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PART I

VISION

To provide a strategic framework for the sustainable management and development of the countryside in Bridgend County Borough within the context of Local Agenda 21.

AIMS

1. To conserve and enhance the biological diversity of the County Borough;
2. To conserve and enhance the landscape of the County Borough;

3. To improve and promote sustainable forms of access to the countryside of the County Borough;
4. To improve and promote recreational opportunities in the countryside of the County Borough;
5. To promote awareness of and participation in environmental and countryside issues;
6. To promote the viability and vitality of countryside communities;
7. To promote a partnership approach with various agencies in implementing the Countryside Strategy;
8. To provide a framework for the practical implementation of planning, transportation and environmental policies of the County Borough.

PART II

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Countryside Strategy (and accompanying Integrated Action Programme) for Bridgend County Borough represent a strategic framework for the sustainable development and management of the countryside and urban green spaces, set within the context of Local Agenda 21. It has been prepared to complement national advice, the development plan process and existing non-statutory documents. Furthermore, the Countryside Strategy seeks to adopt a partnership approach, involving all agencies with an interest in the countryside.

1.2 Instrumental to the formulation of this Strategy is the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) who have provided grant aid. Also as a means of expediting the preparation of countryside strategies across Wales, CCW has prepared advisory documents entitled Guidelines for the production of countryside strategies and integrated action programmes and The future of the countryside in Wales after local government reorganisation which set out the general aims, scope and content that strategies could incorporate. Additionally CCW has provided funding for initiatives arising from strategies and contained within Integrated Action Programmes.

1.3 The Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme for Bridgend County Borough, was approved for adoption by Council on 13 May 1998. This adopted document was also approved by Members at the Highways, Planning and Transportation Committee 17 June 1998 as a piece of Supplementary Planning Guidance, running in parallel with the development of Bridgend County Borough's Unitary Development Plan. It was realised after adoption that the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action programme have differing time scales. Consequently the Highways, Planning and Transportation Committee 31 March 1999 approved the separation of these documents.

1.4 The following represents a first revision to the adopted Countryside Strategy for Bridgend County Borough, resulting from County Borough-wide consultation in December 2000, policy updates and other changes. In the course of this consultation over 100 organisations and individuals were sent a copy of the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme. Comments made as a result of this consultation process are set out in a Report of Consultations Document .

2. COUNTRYSIDE AND LANDSCAPE OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH

2.1 The development plan describes 'countryside' as the area outside settlement boundaries. Within Bridgend County Borough this covers an area of varied landscape with fine examples of natural beauty ranging from the exposed tops of the coalfield plateau, through upland and lowland valley landscapes and coastal plateau, to the Heritage coastline with its dunes. This is interspersed with woodlands, moorlands and river valleys and constitutes a rich natural and semi-natural environment. Bridgend County Borough also contains an equally varied man-made environment comprising iron age forts, Norman castles, Tudor great houses, Victorian towns and public buildings, as well as significant areas of urban fringe and urban

green spaces. The Strategy includes a consideration of these man made features and landscapes, but does not cover individual buildings of historic or architectural interest within built up areas.

2.2 It is important to note the role of agriculture in shaping the Bridgend countryside. Large tracts of the Bridgend countryside are contained on farm holdings, and this industry has an important contribution to make in terms of landscape and biodiversity enhancement.

2.3 Whilst the landscape and other elements reinforce Bridgend County Borough's local distinctiveness, it is the intention of this Strategy not only to maintain and enhance these natural and semi-natural elements, but also the man-made features/areas of urban green spaces. In this way the entire identity of the County Borough is maintained, whether in terms of biodiversity, landscape or cultural heritage.

3. LOCAL AGENDA 21

3.1 At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or 'Earth Summit' held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 four matters of international importance were discussed namely, Climate Change, Biodiversity, Forest Principles and Sustainable Development.

3.2 The most significant outcome of the summit was when 179 world leaders, including the UK signed and ratified the international action plan to promote sustainable development, entitled Agenda 21 (short for An Agenda for the 21st Century). The purpose of a Local Agenda 21 strategy is to produce comprehensive policies to promote sustainable development and build partnerships between local authorities and other sectors to achieve them.

3.3 Sustainable development is a concept with many definitions but is widely defined as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

The Rio + 10 Conference is to be held in Johannesburg in 2002. This conference will seek to assess the world-wide progress of promoting sustainable development principles, since the 1992 Rio Summit.

4. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

4.1 National guidance has indicated on a number of occasions not only the need to take environmental concerns into account, but also to promote sustainable development. In particular in 1990, the Government published its White Paper entitled This Common Inheritance, which highlighted the need for local government and other agencies to give full weight to the environment in their decisions and policy preparation.

4.2 Following the Rio Summit UK local authorities were therefore in a position to 'think globally and act locally' to help lead the way in promoting Local Agenda 21. This was supported in 1994 by the Government publication Sustainable Development in the UK and the Prime Minister at the UN General Assembly Special Session on the Environment (Earth Summit II) held in New York 1997, where he stated that "I want all local authorities in the UK to adopt Local Agenda 21 strategies by the year 2000." Further guidance, Sustainable local communities for the 21st Century – Why and how to prepare an effective Local Agenda 21 strategy, was launched by the Deputy Prime Minister on 14th January 1998 in London and by The Secretary of State for Wales in Cardiff on January 26th 1998.

4.3 Sites that are considered to be of particular importance in terms of nature conservation and landscape are protected by national guidance and statutes, using specific designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Heritage Coast, National and Local Nature Reserves. Buildings and sites of architectural or historic importance are protected through being designated Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, or Conservation Areas.

4.4 In 1996 the Welsh Office produced the White Paper A Working Countryside for Wales, which points the way for the future of rural Wales. It reviews Government policies, takes into account a wide ranging

consultation exercise and sets out the Government's vision for rural Wales. The report and policy statements emphasise the following priorities: to support local communities in the achievement of their aspirations for a good quality of life; to promote sustainable economic development through competitive enterprise; and to conserve and improve the environment, with special care for biodiversity. In effect, the Bridgend County Borough Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme seeks to implement the priorities of this White Paper in conjunction with existing and proposed guidance at both a national and local level. A review was undertaken in 1997 and maintained the Government's commitment to promoting sustainable principles in rural areas of Wales.

4.5 The Welsh Office also published in 1996 Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy consolidating existing guidance relating to land use issues for Wales. This document was updated in 2002 by Planning Policy Wales. This further integrated sustainable development into the land use planning system. Sustainable development is identified as a general principle underpinning the advice which in terms of land use planning aspires to reconcile development with the environment. Based on this principle, the guidance provides not only a framework for the preparation of development plans, but also for the Countryside Strategy.

4.6 The advent of the National Assembly of Wales in September 1998 also saw introduction of a duty under section 121 of the Government of Wales Act (1998) to promote sustainable development, one of only two governments in Europe that have such a constitutional duty. In order to deliver this, a Sustainable Development Unit has been set up, within the National Assembly. The Unit has prepared a sustainable development scheme which includes a framework for setting out what the Assembly intends to do by when and how progress will be measured. This was published in November 2000 following extensive consultation and is entitled A Sustainable Wales - Learning to Live Differently.

4.7 The most recent piece of legislation that will affect the on-going development of the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme is the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). This Act has three main components, namely: Part I Access to the Countryside (i.e. Open Countryside), Part II Public Rights of Way and Road Traffic; and Part III Nature conservation and Wildlife Protection. It is clear from the Act that the Government expects countryside agencies to play a major part in delivering the Act. This includes the provision of wardening services, adequate means of access, the provision of countryside access forums and greater protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Act provides further opportunities for joint working and partnership initiatives. However, this may be borne out of necessity since the implementation of this Act places greater financial demands on countryside agencies.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN (EDAP)

5.1 The Development Plan for Bridgend County Borough comprises the Ogwr Borough Local Plan, Mid Glamorgan Replacement Structure Plan and the Mineral Local Plan for Limestone Quarrying in Mid Glamorgan (as they relate to Bridgend County Borough). The Ogwr Borough Local Plan was adopted in April 1995, the Mid Glamorgan Replacement Structure Plan was adopted on the 19 March 1997 and the Mineral Local Plan for Limestone Quarrying on the 30 April 1997. All three plans are to be replaced by the new Unitary Development Plan (UDP), a deposit version of which has recently been prepared.

5.2 Throughout the writing of the UDP there has been an ongoing sustainability appraisal of the policies by independent consultants, Baker Associates. Planning Guidance (Wales) further suggests that environmental considerations should be a part of policy appraisal throughout plan preparation. It states that ...a systematic sustainability appraisal is the most effective way for of ensuring that the implications of an emerging UDP are considered as an integral part of its preparation.... Each stage of the preparation process has been appraised to assess the degree to which the policies meet the objectives of sustainable development.

5.3 The Local Government and Housing Act of 1989 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to prepare, consult upon and make available a document that sets out any proposals that they may have for the promotion of economic development in their area. This is known as an Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP). The Bridgend EDAP is now included within the Bridgend County Borough Business Plan 2002/03 and a draft version of this document has been prepared. Its mission statement looks "To improve broaden the economic base of the County Borough of Bridgend, in order to ensure that good quality employment opportunities are available to its residents." The strategic context of the EDAP is set by the document A

Sustainable Economic Regeneration Strategy for Bridgend County Borough (also see paragraph 6.2). This places environmental sustainability and partnership working at the heart of economic development and economic regeneration. One of the key objectives in the EDAP is to ensure activities are consistent with Local Agenda 21 achieving sustainable development.

