

Merthyr  
Tydfil  
Biodiversity  
Partnership



# Action for Wildlife in Merthyr Tydfil

The Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Action Plan

2014-2019

Free  
Publication



Wales Biodiversity Partnership

 **Cyfoeth  
Naturiol  
Cymru**  
**Natural  
Resources  
Wales**





# INTRODUCTION

This booklet provides a summary of the Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Action Plan. The Action Plan has been produced by the Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership with the support, advice and financial assistance of Natural Resource Wales and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

The Action Plan sets out objectives, targets and actions for the conservation of biodiversity within the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. The complete plan can be viewed on the Biodiversity Action Reporting System website which is linked to throughout this document wherever the BARS logo appears.



Paper copies are available upon request.



# OUR VISION

**'Our vision is to achieve a better quality of life in the County Borough by ensuring a richer wildlife, that is cared for and treasured by all who live, work and visit here.'**

For further information contact:

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## What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity, or biological diversity, is the variety of life on Earth. This includes all of the different plants, animals and micro-organisms; the genes they possess, the habitats they live in and the ecosystems that they collectively form.

## Why do we need to conserve biodiversity?



- **We would not survive without it:** It provides our oxygen, food, clean water, soil, clothing, medicine and energy sources.
- **It benefits our health:** Living in and interacting with our natural environment can improve our health and well-being.
- **It benefits our economy:** Cared for and diverse landscapes attract home-buyers, businesses and tourists.
- **It's our responsibility:** We have a moral obligation to protect and conserve the biodiversity that we are lucky enough to enjoy today.
- **It's the Law!:**

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that any public or statutory body must have regard for the conservation of biological diversity in the exercise of their functions.

**“No organism lives in isolation from other living things, and each has its own way of life which contributes to the balance of nature... If we continue to pollute the atmosphere, contaminate land and water and degrade our ecosystems by, for example, destroying forests, wetlands and marine environments, then the planet will suffer accordingly.”**

UK Biodiversity Action Plan



## Background

### The Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) was the first ever treaty to provide a legal framework for biodiversity conservation and was signed by 159 governments, including the UK.

These governments acted in the knowledge that action must be taken to halt the worldwide loss of animal and plant species and genetic resources.

They agreed to create and enforce national strategies aimed at conserving, protecting and enhancing biological diversity. [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)

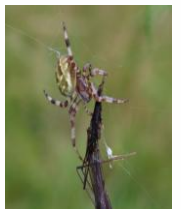


### Wales Biodiversity Action Plan

In 1994 the UK government, after extensive consultation regarding issues raised at the Convention on Biological Diversity, launched the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP). The plan discussed issues relating to conservation of the UK's biodiversity, and drew together a program of activity and commitment. Wales has since developed an individual strategy prioritising the most relevant species and habitats in Wales. The Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Action Plan (MTBAP) contributes to Wales and the UK BAP. [www.ukbars.defra.gov.uk](http://www.ukbars.defra.gov.uk)  
<http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk/organisation/show/1371>

### Priority Habitats and Species

Basically, a list of 557 species and 54 habitats in Wales are referred to as the list of habitats and species of principal importance in Wales. This list will be used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and national statutory authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 "to have regard" to the conservation of biodiversity in all their activities.





## Functions of Local Biodiversity Action Plans

From the Wales Biodiversity Partnership Website

[www.biodiversitywales.org.uk](http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk)

- *To ensure that national targets for species and habitats, as specified in the UK Action Plan, are translated into effective action at the local level*
- *To identify targets for species and habitats appropriate to the local area, and reflecting the values of people locally*
- *To develop effective local partnerships to ensure that programs for biodiversity conservation are maintained in the long-term.*
- *To raise awareness of the need for biodiversity conservation in the local context*
- *To ensure that opportunities for conservation and enhancement of the whole biodiversity resource are fully considered*
- *To provide a basis for monitoring progress in biodiversity conservation at both local and national levels.*
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## Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership (MTBAP)

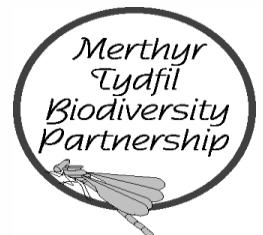
The MTBP was formed to help implement and meet the targets of the MTBAP.

