### **Biodiversity Progress Report**

#### **Background**

We are in an ecological and climate crisis. Nature is our planet's life support system and consequently essential for human survival. Our natural environment provides our food, water, air, building materials, medicines and landscape. Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and biodiversity loss continues as a direct result of human impacts, through habitat loss and degradation, over exploitation, pollution, climate change and invasive non-native species.

As a Local Authority we have a responsibility to function sustainably and lead by example, protecting and enhancing our natural environment. Flintshire County Council have many areas of responsibility which can impact on the natural environment and we have the authority to ensure we function in a way which ensures the protection and recovery of nature. This way of working goes hand in hand with effective action against climate change.

To meet the challenge of reversing the decline in biodiversity it is essential that we act now and ensure as a local authority we meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

#### Supporting Nature in Flintshire

Flintshire County Councils' Biodiversity plan "Supporting Nature in Flintshire 2020 - 2023" has been produced in response to the enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Act requires that Public Authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.

A public authority, in complying with the Section 6 duty, must have regard to:

- The Section 7 list of habitats and species of principle importance for Wales
- The State of Nature Report published by Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
- Any Area Statement which covers all or part of the area in which the authority exercises its functions, once these are produced.

"Supporting Nature in Flintshire" is Flintshire County Council's second biodiversity duty plan which outlines how we plan to address our biodiversity duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 between 2020 and 2023. Delivering the plan will also help achieve our Council plan priorities and Well-being objectives.

Whilst we made good progress in 67% of the target areas in the 2016-2019 plan. There are areas which need further work and this updated plan ensures that these areas are included and can be prioritised.

Flintshire County Council, like other Local Authorities are under extended and continued financial pressure. It is essential that environmental initiatives are viewed holistically,

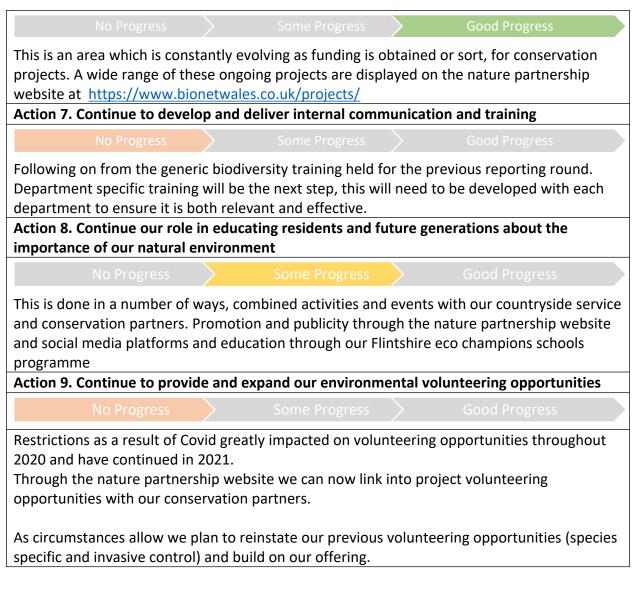
considered across functions, embedded within council programmes and embraced as an opportunity to improve our local environment, County wide well-being and resilience.

Progress to date on the plan is outlined below:

# Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels

Action 1. Engage key depa Section 6 duty	rtments ac	ross the Council to	suppor	t implementation of the
No Progress				
This engagement faced sor response. The plan will be t	-			-
Following this department implementation of the plar		out will be sought ir	1 2021 w	hich will further shape
Action 2 Assess existing Co where possible	ouncil plans	s and policies for in	npact or	i biodiversity and influence
No Progress				
Biodiversity officer inclusio Nature Partnership represe			sessmer	t board and additional
Action 3. Ensure high level	considera	tion of duty in Cou	ncil doc	uments
No Progress				
The Biodiversity officer and into higher level plans.	l Natural ei	nvironment departi	nent pro	ovide comment and input
Action 4. Ensure that envir	onmental	impact is considere	ed throu	gh the procurement proces
No Progress				
The required social value e environmental consideration	•	procurement now p	orovides	an opportunity for
Action 5. Continue to work (Bionet)	in partne	rship to coordinate	the reg	ional nature partnership
No Progress				Good Progress
Work to develop the Nature Partnership, maximize effectiveness, support collaborative conservation action across north east wales is ongoing through the Local Nature Partnerships Cymru project which funds officer time and promotion/publicity activities for nature recovery. In March 2021 the regional nature partnership website was launched <u>https://www.bionetwales.co.uk/about/</u>				
Action 6. Continue to deve			partner	organisations