6. OTHER NON-STATUTORY PLANS

6.1 Bridgend County Borough has a number of relevant non-statutory documents that are at varying stages of completion and are listed in bibliography to this document. These strategies cover a wide remit, including landscape improvements, tourism, recreation and economic development. These provide an important input to the Countryside Strategy as they highlight particular issues, which need to be addressed. The Countryside Strategy will also need to take account of area regeneration strategies and identify ways of integrating its aims and objectives into these individual strategies.

6.2 Bridgend's inclusion within in the West Wales and the Valleys Objective 1 area has lead to the production of A Sustainable Economic Regeneration Strategy for Bridgend County Borough. This document sets out the proposed long-term vision for the future development of Bridgend County Borough and provides a context for progressing Objective 1 bids.

6.3 It has a number of references that are relevant to the Countryside Strategy including an overarching strategic objective that seeks to conserve and enhance environmental assets, ensuring that the potential adverse environmental impacts of growth are considered and mitigated where possible. Indicators include the proportion of waste re-used or recycled and greenfield land take. In light of Bridgend's Objective 1 status and the production of A Sustainable Economic Regeneration Strategy for Bridgend County Borough, a number of bids have been prepared for the area, including the development of a coastal zone management service.

7. PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

7.1 Intrinsic to the development of all the above plans and strategies is wide public consultation. CCW's advice indicates the need to encourage a partnership approach when preparing countryside strategies which should include input from national, regional, local, voluntary organisations, other interested parties and members of the public. The 1st Review of the Countryside Strategy has been made available for consultation at each exhibition venue of the Pre-deposit UDP and its Members' Seminars. Thus providing the Countryside Strategy with greater future standing as Supplementary Planning Guidance. In addition, over two hundred organisations and individuals have been contacted as part of the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme consultation process. Both documents have been advertised in schools, recreation centres and the regional press. Furthermore they have been placed in libraries throughout the County Borough for inspection.

7.2 Bridgend County Borough Council is already involved in implementing a number of projects, often in partnership with other organisations including CCW, the Environment Agency Wales, the Welsh Development Agency, Groundwork Bridgend, Ramblers Association and Glamorgan Wildlife Trust. These projects will form a useful basis for developing partnerships, Including both the public and private sector as a means of promoting sustainable development.

7.3 In progressing the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme other key partners will also be identified and include such organisations as community councils, adjacent unitary authorities, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, CSV Wales and the Prince's Trust Cymru.

8. STRUCTURE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE STRATEGY

8.1 The CCW advice recommends that the Strategy covers a period of five years and is subject to review every three years and that the Strategy sets out a strategic framework for the sustainable management for the countryside. The Countryside Strategy is implemented via projects contained in the accompanying Integrated Action Programme reviewed annually and forms the basis of a bidding document for grant aid for specific projects.

8.2 Clearly the progression (and success) of the Countryside Strategy to a large extent depends upon the ability to secure adequate financial resources. CCW has shown the way ahead by providing the grant aid and advice as described above in paragraph 1.2. The success of the Countryside Strategy and Local Agenda 21 are also dependent upon their ability to influence and set policies outside the land use planning process. These include such areas as education, transportation, highways, energy efficiency, land ownership and agriculture.

8.3 The Strategy for Bridgend County Borough comprises five core topic areas which will be expanded upon to provide a series of sub topics. The five core topic areas are:

Nature Conservation

Access and Recreation

Landscape Conservation and Enhancement

Environmental Awareness and Education

Economy and Land Management

8.4 The issues relating to each of the core and sub topic areas are outlined. To develop these issues, a number of general objectives are identified and form the basis of the Integrated Action Programme.

8.5 The Integrated Action Programme sets out a series of projects identifying partners, setting out timetables and where possible any additional information. Partners names are given in an abbreviated format and should be cross-referenced with the list of key partners and consultees contained in the Report of Consultations document where their names are given in full. There are a number of common issues that are relevant to some or all of the core topic areas. These are outlined and discussed in Section 9.

9. COMMON ISSUES

9.1 Staffing and other Resources

9.1.1 Since many of the actions generated from the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme will be project based, staffing and resources, in particular funding dedicated to a given initiative, will need to be identified. This is supported by the CCW's advice. In the Integrated Action Programme it is intended that a matrix of partners are identified in relation to each of the projects, alongside the projects' costing, timetable and monitoring process.

9.2 Pollution

9.2.1 It is important that an integrated approach to pollution control is taken in the countryside, inclusive of noise, air, land and water. The Environment Agency Wales has a wide responsibility for pollution monitoring and waste management as described in their Citizen's Charter (pages 7-9). The traffic related problems of vehicle congestion and emissions from industry, air pollution and associated respiratory complaints are well rehearsed. Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities to carry out periodic reviews of air quality in designate Air Quality Management Areas wherever required. Local authorities must also ensure that noise-creating development does not cause an unacceptable degree of disturbance to others. Design initiatives will be important here to mitigate any problems. Land contamination and waste management issues will also be of relevance to pollution abatement in the countryside. The guidance relating to the Road Traffic Reduction Act, recently introduced, will have to be carefully considered in relation to transport targets mileage reduction and improving air quality.

9.3 Waste Management

9.3.1 A perfectly sustainable society would not generate any waste or at least that which could not be re-used in one form or another. Such a visionary approach may constitute a long-term aim, but is some distance away from present day realities. There is no 'quick fix' solution to society's waste problems. In this case we must learn to manage waste in the most sustainable way, attempting to reduce it as much as practicable. To this end the Government produced Making Waste Work: A strategy for sustainable waste management in England and Wales, in 1995. This document sets out a global policy framework for the management of waste and considers amongst other issues, countryside, landfill, lorry usage, pollution and fly tipping.

9.3.2 This initiated the Waste Minimisation Act (1998), which allows councils to promote alternatives to wasteful products. The Government is also producing guidance on implementation of the Act. The Government's new Waste Strategy 2000 for England and Wales Part 1 and 2 features the best local authority actions on this issue. The Strategy opens the way to planned and cost effective waste reduction. The main mechanisms in this Strategy for addressing actual waste reduction are targeted at consumers. It also proposes mandatory recycling targets, and encourages local authorities to work with community businesses to achieve these targets.

BCBC has recently signed up to a partnership arrangement with Neath Port Talbot CBC to develop a materials recycling and energy centre at Crymlyn Burrows near Swansea. Arising out of this partnership are issues associated with the level of commitment the Council should make in respect of other future waste management schemes, which need to be considered.

9.4 Data Collection

9.4.1 A comprehensive database of land use issues including geology, biodiversity, listed buildings, etc. assists in identifying where resources need to be channelled. Additionally, a comprehensive database will give a realistic overview of the opportunities and constraints specific to Bridgend County Borough. This would facilitate a State of the Environment report and would have implications on future policy development. Currently Bridgend County Borough Council in partnership with Caerphilly C.B.C and Rhondda Cynon Taff C.B.C, is developing a Geographical Information System (GIS) based landscape assessment tool known as 'Landmap', that has been funded by CCW. There is also a need to support the development of a Biological Records Centre for Bridgend, comprising a partnership of organisations already actively involved in biological recording.

9.5 Management and Aftercare

9.5.1 The long-term management and maintenance of projects in the Integrated Action Programme needs to be considered at the initial stages. Where possible organisations will be identified to carry out this ongoing work as part of the "monitoring" process mentioned above in Staffing and Other Resources. One possible way of ensuring that monies are set aside for this purpose is to establish a trust fund using a percentage of the initial capital funding for the project.

10. MECHANISMS

10.1 In progressing the Countryside Strategy forward to the implementation stage a number of mechanisms need to be identified. Examples of some are given below, and they should be considered in conjunction with those in other non-statutory documents, in particular Landscapes Working for Bridgend County Borough.

10.2 Local Agenda 21

10.2.1 The Council as a major player in the local economy can have a strong influence on important aspects of the environment and quality of life of people living in the area. The Authority has therefore appointed a Local Agenda 21 Officer, established a corporate working party and adopted an Environmental and Sustainable Development Policy. A Framework for Action: 21 Steps towards Local Agenda 21 in the County Borough was also approved in February 1999.

10.2.2 This document is being revised and updated in light of policy changes including Best Value and the Community Planning Process. An environmental and sustainability checklist has also been included in the Best Value Performance Reviews Toolkit, together with a menu of recommended actions to improve environmental sustainability performance. Consistent with these aims, work with local communities, businesses and other organisations will also be adopting the principles of the Environmental and Sustainable Development Policy. In this way, in house action and community involvement has together formed the basis of Building a Better Bridgend County Borough – The Local Agenda 21 Strategy approved in November 2000 and published in December 2000.

10.3 Countryside Management including the Coastal Zone

10.3.1 A countryside management service is able to provide an administrative structure and human resource for an integrated service of biodiversity conservation and countryside management, as already exemplified in the County Borough by the Kenfig National Nature Reserve's remit to area and outreach management. The countryside management service will be structured in a way that complements environmental planning objectives such as implementation of Local Agenda 21, and will involve community groups and volunteers assisting, for example, with biological monitoring, nature reserve management tasks and creative conservation initiatives. Volunteers can supplement the core resource of countryside management service staff. Operation of the countryside management service will include the provision of advice on environmental enhancement to landowners, and guidance on sources of funding.