The targets for all habitats in this plan are to maintain extent, achieve favorable condition, restore, expand, maintain and increase species and habitats.

The partnership is made up of a variety of individuals, community groups, voluntary, government, and non-government organisations who meet quarterly.

## Merthyr Tydfil BAP approach

There has been a concerted effort to focus on habitats. In most circumstances a focus on habitat improvement will benefit individual species. Where this is not necessarily the case: species which require separate consideration, separate species actions/targets have been included.





## Introduction to Merthyr Tydfil's Habitats

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough has a dense network and wide variety of quality habitats. Due to its rich geology and post industrial landscape there is a mixture of characteristic habitats.

Semi-ancient woodlands are prominent on the steeper valley sides especially along the Taf Fechan and Taf Fawr valley.

Grazed land ranges from calcareous, acidic, neutral and marshy through to heathland. A special feature within Merthyr Tydfil County Borough is the limestone heathland, with its well drained limestone soil and lime rich quarry spoil. It has developed a specialised mosaic community comprising limestone grassland plants and ericaceous heathland, an unusual habitat that is extremely scarce in Britain.

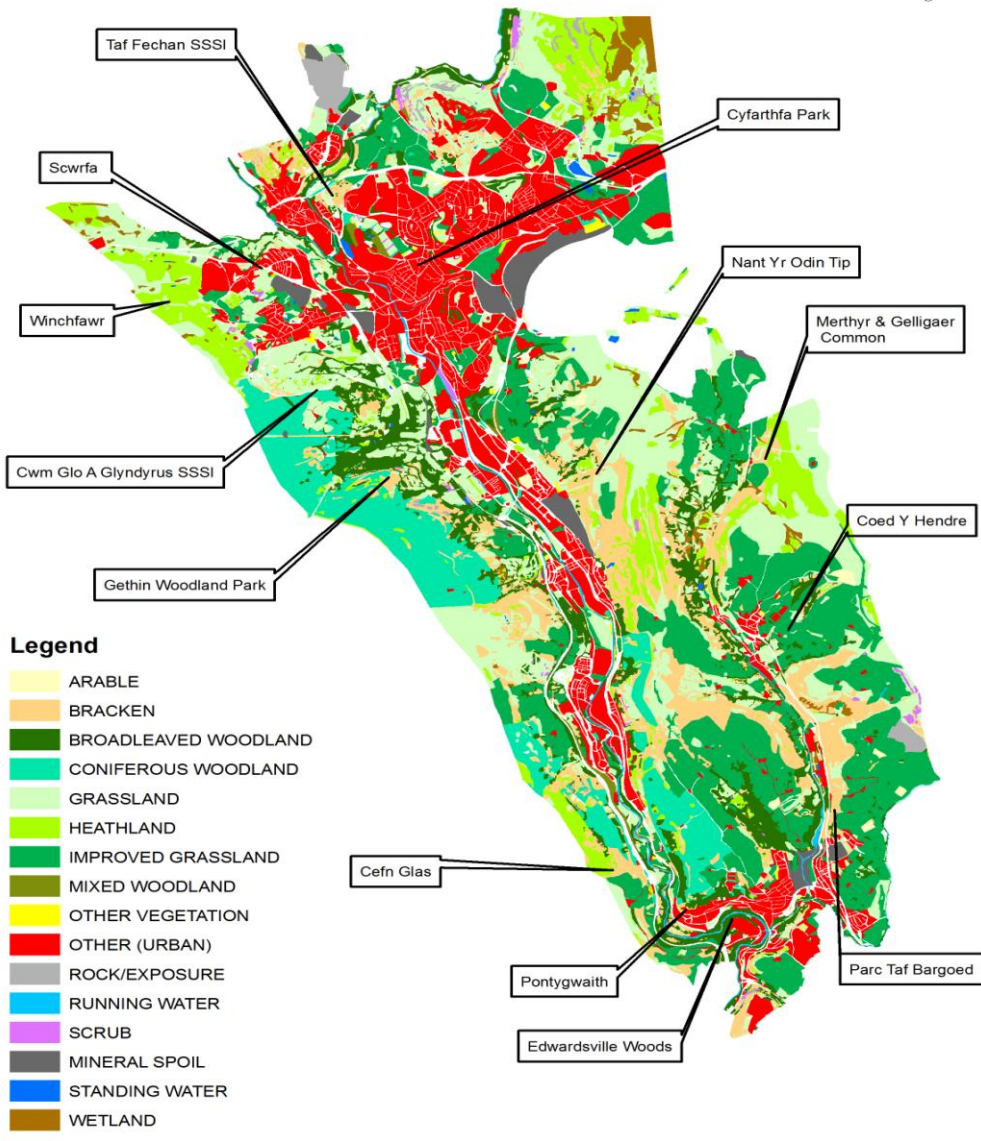
Mineral spoil, coedcae (ffridd) and river/streams species rich are distinctive habitats which contribute significantly to regional and national ecological connectivity and diversity.

