan. Additional evidence that comes to light during discussions with partners is also taken into account. Each strategic priority is assigned a RAG status (red, amber, green) to provide a simple indication of the level of progress made.

Foreword

Ten years have passed since Swansea Environmental Forum (SEF) published *Time to Change* – Swansea's first environment strategy. In that time we have seen changes in the way natural resources are viewed and managed, both locally and further afield. Some of these changes have been positive but others not so good.

There is now a greater recognition that our health and wellbeing are directly linked to the condition of the natural world and the quality of our built environments. Concerns about issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss have led to international agreements, national commitments and local policies to protect our environment. This has influenced the way we live our lives and decisions made by governments, businesses, organisations and households. For example, the amount we recycle in Swansea has doubled in the past ten years – rising from 30% in 2006/7 to 60% in 2015/16. Over the same period, the number of schools in Swansea attaining the prestigious EcoSchools Green Flag has increase from 23% to 53%.

Despite such improvements, we still face many challenges to ensure that the quality of our environment is secured for the benefit of everyone across the world and for future generations.

SEF is the lead strategic partnership for the natural and built environment in Swansea and part of this role is to manage and monitor progress with the Swansea Environment Strategy. This summary document outlines the findings of the latest biennial strategy review, which covers the 2014-16 period.

We would like to thank all those that have taken action to improve the environment over the past ten years and helped to make Swansea a better place to live, work and visit.

SEF Executive Committee, September 2016

Our Vision for Swansea

Time to Change set out a vision for Swansea as a place where local people have good opportunities for work, learning and leisure but where natural assets are looked after and improved; where everyone understands and values the natural environment and tries to live more sustainably; and where the quality of life of others around the world and in the future is respected.

The strategy was arranged 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 theme has a vision and a set of priorities (strategic aims).

SEF made a commitment to monitor progress and publish findings every two years and this is a summary of the fifth progress review, which focuses on the period April 2014 to March 2016. The full report is available at www.swanseaenvironmentalforum.net

This table provides a summary of progress made between April 2014 and March 2016 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 Use</p>	BE1: Improve the quality and attractiveness of the city centre, other settlements
	BE2: Promote sustainable buildings and more efficient use of energy
	BE3: Ensure the supply of high-quality, affordable and social housing within mixed
	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
	WM4: Restore contaminated land ensuring minimum risks to the environment
	WM5: Reduce waste going to landfill and increase reuse, recycling and composting
	WM6: Provide and develop suitable sites and sustainable technologies for
<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

Actions are being taken to help assess and evaluate the natural environment in Swansea but suitable indicators have still not been agreed.
Some progress has been made in preparing plans to protect natural assets in Swansea but further resources will be needed if these are to be safeguarded into the future.
A growing number of sites are being managed by organisations and community groups for the benefit of biodiversity and people, and the number of agri-environment contracts in Swansea has increased.
Opportunities to visit, enjoy and learn about the natural environment in Swansea continue to improve with an increasing number of events and interpretative resources.
Regeneration in some parts of Swansea has continued and levels of street cleanliness and public satisfaction with their local neighbourhoods remain high.
The energy efficiency of many homes and other buildings is improving and standards set for new developments are increasing. More renewable energy is being generated in domestic, community and commercial settings.
Improvements continue in both social and private housing sectors in Swansea and many long-term empty properties have been brought back into occupation but housing supply is still not meeting current or expected future demands.
Good progress has been made with several heritage schemes across Swansea but some key historic buildings and heritage sites remain at risk.
Collaboration between organisations is proving helpful in efforts to identify and tackle pollution sources and engage communities in protecting our water environment.
All designated bathing waters around Swansea and Gower meet minimum standard and most reach excellent standard. Improvements continue in the monitoring and reporting on water quality and dealing with pollution sources.
The number of properties at high risk of flooding has reduced whilst the percentage of at risk properties on the flood warning service has increased and flood risk management plans are in place.
<i>As no indicators or actions relating to this priority were identified for the period 2014-16, it did not seem appropriate to make an assessment of progress.</i>
Recycling and composting in Swansea continue to increase, driven by targeted promotion and improvements to services. Waste going to landfill continues to fall but the number of fly tipping incidents in Swansea has risen.
Improvements continue to be made at the Council's Recycling Centres and plans are still progressing towards regional facilities to deal with food waste and residual waste.
Cycling appears to be increasing but there is insufficient data to suggest an increase in public transport or reduced car use. Patronage of park and ride facilities in Swansea has fallen further.
Wayfinding in the city centre has been improved but no new surveys have been undertaken to help assess accessibility to facilities and services within Swansea.
Air quality in Swansea remains a concern and as inner city dwellings and café environments increase then the number of people exposed to poor air quality may also rise unless traffic can be reduced or diverted.
The level of air quality monitoring and reporting in Swansea remains high but this could be better used to inform policies and actions.
Many Swansea schools continue to progress with sustainability schemes and utilise local environmental education resources. Local universities are setting high standards for good practice in sustainability.
The number and range of activities, events, groups and information sources in Swansea that support and promote environmental understanding and sustainable living continue to increase and improve.
The opportunities for volunteering and participating in the management of local assets is growing, as are the number and range of groups, projects and partnerships involved in environmental activity in Swansea.
Many local businesses and organisations continue to participate in environmental management schemes, staff training initiatives and partnerships that promote environmental sustainability practices.