10.3.2 The development of a Biodiversity Action Plan (considered in the Nature Conservation section of this Strategy) will need to be integrated into such a framework for wider countryside management, and would assist the production of a countryside management plan in providing a prioritised framework of biodiversity conservation objectives. The countryside management service could also include a commitment to the establishment of a centralised biological recording centre for the Bridgend County Borough as mentioned earlier in the Data Collection section (paragraph 9.4.1).

10.3.3 The 'coastal zone' as defined in the Deposit Unitary Development Plan for Bridgend County Borough (set out in accordance with Planning Policy Wales (2002) (Section 5 refers) and Technical Advice Note (Wales) 14 – Coastal Planning (1998)) stretches 13 kilometres from the estuary at the River Ogmore to the River Kenfig. The coastal zone's seaward boundary is defined by the mean low water mark. On the landward side it is defined by a line on the proposals map that includes those undeveloped areas and areas that have a strong maritime influence.

10.3.4 The co-ordination of coastal planning with neighbouring authorities is in part achieved through the Swansea Bay Shoreline Management Plan (2001) which has been developed to provide a framework for the development of sustainable coastal defence policies, strategies schemes and will be integrated within broader coastal zone management initiatives.

10.3.5 The importance of the Bridgend coastal zone in terms of its biodiversity, recreational and tourism value has long been recognised on both a local, national and international level. For this reason an Objective 1 bid for a Coastal Zone Management Service has been submitted to the National Assembly of Wales to ensure that the Bridgend County Borough coastline is utilised sustainably for both existing and future generations.

10.3.6 The Environment Agency Wales' 'Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP) for Neath, Port Talbot and Bridgend 2000 – 2005', will both inform, and be informed by, this Countryside Strategy and the Integrated Action Programme. The LEAP, Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme have been cross-referenced and appropriate fora will discuss the development of shared policies for some issues e.g. Japanese Knotweed.

10.4 Species and Habitat Management Plans

10.4.1 Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report published in 1995 identifies 400 species which are either globally threatened or which are rapidly declining in the UK. National Action Plans have been prepared for 116 of these, with the rest being prepared during the next three years. 'Habitat statements' have been prepared for all 'broad habitat types' occurring in the UK, to inform national and local policy and

action. These include urban habitats as well as those generally associated with 'countryside'. Within these 'broad habitat types' are 38 'key habitats', which have been identified as requiring priority action. Action plans have been prepared for 14 key habitats and plans for the remainder are to be prepared within the next three years.

10.4.2 The Steering Group Report makes clear that local authorities have a key role to play in ensuring that biodiversity conservation is implemented in the UK. They are expected to take the lead in promoting Local Biodiversity Action Plans, which is the mechanism proposed for local action. The report states that if the UK Action Plan is to be implemented successfully, it requires some means of ensuring that the actions needed at the national level are undertaken in an integrated manner and that national targets are translated into effective action at the local level. Local Biodiversity Action Plans should include targets which reflect the values of local people and which are based on the range of local conditions and therefore promote local distinctiveness. Local Biodiversity Action Plans are seen as providing the ecological element of Local Agenda 21.

10.4.3 Support and development of the concept of species and habitat action plans at the local level will assist in the delivery of national targets for nature conservation. Such plans would identify targets and action for important species and habitats, which can be used to help integrate specific action into the work of the County Borough Council.

10.4.4 There are a number of species and habitats of European significance within the Bridgend County Borough area. Some species, such as the Fen Orchid and the liverwort are at present known to be present only at Kenfig and Merthyr Mawr dune-systems, both statutory designated sites that are being managed for such ecological features. Recent research has established that Kenfig Pool is the most important site for the Aquatic Warbler in Wales. It is therefore clear that Bridgend County Borough is already contributing to the conservation of biodiversity through its commitment to these statutory sites.

10.4.5 In contrast, other species, such as Otter, Dormouse and the fritillary butterflies are examples of species that generally occur outside of statutory designated sites. In the case of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly, its habitat is 'purple moor grass and rush pasture', a 'key habitat' with a 'costed action plan' prepared.

This habitat is increasingly fragmented and lost to agricultural improvements and development, and the Species Action Plan encourages 'favourable management of all known sites with large and medium populations, and of associated occupied or potential sites, to encourage the formation of site networks'. The conservation of such species can be delivered through the identification and protection of non-statutory sites of substantive nature conservation interest (SINCs). An updated database of sites is held by the Environment Section of the Planning Department and is cross-referenced to Policy EV15 in the adopted Ogwr Borough Local Plan and Policy EV19 of the Deposit UDP. Their inclusion is based on selection by clear and rigorous criteria.

10.4.6 It can therefore be seen that in a general sense, and in some particular cases, the objectives and targets within the Steering Group Report are already built into the County Borough Council's range of activities.

10.5 Agri-Environment and Grant Aid Schemes

10.5.1 A number of grant aid schemes are available including those relating to agriculture, woodlands, countryside access, tourism and rural business. These schemes could assist the Strategy achieving its aim of promoting sustainable development, particularly for the fact that several provide on-going grant aid over a number of years. The most prominent agri-environment scheme is 'Tir Gofal' run by the National Assembly of Wales and CCW and which supersedes initiatives such as Tir Cymen and the Habitat Scheme.

10.5.2 It is a whole farm initiative that offers farmers incentives to manage their land in environmentally beneficial ways. Also the Forestry Commission gives advice and grant aid in the support of woodland management. A number of the woodland grant schemes currently operate within the County Borough.

10.5.3 The importance of European funding for the agricultural sector cannot be under-estimated as it has bolstered this industry for the last twenty five years or so, primarily by way of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The financial aid that Welsh farmers receive through the CAP is administered through the National Assembly of Wales. Similarly European funding in the form of Objective 1 which covers the whole of the county borough and Objective 2 funding which applies to certain areas of the county borough are administered through the Assembly. Both of which can be applied to support Bridgend's rural economy. In addition to EU funding for agriculture and agri-environment schemes, the National Assembly for Wales, Welsh Development Agency, Wales Tourist Board, Millennium Commission and Heritage Lottery Fund help fund environmental projects outside the agricultural sector. Given the general lack of funding available locally, accessing these external funds is crucial in delivering many of the Countryside Strategy's aims.

10.5.4 Several voluntary sector organisations such as Environment Wales and The Princes Trust Cymru administer their own grant aid schemes. Others administer grants on behalf of private sector companies and include schemes and campaigns such as the 'Shell Better Britain Campaign' and sponsorship through the 'Green-IT' scheme.

10.6 Land Use Planning

10.6.1 The principal purpose of the development plan is to put forward a co-ordinated land use programme at the local level for a fifteen-year period. The predominant issue concerning land use policies is the need to reconcile economic objectives and environmental concerns. In essence, the Countryside Strategy uses this policy base to progress practical initiatives in the countryside to the implementation stage. Development Control has an important role in ensuring that design guidelines are adhered to and initiatives are consistent with the policies of the development plan. Furthermore, the development of model conditions for nature conservation and landscape, and where appropriate the use of Section 106 Agreements, can assist in the development of both the aims of the Countryside Strategy and projects contained in the Integrated Action Programme. These objectives have been addressed through policies in the Deposit UDP.

10.7 Transport Planning

10.7.1 Effective day-to-day and long-term transport planning at the local level, is fundamental to the social and economic well being of the County Borough and its citizens. Transport planning should not be considered in isolation, but integrated with other disciplines into the development plan process.

10.7.2 For example, an intent to provide cycling and walking facilities in all new schemes and to separate these from vehicular traffic should be considered wherever possible. Following recent government guidance (Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy) and a change in public and professional perceptions, real opportunities are emerging to enable transport planning to support sustainable land-use planning, whether through small-scale local initiatives or larger strategic projects. The Road Traffic Reduction Act emphasises this changed approach. Existing development plan policies already go some way to meeting these objectives. A carefully considered approach to transportation issues will enhance the Countryside Strategy by, amongst other things, encouraging the use of the most sustainable mode of transport wherever possible.

10.7.3 Where practicable, due regard needs to be given to nature conservation issues during the design and construction of necessary highway schemes. Where conflict may occur, or where particularly important habitats and or species may be affected by transportation proposals, it is especially important that mitigation measures such as translocation are taken. It is important to recognise that transportation and nature conservation issues are linked and it has been shown that even major highway schemes can have a positive effect on the environment by providing opportunities for new habitat creation. Greater care and attention to the natural environment is now becoming a key element in transportation planning and will form an important role in transportation issues in the UDP.

10.8 Forums, Working Groups, etc.

10.8.1 The on-going momentum and development of the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme is set to be progressed through a number of fora and working groups. For example the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group and Access and Recreation management Group have been

established. Membership of these fora and groups are structured so that as wide as possible range of views can and will be incorporated. The establishment of such groups and Forums are listed projects of the draft Integrated Action Programme.

10.8.2 The Countryside Strategy is also informed and progressed through the WDA Environment Programme, Greening the Valleys, and Landscapes Working for Bridgend County Borough.

PART III

11. NATURE CONSERVATION

11.1 A healthy environment is important to everyone; it is essential for our well being and our quality of life. A healthy environment is one of the main goals of sustainable development, and nature conservation is a major part of this process.