### Biodiversity Update, Flintshire County Council



# Where we need to be in 2023:

- Considering the impact of decisions on the natural environment across all departments as standard and ensuring that decisions seek to promote and enhance nature wherever possible.
- Coordinating an influential and effective Regional Nature Partnership and creating opportunities for partnership working.
- Our staff understand the impact they can make on the natural world and are confident to suggest change to support continual improvements towards a sustainability.
- Supporting and promoting a strong understanding of the importance of nature across our communities.

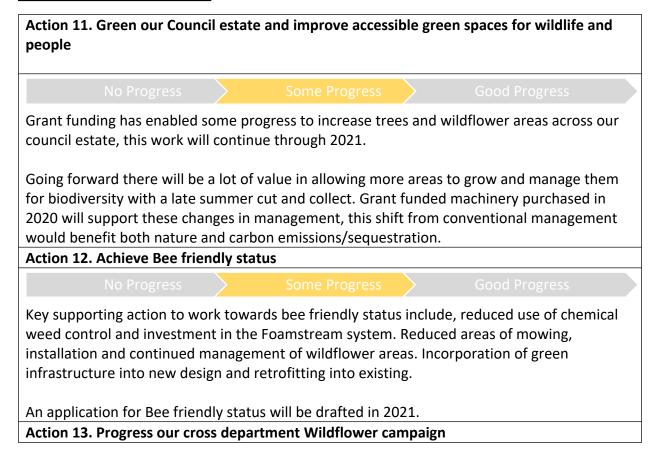
# Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principle importance and improve their management

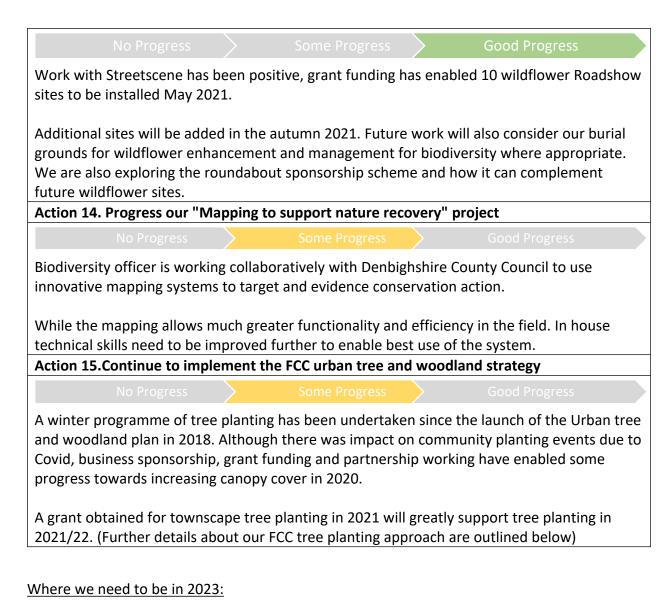
Action 10. Publish a Local Nature Recovery Action Plan for North East Wales					
No Progr	ess 🔶			Good Progress	
for our area have bee	en outlined on t is document wi conservation p	the nature partnershi ill evolve online and p project priorities. It ca	p websi provide	e first three priority hab ite with short, medium a evidence of change and ewed here	and

#### Where we need to be in 2023:

• Have an effective, innovative and collaborative Regional Nature Recovery Action Plan

# Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation





- Have a greener more biodiverse council estate which is well used and appreciated by residents.
- Using accessible and efficient mapping technologies to inform action, evidence change and engage residents.

# Objective 4 Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

Action 16. Continue to work with key departments to reduce the impact of climate change					
					Good Progress
reduce the Our Flintsl	e impacts of clima	ate chan	ge.		ussed above) will help to unction with Energy staff)

Work through the IIA board enable assessed will also support action a	• • • •	the environment to be
There will also be further opportu terms of improving biodiversity va Action 17. Promote and enable gr	alue and carbon sequestration	-
No Progress	Some Progress	Good Progress
Our County Ecologist works to ena that important species and habita Unfortunately a conference on gre Biodiversity officer and colleagues Covid. This will be re-arranged to a As a collaborative piece of work w can support greener development	ts are protected. eener development which had and due to take place March align with any future restriction with the nature partnership we	d been organised by the a 2020 was postponed due to ons and may be moved online. e are exploring how else we
Action 18. Work in partnership to	limit the impact of INNs on	local biodiversity
No Progress	Some Progress	
The majority of invasive nonnative events were cancelled in 2020 as a Wales Wildlife Trust, some manag along the River Alyn) was underta	a result of Covid. As a result o gement for key projects (E.g. (	of collaboration with the North Controlling Himalayan balsam
The Biodiversity officer will be ma 2021 and continuing ongoing com sites are reported.		