How Are We Doing?

The latest review suggests progress has been made in each of the strategy's five key themes but that further work and more resources are needed.

The Natural Environment and Biodiversity

Natural Resources Wales collaborated with a range of partners to explore new approaches to natural resource management in the Tawe Corridor and Swansea Bay. This trial scheme included community consultations and research projects which will inform future work of NRW, SEF and others.

The local authority's programme of sowing wildflowers in public spaces and along highways has been well received and supported biodiversity.

A network of 'Friends of' groups has developed to support greater community involvement in the management of parks and other green spaces across Swansea. There has been an increase in the number of events and resources that promote the enjoyment of the countryside.

The Built Environment and Energy Use

Regeneration projects, particularly in the City Centre and SA1, have continued and the number of new properties meeting high standards has increased with energy efficiency and renewable energy generation across Swansea improving. The quality of social housing continues to be improved but the supply of housing, including affordable housing, is still below the required level. Many vacant properties have been brought back into use and several heritage projects have moved forward.

Water, Land and Waste Management

Strong partnership working is leading to improvements in water quality and helping to engage people's interest in their local waterbodies but identifying and dealing with sources of pollution remains a challenge.

The number of properties in Swansea at risk of flooding continues to fall and the number on the flood warning system has continued to increase.

Recycling, composting and reuse of waste has continued to increase through improved kerbside collection schemes and council recycling centres but the number of fly tipping incidents in Swansea has increased in the last two years.

Sustainable Transport and Air Quality

There is some evidence to suggest that cycling is increasing but more research is needed to determine whether the level of public transport and car use has changed and if citizens still feel they have easy access to facilities and services.

Patronage of park and ride facilities in Swansea has continued to fall and in May 2016 the Fforestfach facility was closed, leaving just two sites.

Air pollution in some parts of Swansea still exceeds limits and policies to increase inner city living and more outdoor café facilities may exacerbate the problem unless traffic in these areas can be reduced.

The Low Carbon Swansea Bay project has supported partnerships to promote sustainable travel planning and the increased use of electric vehicles in the Swansea Bay region.

Environmental Awareness and Action

Schools, colleges and universities in Swansea continue to implement sustainability principles in both their management and teaching. Many businesses and organisations are improving their environmental impact through staff awareness and training, and participating in environmental standard schemes and partnerships.

Opportunities are growing for people to take part in community activities and volunteering linked to improving their local environment.

Where Next?

In 2015, Swansea Environmental Forum and its partners agreed a new set of strategic priorities (drivers) as part of the One Swansea Plan. These priorities effectively update those previously outlined in the Swansea Environment Strategy ten years ago and will provide the structure for a new action plan.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act came into force in 2016 with new goals and guidance for sustainable development at a national and local level. SEF will work closely with public bodies and others, both within and beyond the environmental sector, to help develop and deliver a Wellbeing Plan for Swansea.

SEF will continue to support the Swansea Healthy City programme and, in particular, champion actions towards a healthy urban environment. SEF will also work closely with Natural Resources Wales and the local authority to implement a holistic, eco-systems approach to natural resource management in line with the Environment (Wales) Act – an approach that supports health and wellbeing, the economy, education, culture and heritage, and community resilience.

SEF will further develop its community engagement and partnership projects such as Sustainable Swansea, Clear Streams Swansea, Community Green Spaces and Low Carbon Swansea Bay to support the strategic priorities.



For a copy of the full progress review report or for further information about the aims and activities of Swansea Environmental Forum please visit our website www.swanseenvironmentalforum.net