11.2 At the United Nations 'Earth Summit' held in 1992, 153 world leaders, including the UK, signed the Convention on Biological Diversity, essentially a commitment to conserving and sustaining biological diversity. The 1995 Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan reiterates the Government's pledge not only to conserve but also to enhance biodiversity. The need for this commitment is unquestionable: the Countryside Survey, the Government's own monitoring project, has revealed many examples of loss of habitats and species diversity in the British countryside since the 1980s.

11.3 Biodiversity: species and habitats

11.3.1 Biodiversity is the variety and richness of life forms. The term encompasses the whole of life: genetic variation, species variation and ecosystem variation. It covers everything from algae to elephants, bacteria to blue whales. It is a term that, since the signing of the Biodiversity Convention, has rapidly moved from the realms of science into the public and political arena, and which has stimulated an increased level of interest in nature conservation. It has also stimulated the development of an entirely new discipline to nature conservation, which involves clear determination of priorities and the establishment of targets to guide and monitor action.

11.3.2 Conserving biodiversity is not just about rare and threatened species and habitats, although Bridgend has examples of both. All wildlife lives in a delicately balanced environment, which is easily upset by the loss of species or habitats. The quality of our lives is intimately bound up with maintaining biodiversity.

11.3.3 The intricate network of ecosystems, habitats and species comprising biodiversity provides the support systems that sustain human existence. It provides many of the essentials of life - our oxygen, water, food, clothing and relaxation. The value of biodiversity extends from the spiritual benefits to be gained from contact with nature, to the economic potential of wild species for new sources of food or medicines. This includes the potential for new products being produced through advances in biotechnology.

11.3.4 In a local context, biodiversity has particular importance in giving a distinctive character to an area whether it is a grassland, estuary, woodland or mountain. Even in towns and cities oases of wildlife habitat make an important contribution to the quality of life.

11.4 Habitats

11.4.1 Species occur together in communities to form habitats and ecosystems. If habitats important for biodiversity can be conserved, then thousands of different species will benefit - perhaps even ones not yet recorded. Several habitats in Bridgend County Borough are internationally important, representing a large proportion of the European resource, for example purple moor-grass and rush pasture, reedbeds, and coastal sand dunes. The total areas of many habitats important for biodiversity in Bridgend County Borough are now very small. Compared with intensively farmed areas, they are rare.

11.4.2 The biodiversity of Bridgend County Borough can be characterised at the broad scale as being dependant upon scarce and highly fragmented patches of natural and semi-natural habitat. Likewise, many important species are widely dispersed and individual populations are often isolated from each other. This applies to rural and urban areas.

11.4.3 Only a relatively small area of the County Borough's land surface is specifically protected against damage or loss with a view to conserving rare habitats and the species they support. However much wider areas will need appropriate management, through agri-environment type schemes, in order to conserve and enhance the whole biodiversity resource of the County Borough.

11.4.4 Among its objectives and targets, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (on page 168) states that 'the fragmentation or isolation of key habitats is to be avoided and wherever practicable past fragmentation is to be reversed'. It is an explicit target in the UK Action Plan to increase, expand and extend the area, range, population size, occurrence and distribution of many priority habitats and species in the countryside. Fragmentation is a force acting contrary to these targets, often resulting in species extinction, changes in community composition, reduced genetic diversity, exposure to pollution and physical disturbance from neighbouring external activities. This leads to reduced opportunities for species dispersal and hence the increased isolation of some habitats and their constituent plants and animals. Where wildlife-rich sites are fragmented and isolated, serious damage can be caused by relatively local events, such as fire, pollution or development.

11.4.5 Reversing fragmentation and improving the connectivity of wildlife habitats does not just involve SSSIs, but includes all patches of natural or semi-natural habitat. Remaining habitat fragments, together with landscape features that provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping-stones from one habitat to another, are particularly important in countering the adverse effects associated with fragmentation. They help to form the local ecological network necessary to ensure the maintenance of the current range and diversity of our flora, fauna, geological and landform features and the survival of important species

11.4.6 Throughout the countryside and in urban areas, these habitat fragments and 'connecting' landscape features often provide the greatest opportunities for species migration. These features also act as a source and as a means for the spread and dispersal of habitats and species into new areas. This movement, within and between landscapes, then enables genetic exchange and variation, which is so crucial to the overall health, vigour, adaptability and survival of wild plants and animals

11.5 Species

11.5.1 All species have an intrinsic value in their own right in forming the biological diversity of an area. Some are exploited for human needs such as food, biological pest control and medicine, while others have scientific and cultural importance. Yet many species in Bridgend County Borough have undergone massive declines and some, such as marsh fritillary, merlin and medicinal leech are in danger of disappearing altogether. While most species can be conserved through habitat protection and management, others require special attention. These are species that survive in only a few isolated sites or perhaps are widespread but have particular requirements. Those species with action plans from Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report that occur in Bridgend include the Fen Orchid, Great crested Newt and Brown Hare, among others.

11.6 Existing site protection

11.6.1 Sites of nature conservation importance in Britain which have statutory designations because of their international or national interest represent the 'top tiers' of protection, and are thus probably best understood and most widely accepted. The primary designations are Special Protection Areas (SPA), proposed Special Areas of Conservation (pSAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). Just two sites of nature conservation importance within the County Borough receive statutory protection for their international wildlife conservation interest; they are Kenfig NNR and Merthyr Mawr pNNR, both SSSIs which together also form the Kenfig candidate SAC.

11.6.2 A very small additional number of sites receive statutory protection for their national interest; these comprise the twelve Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and two Local Nature Reserves, designated in respect of their habitats. These habitats include ancient oak woodland, mixed ancient woodland with rich ground flora, wet meadows on peaty soil, valley and upland blanket mire, deep rocky chasms with mosses and ferns, large sand dune systems, and also geological facies). These 'designated' sites cover 3,026 hectares or 11.87% of the County Borough's land area, including the 1,203 hectares comprising the Kenfig cSAC. This compares with the 18 'Landscape Conservation Areas' identified in the Local Plan, which cover 3,062 hectares (12.0% of the County Borough).

11.6.3 In addition, over 160 non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) have been identified, and the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust manages Park Pond and the Parc Slip Restoration Site near Tondy as one of their nature reserves. Throughout most of Britain, planning authorities have policies aimed at protecting their own locally important sites as well as the nationally important statutory sites and protected species. In the Mid Glamorgan Replacement Structure Plan as affecting Bridgend County Borough the relevant policies EV5 and EV6 relate to such 'second-tier' sites - or 'SINCs', as they are usually referred to. The adopted Ogwr Borough Local Plan also contains policies related to the protection of trees, hedgerows and woodlands, the protection of sites of national, regional and local importance, and mitigation for their loss. At the time of writing, a Unitary Development Plan for Bridgend County Borough (UDP), for the period 2001 to 2016, has been issued as a Deposit Draft dated 24th May 2001. This plan includes amongst its chapters at least thirty-three policies which comprehensively deal with, or touch upon, nature conservation and the protection of the natural environment.

11.7 Trees and Woodlands

11.7.1 Landscapes Working for the County Borough of Bridgend summarises the issues surrounding the County Borough's woodland and forestry resource (Section 4.10). These include blocks of coniferous forest with straight edges, woodlands of high nature conservation value and woodlands whose nature conservation value and long-term existence are both limited and threatened by over-grazing, mostly by sheep.

11.7.2 The Forestry Commission is the lead government department responsible for implementing national policy in respect of trees, woods and forest industry. It administers grant aid for establishing and managing trees and woodlands and provides free advice on all forestry matters, and controls tree felling in the public and private sectors. Coed Cymru also has an important role, providing advice on management and the availability of grants.

By working with local woodland owners, contractors and saw millers they aim to enhance the biodiversity and recreational values of the woodlands as well as improving the timber markets and uses for home grown timber. Management of woodlands can also feature in agreements under Tir Gofal, a whole-farm agri-environmental grant scheme administered by the Countryside Council for Wales on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales.

11.8 Wetlands

11.8.1 Wetlands, including rivers, support specialised, often species-rich communities of plants, invertebrates and birds. A third of Britain's native flowering plants are associated with wetlands. The nature conservation interest of wetlands is lost when such sites are drained, tipped on or exploited for peat, and in many other ways, including through natural succession to scrub and woodland, through agricultural intensification and changing grazing and hay-making practices, through pollution, recreational pressure or development. For example, at Kenfig a wet meadow adjacent to the National Nature Reserve, that supported breeding lapwings and a unique variety of flowering plants, was lost when the ground was 'improved' for grazing through turf-removal and land-fill in the early 1990s.

11.9 Heathlands and Grasslands

11.9.1 Unimproved grasslands vary from wet Molinia tussock grassland, to dry neutral grasslands, together with grasslands developed on calcareous and acidic substrates. Heathland occurs where once-established woodland was cleared for grazing or cultivation, the resultant leaching of nutrients inhibiting the re-

establishment of woodland cover. All grasslands are under threat from inappropriate management, drainage and agricultural improvement.

11.10 Public and Private Open Spaces within Settlements

11.10.1 The presence of wild areas as an integral part of the urban fabric, although not forming 'countryside', is an important element of the relationship between local people and the natural world. People value variety in the landscape, whether in a rural or an urban setting. Moreover, the greater the variety in the landscape, the greater the biodiversity. Sparsely vegetated ground is recognised as an important habitat for insects, the very hot microclimates generated by sunlit, bare ground being essential for the larval development of some species and for full activity of many adult insects. Urban habitats may provide environmental stresses, such as lack of water and nutrients, and Nature can colonise such sites in unpredictable ways.