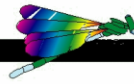
Two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Cwm Taf Fechan and Cwm Glo/Glyndrys, demonstrate diversity on old industrial sites with a wide range of high quality habitats and associated species; including waxcaps, pied flycatchers, dippers, salmon, bats and otter.





# Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Habitats





# Ecological Connectivity BARS

The MTBAP aims to address the loss of genetic diversity and integrity as a result of habitat fragmentation and the impacts of climate change. Projects aimed at improving ecological connectivity will be identified and progressed. Development will be required to minimise habitat fragmentation.

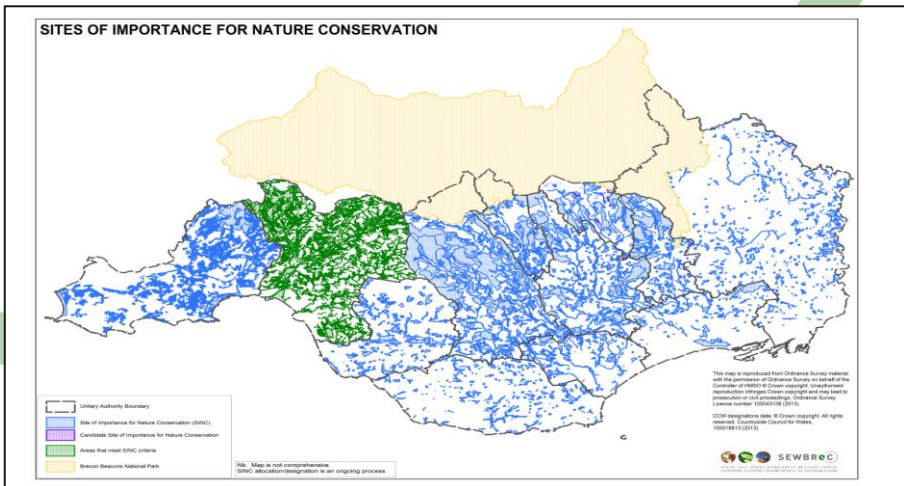
## Targets

- Identify, map and implement ecological connectivity projects for a range of priority habitats on a range of scales.
- Reduce fragmentation of habitats.
- Increase permeability of landscape.

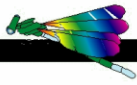
## Examples of actions

- Hedgelaying and hedge planting.
- Drystone walling.
- Management of transport corridors.

## Working together with neighboring County Boroughs







## Broadleaved Woodland



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough has 725 Hectares (Ha) of Broadleaved Woodland, some of which (i.e. Cwm Taf Fechan) has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in recognition of its national importance. A range of different types of woodland are concentrated in a small area reflecting variations in soil type, wetness and aspect.