#### Where we need to be in 2023:

- Climate action is led, coordinated and supported by a cross departmental group
- Improved levels of nature consideration and inclusion across all new development
- We are involved in effective partnership work to minimise the impact of invasive species

#### Objective 5 Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

Action 19	. Monitor and eva	luate ac	tion			
Action to	date has been rec	orded tl	hrough plan reporting	g and gra	ant funding reports.	

In 2021 we will begin to use interactive mapping to track and evidence change in addition to the above reports. This will allow a more effective level of post project monitoring.

#### Where we need to be in 2023:

- We will have a platform where we can share appropriate environmental data across the regional nature partnership.
- We will be able to evidence change and understand what the best action is and where and when to undertake it to focus resources we have.
- We will be using a spatial nature recovery action plan to inform action

#### Objective 6 Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

Action 20. Ensure sufficient capacity and resources to comply with the duty				
No Progress		Some Progress		Good Progress
	l provide tl			e its effectiveness, visibility d to support local authority
The Biodiversity officer ha 2020/2021 this has been of part time support to delive provides a short term stru	complimenter specific §	ted by additional gr grant funds. While t	ant func this is no	ling to contract temporary ot a long term solution it

#### Where we need to be in 2023:

- Have a strong and effective local and regional network which has well-coordinated and effective communication with national forums.
- We need a local structure which is effective, stable and supports our commitment to continued action to halt nature loss and creates a workplace where environmental consideration and nature based solutions are mainstream.

#### Short term grant funded projects:

<u>The majority of biodiversity work to fulfill the objectives are undertaken with external grant</u> <u>funding</u>. The level of funding obtained dictates the scope and impact of projects.

- Grant income for biodiversity projects (excluding Countryside service projects) for 2020/21 exceeded £220,000. This grant funding enabled the enhancement of green spaces for pollinators, orchard creation, tree planting, and installation of wildflower areas, meadow management and investment in machinery to manage the council estate for wildlife, including cut and collect machinery and a chemical free weed control system.
- Confirmed biodiversity grant funding for 2021/22 is approximately £232,000. Planned outputs for this grant funding include, continued temporary increase in hours for Biodiversity officer role, part time temporary support for the Biodiversity officer, creation of a total of 40 new natural assets across the county, including; High impact wildflowers in our Roadshow project, biodiversity enhancement along coastal sites in the Colour Our Coast project, fruit tree planting along active travel networks for our Fruit routes project, creation and enhancement of More meadows, a Townscape trees project to increase urban tree cover and improve understanding of their value and further investment in equipment to enable the management of natural assets into the future. The Biodiversity officer has also begun a collaborative project with Bumblebee conservation to further work with Calon wen farms in Flintshire and will be able to link with FCC tenant farms, offering support for farm management which benefits pollinators.

### Tree planting

- Our urban tree and woodland plan sets out targets to increase urban canopy cover. Following its adoption in 2018 a number of grant funds have been obtained to progress the plan. The natural environment team have undertaken a programme of tree planting each winter planting season since 2018 which complies with the requirements of funding obtained, supports work within partnerships and/or takes advantage of opportunities. Short term, specific funding and resources can dictate the scope of tree planting projects. Tree planting is also guided by the urban tree and woodland plan and the principle of the right tree in the right place. This avoids important natural habitats being planted with trees where it wouldn't be appropriate or inappropriate species being planted
- Following the adoption of the plan, the team contacted town and community councils to promote tree planting and attended a number of meetings when requested to explore planting options.
- When sites are suggested for planting an appropriate level of engagement is undertaken, site managers are consulted and underground utilities checked prior to planting which is usually undertaken by the natural environment team with support from Countryside services and where appropriate volunteers.