11.11 Degraded Land

11.11.1 Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy together with the Technical Advice Note (Wales) 5: Planning and Nature Conservation carry forward statements about new wildlife habitats being created during the reclamation of derelict land contained in earlier Government Circulars, and make specific reference to the skilled adaptation of derelict areas to provide extended habitats. Reclamation to a soft end-use is both effective and economical, with a nature conservation end-use being one of the most cost-effective options, with low capital costs, high performance scores and low maintenance costs. Some areas of contaminated land require special treatment. Also see paragraph 12.4.1.

11.11.2 Policies in the adopted Mid Glamorgan Replacement Structure Plan as affecting Bridgend County Borough, and adopted Ogwr Borough Local Plan require the conservation or replacement of areas of nature conservation interest, or the creation of new habitats where possible during development activity. These objectives have been reiterated and strengthened by policies in the Deposit UDP, which also seek to reduce fragmentation of habitats, avoid the isolation of species, and conserve wildlife corridors. Such action is intended to support the continued existence of native fauna and flora in the completed landscape. Post-industrial sites and landscapes offer surprising insights into how to create biodiversity. Abandoned quarries, pit mounds, spoil heaps, mineral workings and railway lines have a multitude of wildlife habitats, created by variations in substrate, slopes and aspects. As in some urban settings, environmental stresses, such as lack of water and nutrients, but also extremes of acidity or alkalinity, favour the development of species-rich natural communities of plants and animals, including locally rare species.

NATURE CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

NCO1 To Conserve and enhance the biological diversity of the County Borough;

NCO2 To establish the Bridgend Biodiversity Partnership to co-ordinate the achievement of biodiversity targets within the County Borough;

NCO3 To develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for Bridgend County Borough, including a systematic survey and evaluation of the nature conservation resource of the County Borough to enable appropriate and consistent designation of sites of nature conservation interest;

NCO4 To develop a Coastal Zone Management Plan, comprising a shoreline management plan and an integrated intertidal-terrestrial management plan, setting out a framework for its integration with neighbouring authorities' plans;

NCO5 To raise awareness of the opportunities to conserve and enhance biological diversity as part of school nature reserves, road building schemes, mineral workings and the siting and layout of new developments through reinforcement of wildlife corridors, habitat linkages and connectivity, using best practice techniques of habitat creation;

NCO6 To ensure the conservation and enhancement of valuable low-lying wet grassland and complementary woodland strip habitats;

NCO7 To ensure the conservation and enhancement of upland wildlife habitats on rock face and scree fields on upper valley side and associated with mine spoil disposal areas;

NCO8 To ensure the conservation and enhancement of upland acid grassland and to reinstate valuable grassland habitats damaged through inappropriate restoration techniques where pipeline construction carried out;

NCO9 To raise awareness of the need to manage broadleaf woodlands sustainably, and of supporting Coed Cymru through adequate resourcing;

NCO10 Within areas of conifer plantation, maximise the residual value of habitat fragments of semi-natural wildlife interest that survive along rides and within glades, and diversify the plantation woodland structure and composition;

NCO11 To raise awareness of the need to manage agricultural land with due regard for its wildlife and to support improvements to the agri-environment grant scheme;

NCO12 To improve the nature conservation value of rivers as wildlife habitats and corridors through river bed, bank and corridor modification and planting, restricting access where river habitats are sensitive to disturbance, and by maintaining the natural river corridor and river courses where new development occurs adjacent to rivers;

NCO13 To improve the connectivity of and linkages between semi-natural vegetation/habitats, including waterways, through habitat creation, including the reinforcement and consolidation of hedgerow boundaries, extension of woodland areas through new planting and natural succession and conversion of adjacent improved agricultural land to semi-natural grassland areas;

NCO14 To identify areas located within parks and playing fields where maintenance regimes can be amended to encourage biodiversity;

NCO15 To replace the use of exotic plant species and the use of natural peat products with the use of native plant species and alternatives to peat;

NCO16 To examine opportunities for the designation of new statutory sites for nature conservation.

12. LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

12.1 Landscape Assessment

12.1.1 Bridgend County Borough Council has a varied landscape. Man has influenced this landscape and built urban development such as barns, walls, ancient monuments and churches are important elements giving Bridgend County Borough its particular character. To maintain and enhance the landscape features of the County Borough within the context of economic development objectives Landscapes Working for Bridgend County Borough (commissioned by the Welsh Development Agency and this Authority) has played an integral role. The pressures for landscape change come from a variety of directions: changes in agricultural practices, coastal defence and flood prevention measures, the demise of coal mining, the deterioration of common land, economic development and the introduction of major new elements such as wind farms. Additionally proposed major highway schemes need to be integrated into the natural landscape, minimising their visual impact

12.1.2 The County Borough Council appreciates how appropriate landscape improvements can help benefit the economy, create or enhance wildlife habitats and add to general public amenity, including creating recreation facilities. Landscape advice is currently given on a wide range of issues, such as the landscaping of new roads, park and ride stations, planning applications, planning appeals and land reclamation schemes.

12.2 Cultural Heritage including Archaeology and Conservation of the Historic Landscape

12.2.1 The historic environment, comprising the archaeological, built and cultural landscape, shares space with the natural environment of landform, flora and fauna. Man has adjusted the natural environment and has imposed upon it a built historic environment which provides the countryside with its human character. These constructions and their surrounds either continue in use or provide extensive physical evidence of the activities of former generations and societies. Archaeological and other built structures are a finite and non-renewable resource which should not be needlessly destroyed. They can provide irreplaceable information about the past and have the potential to increase our knowledge, to stimulate and to entertain. The concept of sustainable development has particular relevance to the preservation of a built heritage which has been created over centuries and cannot be replaced.

12.2.2 Bridgend has a wide variety of archaeological remains, buildings and landscapes of significant interest. Standing stones, cairns and prehistoric villages; Roman camps; medieval castles and churches; farmhouses, chapels, barns and stone walls; ironworks, slag heaps and tramroads; all are characteristic of the County Borough countryside.

12.2.3 Policy EV8 of the adopted Ogwr Borough Local Plan identifies eighteen Landscape Conservation Areas in the County Borough covering a total area of 3,062 hectares. These areas are identified on the basis of their landscape character; that is the characteristics and features that make one landscape different from another including geology, drainage, soils and vegetation and the activities of man over the centuries. The designation will assist in maintaining the diversity of the areas identified.

12.2.4 The County Borough includes two registered historic landscapes, i.e. of exceptional historic interest in the Cadw Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales. These historic sites are Merthyr Mawr Warren and Kenfig pool and Dunes. Merthyr Mawr has a generally ancient landscape with archaeological sites completely buried by sand inundation. Kenfig also has a be-sanded landscape that derives from adverse weather conditions and tidal phenomena in the Middle Ages, perhaps earlier. The County Borough also contains several sites that have been included in the Cadw Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

12.2.5 The County Borough's industrial archaeology is particularly significant, and since it is often associated with derelict land, the County Borough has endeavoured to conserve and enhance such features when associated with land reclamation schemes. Other structures have been conserved as part of the recreational and building conservation programmes and the authority is continuing to work closely with Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments with regards to Listed Buildings in the County Borough.

12.2.6 In the absence of financial resources the authority has also worked in partnership with the Buildings at Risk Trust and Groundwork Bridgend in realising schemes to secure and conserve Sker House and Tondu Ironworks.

12.3 Environmental Improvements

12.3.1 The majority of environmental improvement schemes currently being undertaken in Bridgend County Borough relevant to this Countryside Strategy are predominantly located in urban and urban fringe rather than countryside locations. The reason for this is that the schemes are usually related to broader strategy documents which are targeted on areas of relative economic and social deprivation and are therefore eligible for grant aid, which assists in boosting private sector confidence. Investment in schemes on sites in urban areas can have the knock-on effect of relieving development pressures on more outlying, greenfield or countryside locations.

12.3.2 Environmental improvements vary in size and complexity from extensive land reclamation schemes with integrated transportation and planning elements to individual planting schemes. Although they vary in cost, timescales to implement, and partners involved, most involve the sustainable re-use or upgrading of redundant sites or eyesores and contain a common aim to improve public amenity and benefit the local economy, and occasionally create or enhance wildlife habitats. Environmental improvement schemes have not always proved straightforward to implement and each scheme includes input from other departments and other organisations such as Groundwork Bridgend. In compliance with the requirements of Local Agenda 21, the involvement of the local community in terms of consultation and participation is essential in both the approval of grant aid and to ensure a sense of ownership and ongoing care of schemes.

12.4 Minerals and Land Reclamation

12.4.1 There are many issues related to minerals extraction, land reclamation and recycling of aggregates relevant to the Countryside Strategy. A key area in relation to minerals and land reclamation is the beneficial after-use and long term aftercare/management of land, such as the establishment of woodland which has a significant part to play in this process. Furthermore, this will include: treatment of derelict land, protection and translocation of features of nature conservation interest, reinstatement of Public Rights of Way (PROWs), creation of public amenity features, treatment of mine water discharge, creation/enhancement of regionally important geological and geomorphological sites (RIGS), recycling/secondary aggregates, hydrology & hydrogeology, and transportation of minerals through sensitive areas. It is clear that these issues provide opportunities to implement sustainable development projects and promote nature conservation. Furthermore they overlap with a number of issues dealt with elsewhere in the Countryside Strategy.