### Examples of Actions

- Woodland Thinning.
- Tree Planting.
- Sustainable woodland use including charcoal making.

#### Local Habitats

- Upland Oakland
- Upland Mixed Ashwoods
- Lowland Beech and Yew Wood
- Wet Woodland
- Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
- Traditional orchards
- Wood Pasture and Parkland





## Grassland



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough has 1603 Ha of semi-natural grassland, including acid, neutral and calcareous grasslands, and Rhos Pasture. This action plan does not include 'improved' grassland, such as high quality grazing pasture, which does not typically support a rich and varied biodiversity. Semi-natural grasslands tend to lose more diversity more quickly than almost any other habitat as they rely on regular grazing. Agricultural 'improvement' by way of ploughing, reseeding and fertilising or absence grazing over many years are another cause of loss.

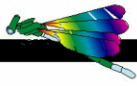
### Examples of Actions

- Grazing.
- Bracken control.
- Fencing.

#### Local Habitats

- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Upland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Meadows
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures





## Heathland



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough has 582.5 Ha of Heathland. This habitat occurs on impoverished, acidic mineral and shallow peat soil, and is characterized by the presence of plants such as heathers, whinberry and dwarf gorses. Whilst heathers may predominate in these harsh environments a rich diversity of flora and fauna complements the heathers. On drier heaths, gorse is a distinctive indicator whilst cross-leaved heath and purple-moor grass indicate wetter conditions.

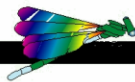
### Examples of Actions

- Control burning.
- Grazing.
- Bracken control.

#### Local Habitats

- Upland Heathland
- Lowland Heathland





# Wetlands



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough has 135.65 Ha of Wetland such as bogs, fen, swamp, marsh, standing open water, and ponds.

Wetlands are biodiversity rich habitats supporting a variety of invertebrates, amphibians and birds. Ponds and standing open water are vulnerable as they tend to silt up over time. To replace those lost new ponds can be created.

Wetlands can help to minimise flood events. Wetlands targets support the Merthyr Tydfil Flood Risk Management Strategy and River Basin Management Plan Objectives (Water Framework Directive).

## Examples of Actions

- Dredging.
- Planting.
- Pond creation.

### Local Habitats

- Blanket Bog
- Upland Flushes, Fens and Swamps
- Reedbeds
- Aquifer fed naturally fluctuating water bodies
- Ponds





# Rivers and Streams



This plan sets out a series of targets and actions for the maintenance, continued management, and expansion/restoration of river, stream, and riparian habitat.

Rivers and streams in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough support a wealth of biodiversity, including key species such as Otter, Kingfisher, Dipper and Salmon. Keeping these habitats well-managed can help minimise flood events. Rivers and streams targets support the Merthyr Tydfil Flood Risk Management Strategy and River Basin Management Plan Objectives (Water Framework Directive).

## Examples of Actions

- Litter clearance.
- Report pollution.
- Open canopy.
- Flood Risk Management.
- Fish pass creation.

### Local Habitats

- Rivers
- Streams







## Urban



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough has approx 1338 Ha of Urban area, including built up areas and buildings, amenity grasslands, gardens, road-side verges, and 'brownfield sites'. Urban areas are now considered to have the potential to be an important habitat, especially when positively managed for wildlife. Urban areas support populations of birds such as house martin, sparrow, swallow and swift, whilst buildings provide roosting habitat for bats. Gardens, if managed appropriately, can be a haven for wildlife, with regular visits from hedgehogs, slow worms, newts, frogs, toads, plus various bird and invertebrate species.

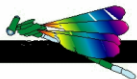
### Examples of Actions

- Bug Hotels.
- Bird/Bat boxes.
- Herbs and Flowers.