- The 2021 townscape trees project funding has been approved to contract external consultants to work with the natural environment team to plan and prepare tree planting sites. The grant will also fund the purchase of trees and contractor installation.
- In Flintshire, a large proportion of our tree planting uses heavy standards which are large trees, these have instant impact and are less prone to damage through vandalism.
- New grant funded mapping capability is enabling the mapping of new tree planting to evidence progress and will in due course be used to publicise action.
- Key urban planting schemes to date have taken place in Flint, Connah's Quay, Saltney and Mold with additional planting at a number of school sites including Nercwys, Nannerch, Broughton and Holywell.

#### Wildflower areas

- Wildflower work is ongoing between the Biodiversity officer and Streetscene staff, the work has a number of objectives; to create demonstration wildflower verges, to improve the management of naturally diverse verges and to manage identified areas of green space less, allowing the grass to grow in some areas where it is appropriate.
- This work links with grant funded projects and equipment and has also established a link with the FCC roundabout sponsorship scheme which will be explored further this year.
- This spring wildflower sites have included sites in Flint, Mold, Buckley, Penyffordd, Bagillt and Connah's Quay

### Partnership working

One element of funding supports Biodiversity officer coordination of the regional nature partnership. This is a collaboration between Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham and drives regional species monitoring projects, development and implementation of the nature recovery plan, a programme of specialist mapping for conservation, awareness and publicity, regional project facilitation. More about the nature partnership can be found at <a href="http://www.bionetwales.co.uk/">http://www.bionetwales.co.uk/</a> and the projects across north east wales here <a href="https://www.bionetwales.co.uk/projects/">https://www.bionetwales.co.uk/projects/</a>

### Other areas:

The Biodiversity officer is also involved in projects looking at potential to improve biodiversity value and carbon sequestration, invasive species control, integrated impact assessments and input into the environmental impact and considerations of internal projects. Green infrastructure projects and site landscaping for biodiversity. For example: the River Alyn Himalayan balsam Control project, Queensferry campus biodiversity enhancement opportunities and Shotton green infrastructure project.

# Detailed breakdown of Biodiversity Funding 20/22

#### Local Nature Partnerships Cymru: EnRaW funding 2019 – 2022

**Aim:** To make a long-term, sustainable difference to halting and reversing the decline of the natural environment, as detailed in the Nature Recovery Action Plan and Natural Resource Policy, through using SMNR principles to harness the collective resources of communities, volunteers, public bodies and businesses (beyond traditional audiences) to take informed, evidence-driven collaborative action within local authority or national park areas.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To establish a vibrant and effective all-Wales network of Local Nature Partnerships capable of contributing to Environment Act implementation at a local level through post creation, capacity-building, peer support and expert input at local and national level.

2. To develop local Nature Recovery Action Plans in all local authority/national park areas and support a broad range of actors to contribute to them in line with SMNR principles,

3. To deliver compelling evidence-based narratives about the value of nature recovery that resonate with a range of audiences and resources to help people, public bodies and businesses reap SMNR benefit themselves

4. To contribute to integration of NRAP, NRP and WFG Act objectives in policy development at local and national level (e.g. Well-Being Plans and Area Statements)

5. To widen participation and investment in the LNP Cymru project at local and national levels and to achieve a more secure and integrated funding base so that nature-based activities that also contribute to social, economic and cultural well-being can continue in future.

Grant fund	WG: Enabling I	Natural Resourc	es and Well-being Grant - £2.4m	
Funds	Staffing	£31,869.94	To fund biodiversity officer increase hours to	
received by		(over 3 years)	full time	
FCC	Project	£21,422.80	Project budget for Local Nature Partnership	
		(over 3 years)	events, publicity and promotion	
Outputs	Developed the regional nature partnership (Bionet) further working with			
20/21	Conwy CBC, Denbighshire CC and Wrexham CBC			
	Biodiversity Officer upskilling: Funded Budget management training, Project			
	management Prince2 Foundation and Practitioner			
	Greener development conference (Fully booked for 120 delegates in March			
	2020 – Postpor	ned due to Covid	)	
	Development of Nature Recovery Plan (Draft complete March 21)			
	Investment in ArcGIS mapping technology to enable mapping in the field,			
	improved action capture, evidence and monitoring (Link to Nature Recovery			
	Plan)			