LANDSCAPES CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OBJECTIVES

LCEO1 To maintain and enhance the landscape features of the County Borough, taking into account pressures for landscape change;

LCEO2 To support and promote landscape improvements to benefit the local economy, create wildlife habitats and add to public amenity;

LCEO3 To ensure the retention of the valued aspects of the built environment particularly those displaying architectural and historic importance, along with elements of local vernacular;

LCEO4 To promote through education and interpretation the intrinsic value of the landscape of the County Borough and the natural and artificial processes that have generated its current appearance, and thereby contribute towards its conservation by the local population and visitors;

LCEO5 To participate in the generation of direct community action towards the improvement of the landscape of the County Borough by such measures as the clearance of litter and fly tipping;

LCEO6 To investigate and ensure the ongoing maintenance of environmental improvements;

LCEO7 To define sites within the County Borough of geological or geomorphological importance and to assess their relative importance with a view to identify those sites of regional importance which would be suitable for selection as a RIGS because of its scientific, educational, historical, cultural or environmental interest.

13. ACCESS AND RECREATION

13.1 The Countryside of the County Borough presents excellent and varied opportunities for both formal and informal recreation. The main challenge for this Strategy is to identify measures to realise and maximise this potential within sustainable environmental limits.

13.2 By developing and promoting opportunities for access and recreation, the Strategy can potentially bring many benefits both to the residents and the environment of the County Borough. They can help to enhance quality of life, assist in raising environmental understanding and awareness and provide a stimulus to the local economy. These potential benefits will need to be balanced against a number of more negative aspects. Recreational activities can for example lead to environmental problems through disturbance to wildlife, erosion of the landscape and pollution. They can also lead to damage to property through trespass.

13.3 Given these positive and negative aspects it is essential that the Strategy and Integrated Action Programme takes a managed and long term approach to the planning of access and recreation. This is particularly relevant within the County Borough given its large and mainly urban population.

13.4 Walking, Cycling and Riding (including Public Rights of Way PROWs)

13.4.1 A Strategy Promoting Countryside Access in Ogwr outlined a range of proposals to promote walking, cycling and riding and identified specific projects to carry out practical access improvements and provide information, education and interpretation about countryside access. It also outlined proposals for establishing networks for walking, cycling and riding throughout the whole of the Strategy area.

13.4.2 The Countryside Strategy needs to take all these ideas forward and work towards the establishment of a comprehensive sustainable transport network for the whole of the County Borough. This will not only promote walking, cycling and riding in the countryside but also provide sustainable forms of access to facilities and services within the urban areas of the County Borough. Public transport forms a key part of the network. Maintenance issues will have to be addressed comprehensively as part of the Countryside Strategy.

The following offer the best opportunities for developing this network:-

- PROWs
- Public Transport
- Community Routes
- Minor roads and highway verges
- Urban open space
- Areas of 'open access'

13.4.3 The Strategy needs to identify specific measures to promote public transport and utilise all available opportunities and mechanisms to progress the completion of a network. It will be important to review existing area-specific strategies and plans to ensure that these take account of access considerations, within the context of all other, sometimes conflicting issues.

13.4.4 This Countryside Strategy is a valuable document for identifying both priorities for work on the existing PROW network and 'strategic' routes that make the maximum possible contribution to an overall access network. However, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 indicates that the whole of the Local Rights of Way network (which includes cycle tracks) must be reviewed. Local Authorities will have to produce Rights of Way Improvement Plans and these Plans will be the basis of future work programmes for these networks. The Improvement Plans will not only look at the current and proposed future use of the network, but will also take into account Access for All. Other issues for consideration will be identified in the regulations. The Local Access Forum, which will also be established as a result of the Act, will have a major role to play in the formulation of the Improvement Plan.

13.5 Transportation

13.5.1 The transportation strategy within the County Borough is currently undergoing a process of change following local government reorganisation and in advance of the emerging UDP. The current strategy as outlined in the Mid Glamorgan Replacement Structure Plan, whilst embracing the principles of sustainability in spirit may now be considered to be inadequate or not progressive enough in the light of recent changes in planning guidance in particular Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy. The emerging transport

strategy will move substantially closer to the declared aims of sustainability. The current strategy involves a mix of the key elements of road construction, public transport improvements, enhancement of cycling and pedestrian facilities, and traffic management measures. To overcome congested traffic conditions, the balance between the major existing policy components is being directed in favour of an increasing role for public transport and away from major highway construction.

A key strategy element of the transportation policy will remain “to improve the accessibility of all sectors of the community to places of work, shopping and recreation.” Similar policies are contained in the Deposit UDP.

13.6 Community Routes

13.6.1 Community Routes form an important part of the proposed sustainable access network within the County Borough. Policy RC11 of the adopted Ogwr Borough Local Plan defines them as “safe routes within and between settlements and points of interest” which are designed to facilitate their use by all members of the community, including pedestrians, cyclists and the less able. The routes provide the opportunity for linear green spaces to be created in urban areas and where possible utilise the existing rights of way network, derelict land, river corridors and disused railway land. It is envisaged that the network will be promoted as an alternative, more sustainable, mode of transport as well as for recreational purposes. The Council is currently working in partnership with Groundwork Bridgend to promote and implement the network of community routes identified in the Local Plan, which in turn will feed into the proposed National Cycle Network which is scheduled to provide a National Cycle Route between Newport and Kidwelly and will pass through the County Borough. There are approximately 72 km of proposed community route identified in the Local Plan which have yet to be implemented and the opportunity to identify additional routes in the future should be explored. The routes aim to serve the needs of the community and therefore the involvement and co-operation of local people and landowners is essential in their implementation. Similar policies are contained in the Deposit UDP.

13.7 Access for All

13.7.1 Policy RC2 of the Ogwr Borough Local Plan draws attention to the need for promoting access for all, which is supported by the Countryside Strategy. Furthermore A Strategy Promoting Countryside Access in Ogwr identifies a number of sites where access for all facilities could usefully be developed. Access for all should be promoted where practical, particularly in urban areas and in locations that have suitable supporting facilities, for example car parking and/or toilets. Such amenities are particularly important for the less able as a car, in many cases is their only viable means of transport and it is the intention of the Countryside Strategy to promote and enhance such facilities. It is also important to realise that some people do not have the means of a car or public transport and thus access to the countryside. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to the provision of safe routes for walking and cycling (particularly through built up areas) and the running of free or especially subsidised transport schemes.

13.7.2 This is consistent with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (1996). The Act makes it unlawful for those who provide goods, facilities or services to discriminate against the disabled. However, this does not mean that the Countryside Strategy promotes or encourage any forms of access into remote or inaccessible areas of the countryside which may conflict with nature conservation aims. Rather, by considering the issue of access for all, the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme seeks to provide controlled access, within which the needs of the less able, including those with learning difficulties and those with restricted opportunities such as the elderly and parents with young children will be considered.

13.8 Countryside Sports

13.8.1 In line with the provisions of the Development Plan and other strategies relating to countryside sport and recreation, the Countryside Strategy will support such activities providing they do not compromise the interests of nature conservation, landscape, access and farming. Working groups could be set up to mitigate any conflicts that may occur. The Sports Council for Wales has prepared a number of advisory documents promoting the responsible use of the natural environment for sport and recreation purposes. Most recently the Sports Council for Wales has published in November 1996 Codes of Conduct:

Responsible use in the Countryside which provides a rationale for codes, and suggests issues that might be addressed within a code of practice. It is the intention of the Countryside Strategy to incorporate such policies and advice within the projects defined in the Integrated Action Programme.

13.9 Country Parks and Recreational Facilities

13.9.1 Country parks provide opportunities for enjoyment of the countryside and have important roles in promoting nature conservation, environmental education and community involvement. Bryngarw Country Park, the only Country Park in the County Borough, was opened in 1986 and has become one of the main countryside attractions in the area with an estimated 65,000 visitors per year. Current financial constraints mean that it is unlikely that any additional country parks will in future be designated, although there is merit in examining options for establishing new parks in the Borough, particularly in the urban fringe areas around Bridgend.

13.9.2 In addition to Bryngarw there are a large number of other recreational facilities within the County Borough including:-

- picnic sites
- children's play areas
- visitor/ information centres
- playing fields

13.9.3 The Ogwr Borough Local Plan also identifies a number of specific sites for recreation including 'informal recreation areas', 'amenity open spaces' and 'kickabout areas.' Ancillary facilities such as car parks and toilets will also need to be considered.

13.9.4 The Countryside Strategy reviews all these facilities and sites and will identify options for further managing or developing them in ways that contribute towards its overall aims. The initial priority should be on monitoring and improving existing facilities rather than establishing new ones.

13.9.5 There are many other areas of land within the County Borough that are also important for recreation, but are not primarily recreational 'facilities.' For example, Kenfig National Nature Reserve is primarily managed to maintain and enhance the features of nature conservation importance found there, but it is also a large open space providing an opportunity for quiet, outdoor exercise and recreation. Over 100,000 people visit the Kenfig Reserve, with perhaps 10-15,000 using the visitor centre each year.

ACCESS AND RECREATION OBJECTIVES

ARO1 To establish appropriate working groups/fora to co-ordinate and manage all access and recreation projects:

ARO2 To manage and promote public rights of way and community routes;

ARO3 To promote short circular walks, access for all routes, long distance walks, farm trails, mountain bike trails, cycle touring routes and riding trails;

ARO4 To promote informal countryside activities including field sports, watersports, hang-gliding and orienteering;

ARO5 To promote countryside "access for all";

ARO6 To promote "green links" between the towns and the countryside of the County Borough using features such as old railway lines and river corridors;

ARO7 To promote the development and enhancement of Country Parks and other recreational facilities within the countryside.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

14.1 One of the main stems of Local Agenda 21 is to encourage the community to think globally and act locally, by living a more sustainable lifestyle. This can only be achieved by community involvement and commitment. It is therefore crucial that the public at large is not only aware of the issues but able to translate them into something that touches their own lives. This will do much to ensure positive and effective environmental change. Within the framework of the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme steps to educate and raise awareness must be put in place.

14.2 Given that many will have differing needs and aspirations the ability to relate issues to a wide audience will be necessary. There are several ways of achieving this but CCW advice suggests that a partnership approach is the best (See 7.1 above).

14.3 Environmental Education

14.3.1 The need to address global environmental issues has been reflected in national trends and developed through the remit of environmental education. The Rio Summit of 1992 followed by the New York summit in 1997 have done much to ensure that environmental issues are considered not only on a national basis, but are also placed firmly on the international and local agenda. Environmental education has a key role to play, aiding all aspects of society to be aware of the impact their actions can have on the environment and to develop less damaging practices. However, issues such as sustainable development are likely to follow a slow process since they are dependent upon changes in central and local government policies which can take time to be absorbed at the local level.

14.3.2 Through environmental education the public can be made aware of the rich environmental culture and heritage of the County Borough and the importance of the need to protect and enhance natural, semi-natural and man made features therein. In this way environmental education could help to ensure that such assets are not only held precious and valuable by the community, but also maintained, cared for and policed. This will be particularly important when in implementing policy through practical projects such as nature conservation land management and after care.

14.3.3 In keeping with the partnership approach, Bridgend Environmental Education Partnership (BEEP) has been established. This partnership comprises the majority of organisations that deliver an environmental education resource in the Bridgend County Borough area. BEEP'S progress to date includes the setting up of a website (<http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/bees>), grant aiding sustainable schools' projects and encouraging Eco-Schools registration.

BEEP includes the Education, Support and Inspectorate Service that ensures that Local Agenda 21 and environmental education is high on the agenda throughout the National Curriculum.

14.4 Public Consultation

14.4.1 An attempt has been made to consult widely on the contents of both the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme in keeping with the principles of sustainable development and CCW guidance. Information and advice has been sought from as wide an audience as is practicable and a list of consultees can be found in the appendix to the comment and response document.

14.4.2 It is hoped that the public consultation exercise carried out to date has not only led to better informed decision making and ownership of the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme, but, also served as a platform for promoting environmental education and awareness. The value of the consultation process therefore lies not only in the assembly of useful ideas and initiatives, but also in disseminating the message and gaining acceptance of the importance of having a sustainable environment.

14.5 Public Participation

14.5.1 It is not only essential to raise awareness and involve people in the decision making process but also to engender the hearts and minds of the community into action. Working with local people can be enriching and enjoyable, but it is important to set ground rules for establishing procedures for sharing with the local community. Different approaches will suit different issues and people and it is important that a mixed programme of events, campaigns and other initiatives is developed.

14.5.2 Methods could include the establishment of on-going fora or one-off round table meetings. Focus groups are a valuable complement to fora, set up to focus on specific issues. Well drafted questionnaires can be used to establish views on specific issues and targeted within smaller areas and communities. The community can manage other surveys themselves, which usually obtain better response rates. Quizzes and 'Planning for Real' exercises are stimulating and innovative methods of involving the public and a good way of exchanging information. Community Arts should be explored where possible and could include the use of various media techniques. Demonstration projects are also a useful tool as a means to an end of 'educating' local people in an enjoyable and practicable way. The use of the media should also be exploited as an effective method to reach many.

14.6 Training

14.6.1 There is little point in involving the community unless there is an on-going corporate commitment within the Authority to the Local Agenda 21 process. To ensure this, a wide understanding of Local Agenda 21 and the Council's role within it has been established through training for all staff and Members across departments and disciplines. There also needs to be training offered to the public at large, particularly in matters of capacity building and in relation to sustainable development.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

EAE01 To develop a partnership approach to progress the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme, ensuring that all views are considered;

EAE02 To support promotion of campaigns which stimulate public awareness of environmental issues;

EAE03 To seek to develop and improve links with local community groups, schools, business and trade organisations;

EAE04 To contact all ages in the community including the less mobile to participate in developing the Countryside Strategy;

EAE05 To establish a data-base of environmental organisations and individuals who are interested and wish to participate in the development of the Countryside Strategy;

EAE06 To ensure adequate dissemination of environmental related information to the public through:-

* 0a co-ordinated programme of environmental events throughout the County Borough

* 1organisation of workshops and seminars to promote countryside awareness and environmental understanding in general

* 2development of an 'interpretation strategy' for the County Borough covering all aspects of environmental interpretation (including leaflets, exhibitions, signage, etc.)

* 3distributing of leaflets through 'Local Information Points'

* 4 contribution to magazine and newspaper articles

* 5 provision of literature and training of staff specifically aimed at the less able and people with learning difficulties

* 6 provision of equal access to education and training

* 7 improvement of the participation in special events e.g. sand sculptures and environmental art within the County Borough controlled facilities

- Make use of all forms of Information Technology and develop information accessible to the world wide web

15. ECONOMY AND LAND MANAGEMENT

15.1 The promotion of sustainable development through Local Agenda 21 and consequently the Countryside Strategy and Integrated Action Programme makes it important to recognise that initiatives may and will be set within the working countryside environment. Therefore there is a need to balance environmental protection with maintaining the agricultural viability of the County Borough. If initiatives throughout the four other topic areas are to succeed, then it is imperative to develop links with landowners and promote sustainable practices relating to economy and land management.

15.2 Employment

15.2.1 The Countryside Strategy supports initiatives by local businesses to improve their internal environmental management practices by use of local sources for their goods and services. Additionally the establishment of new businesses which supply sustainable products and services is encouraged. The Economic Development Unit, based in Bridgend County Borough Council's Chief Executive's Department is in the process of holding seminars for local businesses to help promote good environmental practices and developing partnerships between industry and the County Borough in relation to improving environmental practices.

15.2.2 The Economic Development Unit believe that a commitment to high quality landscapes on industrial sites and their improvement provides a major source of inward investment. Furthermore it is considered that adequate spacing of units and general layout of industrial estates along with landscaping and environmental improvements are essential for its long term success. This is consistent with the aims of the EDAP referred to in paragraph 5.4.

15.2.3 A number of initiatives and strategies have been targeted towards Valley regeneration, for example the Welsh development Agency's Landscapes Working for Wales which through land reclamation programmes supports the re-development of brownfield sites. Also the Greening the Valleys campaign has been set up to change peoples` attitudes towards the Valleys and promote sustainable practices. The Countryside Strategy supports these and other initiatives and further endorses those that provide opportunities for community based enterprises to contribute towards the maintenance of substantial valleys communities. Thereby safeguarding through re-use redundant buildings in these locations, reducing pressures for new development in greenfield areas, and reducing the need for out-migration of the Valley areas.

15.2.4 Ideally, employment opportunities and development in general need to be set against a number of environmental criteria so as not to undermine the nature conservation and landscape quality of the County Borough as a whole. Linked with this is the requirement to provide sustainable transport infrastructure. In practice, economic considerations normally take precedence over environmental concerns. If employment opportunities are to be considered from an environmental perspective then land use planning policies needs to re-address the balance between the economy and the environment and therefore comply with the aims of Local Agenda 21.

15.2.5 There are instances where economic and environmental benefits are complementary. For example, one of Coed Cymru's aims is to maximise timber yield from Welsh woods, while undertaking felling works sustainably. These sustainably managed woodlands also provide an educational resource for various educational and interest groups.

15.2.6 The above and associated issues such as public transport, local employment opportunities and housing issues in relation to affordability are dealt with in the Deposit Unitary Developing Plan.

15.3 Tourism

15.3.1 The tourism and recreation resource of the County Borough is linked with the perception of quality of life, location and amenity value available to its residents.

15.3.2 The County Borough provides a number of tourist opportunities ranging from its varied coastline which is valued for its nature conservation and historic landscape interest to the Ogwr Ridgeway Walk in the north of the County Borough. The tourist resources of the County Borough take a number of forms covering both formal and informal recreation. Although it is realised that tourism has a benefit to the economy of the County Borough, to a certain extent this has to be off-set against the negative effects which tourism can have on valued and sensitive areas of the County Borough. It is the intention of this Strategy to promote and enhance the tourist potential of the County Borough by way of sustainable tourism. A Sustainable Tourism Working Group has been set up for the Bridgend area, comprising officers from Bridgend County Borough Council, Groundwork Bridgend, Neath and Port Talbot and Bridgend College. The Working Group's rationale is to examine and develop the sustainable tourism potential of the County Borough, where sustainable tourism is defined as ... low impact, ideally owned and controlled, economically viable tourism whereby local communities protect the rural areas natural and cultural assets because of their appreciation of its value for tourism revenue. Sustainable tourism enhances rather than damages the environment...