	Creation of Nature Partnership website (Launch March 2021)
	Progress joint species monitoring projects
Planned	Progress action under Nature Recovery Plan
Outputs	
21/22	Re-schedule Greener development conference/Move online if necessary
	Make full use of mapping, website and improved social media platform
	Continue to develop and deliver regional projects
	Explore financial sustainability of the Nature Partnership

#### Local Places for Nature 2020-2022

#### Background

- 1. Our environment underpins our economic, social, cultural and individual well-being. We depend on nature to provide our food, clean water, air, energy and the raw materials for our industries. Pressure on nature comes from many sources, including urbanisation, agricultural management, pollution, climate change and woodland management. NRW's 'State of Natural Resources Report, 2016' identified that Wales did not meet the 2010 international and national biodiversity targets. The most recent State of Nature, 2019 report (a third sector partnership of nature conservation organisations) says that of the 3,902 species (for which sufficient data were available) over 600 (17%) were threatened with extinction from Wales. Another 73 (2%) have gone extinct already.
- 2. Welsh Government has put in place some of the strongest legislation in the world, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations Acts and the Environment Act. This legislation seeks to address some of the challenges we face in a more joined-up way, with duties on Ministers and public authorities.
- 3. While this legislation is starting to bear fruit, our ecosystems are under imminent threat and there is a need to take immediate action.
- 4. The First Minister's manifesto commits to development of an Environmental Growth Plan to halt and reverse the decline in nature and to grow the environment for the benefit of future generations. It focusses on a holistic approach to land, water, air, plants and animals. The concept of 'Stop, Grow, Change for Environmental Growth' explains what individuals, communities, businesses and public bodies can do to help environmental growth;
  - a. **Stop** the decline in nature: this could include a range of activities around reducing litter, stopping or amending existing mowing practices, reducing pesticides and fertilizers, bringing into better management neglected areas enhancing areas of habitat.
  - b. **Grow** nature: this could include growing a National Forest, greening the estate, improving connectivity of habitats, growing the circular economy, creating

allotments/community gardens, creating or increasing nature-rich urban green spaces and using area statements to drive forward activity locally.

- c. **Change** by removing barriers to, and encouraging, 'doing the right thing'. This could include, promoting active travel, inspiring interest and awareness of ecosystem resilience, etc.
- 5. 'Local Places for Nature'. Environmental Growth intends to enable people to see improvements to the natural environment 'from their doorsteps'. This includes community led activity, attending to the everyday places, demonstrating Environmental Growth 'on your doorstep' These may include new projects for community orchards, allotments, 'greening of public buildings', Tiny Forests, water fountains, habitat creation and interpretation, changing mowing practices etc.
- 6. The Local Places For Nature fund is a £5m capital fund in 2020-21 to deliver 'Environmental Growth on your doorstep' It is intended to be a 'bottom up' approach. It is not intended to be prescriptive about what communities may wish to pursue. A range of projects could be presented and supported under the following 4 areas of focus including;
  - a. **AIR:** *Improving air quality,* increasing carbon storage, reducing carbon emissions, removing pollutants.
  - b. **LAND & SEA:** *Improving land and sea;* improving soil quality, improving water quality, encouraging nature in fields, nature reserves, and public rights of way.
  - c. **PLANTS & ANIMALS:** Encouraging plants and animals; creating places for nature, allotments, developing ecological networks, encourage pollinators, wildlife passages, restoring habitat, planting, removing invasive and non-native species, street trees, gardens, hedgerows, roadside verges and green roofs, green corridors, parks, wildflower meadows, woodlands, cemeteries, urban green infrastructure
  - d. WATER: *Improving water quality and availability*; creating places for nature in local rivers, streams and ponds, improving water regulation and improving drainage, water fountains, minimising chemical fertilizers and pesticides etc, using green infrastructure to minimise flooding or improve water availability.
- 7. Requirements for all projects;
  - a. To restore and enhance nature.
  - b. Delivers environmental growth that can be seen 'from your doorsteps'. This means where people live, work, access public services, travel (so it includes roadside verges, roundabouts) and spend their leisure time (e.g. public open spaces). The proposals also include work to underpin the FM's commitment on 'doing the small things'.
  - c. Deliver a capital asset that has a sustainable management plan for future maintenance.
  - d. It will also be important for all projects to show to an appropriate extent that the activity:

- Is small-scale, local activity, designed and led by communities. Enables participation; helping people to experience and value nature, leading to individual and community action to protect and enhance nature.
- Is focused on, or will benefit residents of, areas of deprivation.
- e. Demonstrates multiple benefits; spanning environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being.