15.3.3 The desirability to encourage and promote sustainable tourism has been pointed out on a number of levels. The Wales Tourist Board's strategy Tourism 2000 provides national guidance and includes specific sections on environmental sustainability and tourism. This has been superseded by the Wales Tourist Board's Achieving our Potential strategy, launched in early 2000. This strategy has a key objectiveTo embrace a sustainable approach to tourism development which benefits society, involves local communities and enhances Wales' unique environmental and cultural assets.

15.3.4 The Strategy also considers tourism enhancing the environment through the adoption of 'Green' environmental practices by tourism businesses and the way that the coast and seas have been enhanced by measures to combat pollution and increase the appeal to visitors. Although, there are initiatives that already exist. For example the Green Sea Initiative, was set up in 1996 and formed a partnership between Wales tourist Board, Dwr Cymru, local authorities and environmental agencies to in-still a national pride in the Welsh coastline, primarily by the Blue Flag beach awards. This award signified the fact that beaches had attained a certain standard in terms of water quality and facility provision

15.3.5 Strategic planning at a local level has become increasingly important in the last two years. The advent of the West Wales and Valleys Objective 1 programme, a new national tourism strategy, 'Achieving Our Potential,' and the draft South East Wales Regional Tourism Strategy has set the context and priorities for tourism in the area over the next five years. It is now appropriate, indeed essential, that the unique priorities for action are developed for the Bridgend County Borough area that takes tourism forward within the context set by the national and regional strategies.

15.3.6 The Draft Bridgend County Tourism Strategy (2001) has been prepared in consultation with the private and voluntary sector organisations that are involved in tourism. The Strategy's Vision statement seeks to develop, co-ordinate and manage tourism in order to maximise its benefits to the local economy while minimising any adverse effects on local communities and the environment.... This vision statement provides the basis for three key objectives including the need to ...develop and sustain communities and their environments through sensitive tourism development...The supporting text relating to this objective points out that...The need to integrate the principle of sustainable development into the tourism strategy is recognised not only to improve the quality of facilities to visitors and reduce negative

impacts but also in view of the resultant improvements in quality of life to local people... By seeking to deliver a quality environment for residents and visitors to the county borough people's quality of life is also improved. Furthermore, an attractive environment will attract visitors to the area. In doing this, Bridgend County Borough's tourism resource and the local economy are boosted.

Thus, this aim of the Tourism Strategy closely reflects those of the Countryside Strategy and Bridgend County Borough Council's commitment to Local Agenda 21.

15.4 Housing

15.4.1 Development in the countryside including housing development is catered for in the existing and proposed Development Plan. Housing, like other development, in the context of Local Agenda 21 needs to be integrated with other land uses including transportation links and infrastructure, provision of facilities such as shopping, and access to recreational facilities. The design, siting and choice of materials can aid energy efficiency. Additionally consideration should be given to the mitigation of adverse effects of construction, such as noise and dust pollution, and to the use and re-use of materials in the construction process. The Countryside Strategy support the use of such initiatives when new developments including housing are proposed. In addition the Strategy supports the re-use of brown-field sites in preference to new build and to relieve pressures on green field sites from development.

15.4.2 The opportunity for local employment needs to be taken into account when implementing the housing schemes. For example, ground works and landscaping of new housing developments, such as the regeneration schemes at Lewistown, Tyderwen and Bettws may provide job and training opportunities. These tasks can provide openings not available in other elements of the regeneration schemes.

15.5 Services and Facilities

15.5.1 An Objective of the Ogwr Borough Local Plan points out that "A certain amount of social and community facilities are essential to community development the provision of these facilities to a large extent lies with other organisations beyond the control of the Borough Council." Bearing in mind such constraints, the land use planning system can however set aside areas of developments to cater for the provision of shops, post offices, green spaces and public transportation infrastructure. This can be achieved through negotiations, detailed site design guidelines, and Section 106 Agreements. Through these processes the principles of Local Agenda 21 can be promoted, in terms of integrated settlements, facilities and structures that are designed, built and maintained on an energy efficient basis.

15.5.2 The promotion of social and community facilities engenders pride in the neighbourhood and a sense of place. This can be assisted through appropriate infrastructure described above and projects that enhance the character of an area, which could include nature conservation, landscape features or improving access and recreation facilities.

All of these could be community led, supporting the Local Agenda 21 process.

15.6 Agriculture/Forestry

15.6.1 The Bridgend County Borough Council publication Bridgend Insight - A Profile of Bridgend County Borough (1995) points out that Agriculture Forestry and fisheries employs less than 1% of the Bridgend County Borough workforce. However, a substantial proportion of countryside within Bridgend County Borough is in agricultural use (roughly 76% based on 1992 figures) and has an important value in terms of landscape, recreation, access and nature conservation. Furthermore the economy of the valleys depends largely upon a healthy agricultural presence.

15.6.2 The provision of subsidies from the National assembly of Wales, grant aid (e.g. via Tir Gofal) and advice is increasingly important in ensuring the agricultural viability of the County Borough. For instance Farmers have historically faced fluctuations in incomes that have been stabilised by the intervention of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). However, changes to the CAP and other recent issues such as the

BSE and foot and mouth crises affecting British farmers puts ever increasing pressure on the farming industry. It may now be the case that the farming industry has to be even more flexible due to these and other economic pressures. One way of achieving this could be through the implementation of farm diversification schemes, which could help, keep farms viable. This could include the promotion of organic farming, selling of farm produce in farm shops and using farms for educational purposes, with the aim of making the public more responsible for their actions in the countryside.

15.6.3 Forestry is supported in the Development Plan as it provides a sustainable economic resource. However forestry associated activities such as haulage can cause conflict with other countryside activities. In Bridgend County Borough, Forest Enterprise has 2088 ha of land in its ownership (based on 1992 figures) which has value in terms of recreation, landscape, nature conservation, and environmental education. To accommodate this Forest Enterprise has an “access on foot” policy. Forest Enterprise also works in partnership with other bodies such as the CCW in promoting nature conservation initiatives. Besides this, talks are given to schools and groups on woodland and forestry care with supporting literature. The Countryside Strategy endorses this work of Forest Enterprise and where possible will aim to provide support.

15.7 Cultivation

15.7.1 The activities relating to land cultivation include allotments, small holdings, city farms, residential gardens, waste ground and the above mentioned urban green spaces. Provision for allotments is made under Policy RC13 of the Ogwr Borough Local Plan, where they are identified as “an important form of adult recreation as well as a useful source of produce.” Additionally allotments provide a local, sustainable food resource that should be encouraged by ensuring that land is free of contamination, vandalism and that neighbourhoods realise the potential of this resource, which would engender community spirit and a sense of place. This philosophy can be extended to the other areas described above, where good husbandry techniques such as organic practices could be employed.

15.7.2 If a commitment to cultivation as a means of engendering community support and participation is to be sustained then consideration must be given to customers and producers and where a number of producers can work together and be mutually supporting. One example is a food co-operative into which community orchards, urban farms, allotments, etc. can feed their produce through. Connections can be identified e.g. where composting can support the work of the food producers.

15.7.3 Often the act of involvement alone costs money and this could well be an issue for low-income households. For example, the buying of plants from garden centres and other retail outlets is an expenditure that is likely to be low priority where income is low. Ideas to encourage involvement and engender awareness, and enable plants to be bought at near cost and/or propagated in a shared way could be a way forward. Even the sharing of garden equipment to cut grass and hedges may remove the obstacle to even the basic tasks of garden tending. This may require particular focus in those locations where social housing is also matched with low income.

15.8 Sustainable Development Projects

15.8.1 In compliance with Government advice, the Deposit UDP promotes sustainable development which is also being progressed through the Local Agenda 21 process. The promotion of sustainable development via projects contained in the Integrated Action Programme is also an underlying principle of the Countryside Strategy. It is appreciated that many projects implemented to date have stemmed from a top down approach which could benefit from grass root input at the planning and implementation stage. Therefore, the Countryside Strategy via the Integrated Action Programme presents a series of innovative sustainable development projects which are being steered by one or more key partners working with the community in the County Borough.

ECONOMY AND LAND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

ELMO1 To promote sustainable land management practices;

ELMO2 To pursue the inclusion of an overriding environmental policy in the emerging Unitary Development Plan against which all development proposals can be measured and assessed;

ELMO3 To support regeneration strategies and initiatives based on Local Agenda 21 principles;

ELMO4 To provide design guidelines for developments that incorporate best practice advice in respect of environmental principles;

ELMO5 To develop links with organisations/ businesses to promote sustainable development;

ELMO6 To encourage environmental businesses;

ELMO7 To investigate options for improving public transport in the County Borough by

- developing new infrastructure and
- increasing the quality and level of services

ELMO8 To promote environmentally sound integrated transport systems where practicable;

ELMO9 To stimulate the local economy incorporating sustainable tourism principles;

ELMO10 To support the further promotion of farm diversification schemes;

ELMO11 To look to develop links and support environmental work undertaken by Forest Enterprise;

ELMO12 To encourage permaculture through such initiatives as:

rain water collection for gardening

use of natural fertilisers and pesticides

pond creation

habitat creation/mowing regimes

supporting educational literature

ELMO13 To prepare a portfolio of sustainable development projects identifying where practicable:

project

partner(s)

timetable

capital and revenue costs

funding

maintenance arrangements.

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