Grant fund WG: Local P	WG: Local Places for Nature 2020/21			
Grant stream	Funds	Outputs		
	received			
Greening the public estate	£40,135	Investment in Foamstream chemical free		
		weed control system – housed at Alltami for		
		cross dept use. Foamstream system has		
		reduced the use of chemical weed control, is		
		multi-use has also been used for park		
		cleaning and will be used in preparation for		
		wildflower areas and future management of		
	672.265	these areas.		
Environmental growth	£72,365	Creation of 14 capital assets for nature and investment in maintenance equipment. New		
		meadows, orchards, exemplar places for		
		pollinators and 2 Bank Commander 2 wheel		
		tractors (1 Streetscene, 1 Countryside) to		
		enable grassland management and ground		
		preparation for wildflowers)		
LP4N Capital Underspend	£38,850	Biodiversity enhancements at greenspaces in		
		Flint – Supporting the draft Flint Green		
		infrastructure plan (Tree planting and		
		wildflower areas at Cornist Park and		
		Swinchiard Recreational ground)		
Preparatory Grant	£65,000	Purchase of grass management equipment:		
		Grillo Cut and collect machinery for		
		Streetscene, Tractor and Ryetec for meadow		
		management in Countryside to support		
Revenue Grant	5,000	delivery of objectives in 2021/22 LP4N bid. To support delivery Q3/4: Funded relief		
Nevenue Grant	5,000	ranger support 1 day per week Nov 20 –		
		March 21		
Outcomes Support deli	very of ECC Sect	6 Duty (and related Council plan action), FCC		
	•	n and Environment priority in FCC Wellbeing		
plan.				

Investment in equipment to support improved council estate management for biodiversity and wellbeing.
 Creation of natural community assets improving local biodiversity value and community connection with nature.
 Funding and increased capacity has enabled improved internal cross departmental working and enhanced regional working.

Grant fund WG: Local Plac	Grant fund WG: Local Places for Nature 2021/22			
Grant stream	Funds approved	Planned Outputs		
Local Places for Nature (Greening the public estate and Environmental Growth Combined at Biodiversity officer request)	£112,437.50 (£8,437.50 project office)	<ul> <li>Colour Our County Project: 4 Work areas outlined below to create 40 natural assets. It will also purchase additional equipment to support future maintenance of the assets.</li> <li>Work will support delivery of S6 duty, Urban tree and woodland plan and Council plan.</li> <li>Colour our coast: Tree and shrub planting, wildflower area creation in publically accessible spaces in the more deprived coastal communities. (10 sites min.)</li> <li>Roadshow: High impact wildflowers on our transport network (15 sites min.)</li> <li>Fruit routes: Fruiting tree and shrub planting along our active travel routes (10 sites min.)</li> <li>More meadows: Meadow enhancement or creation at publically accessible sites (5 sites min.)</li> </ul>		
Challenge Fund	£100,000 (£10,000 project office)	<ul> <li>Townscape trees: Tree planting across our settlements. The grant will specifically fund:</li> <li>1.Consultant work to undertake;</li> <li>Site scoping (Refer to tree and woodland plan and deprivation index)</li> <li>Site assessments, Utilities searches and permissions,</li> <li>Design Drawings, Recommendations for tree species, form and sizes for each location, Stakeholder liaison,</li> <li>Works specification for each site,</li> <li>Details of any traffic management required for the sites and keeping professional stakeholders (e.g.</li> </ul>		

		<ul> <li>highway engineers) appraised of the developing schemes.</li> <li>Brief 5 year maintenance requirements.</li> <li>2.Tree purchase and accessories</li> <li>3.Contractor planting (Winter 21/22)</li> <li>4. Mapping of all planting. It will provide a clear picture of project output and local benefit.</li> <li>Work will progress Urban tree and Woodland plan, support carbon reduction action and implement S6 duty.</li> </ul>
Revenue Fund	£20,000	Continued support for the Biodiversity Officer from Relief ranger (1 day per week) Contracted support from North Wales Wildlife Trust (1 day per week) Collaborative project with WCBC, Bumblebee conservation and Calon wen farms (Including work with Council tenant farms where possible)