#### • Local Habitats

- Transport Corridors
- Gardens and allotments
- Managed Green spaces
- Brownfield/Wasteland/derelict sites
- Veteran and street trees
- Churchyards/cemeteries and burial grounds
- School grounds/playing fields and play grounds





## Linear features



Linear features often support a variety of plant and animals and have been identified as an important tool in addressing issues of ecological connectivity and habitat fragmentation, which themselves are major factors in the decline and loss of species. Features such as dry stone walls and hedges are being lost rapidly due to changes in farming and the loss of traditional farming skills.

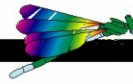
### Examples of Actions

- Restore dry stone walls and hedges.
- Ditch creation.
- Road verge management.
- Hedgelaying.
- Training.

#### Local Habitats

- Transport corridors
- Field boundaries
- Riparian corridors (rivers, canals, streams)
- Dry stone walls
- Road verges
- Hedgerows





## Inland Rock



Merthyr Tydfil has approx 85 Ha of Inland rock. Many inland rock habitats, such as quarries, have not been used for years and have been colonised by specialised plants, such as ferns, bryophytes and lichens, and associated invertebrates and other animals.

Several important species of birds use inland cliffs for nesting, notably the raptors (such as the Peregrine Falcon) and ravens. Many of these sites have geological, historic and cultural interest.

### Examples of Actions

- Designate RIGS (Regionally Important Geological Site).
- Vegetation clearance.

#### Local Habitats

- Inland rock outcrop and scree habitats
- Limestone pavements





## Coedcae (Ffridd)



Coedcae is usually unenclosed land found on steep valley sides with a mosaic of habitats which typically include some of the following; heath, bracken, acid grassland, scrub and mineral workings. They are the result of old farming methods called hafod a hendre where cattle and sheep were taken to the hafod (higher pasture farm) in the summer and hendre (old farm) for the winter. Coedcae (Ffridd in North Wales) is a distinctive feature of Wales and very rich in biodiversity creating important 'connective' links between and throughout Merthyr Tydfil and Wales.

### Example of Actions

- Grazing control.
- Fire control.
- Bracken control.
- Support landowners and graziers.
- Identify and map key sites.







## Mineral Spoil



Merthyr Tydfil has approx 153 Ha of Mineral Spoil habitat, including coal tips, iron workings and reclamation sites. The mineral spoils of the South Wales Valleys are of great ecological value; Merthyr Tydfil County Borough has some of the best, most varied and dense examples due to the unique industrial heritage; lichen/bryophyte-rich heaths, flower-rich vegetation and fungi (such as waxcaps) occur on them. These sites are often very important for historical, archaeological, cultural, geological and landscape reasons.

### Examples of Actions

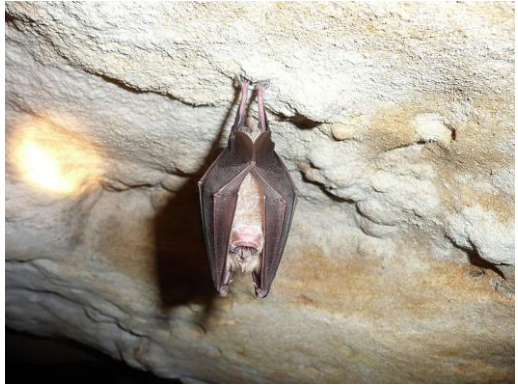
- Protection, management and enhancement.
- Regional mapping and protection.
- Reinstatement/restoration where essential.
- Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land.
- Mineral/ Coal spoil designated as a Wales BAP habitat.







## Bats



All bats that occur in Wales are European Protected Species, meaning that it is an offence to harm or disturb them or their roosts, whether intentionally or by accident. This action plan sets out a series of targets for continued monitoring of bat populations, and appropriate management and designation of bat habitat. MTBP also aim to encourage 'bat friendly' additions to new developments, such as bat bricks and boxes, and to include foraging habitat and connectivity within landscaping projects.

### Examples of actions

- Create new roosting opportunities.
- Maintain dark areas.
- Bat Boxes.

#### Species

- *Myotis bechsteinii* - Bechstein's bat
- *Plecotus auritus* - Brown long-eared Bat
- *Nyctalus noctula* - Noctule Bat
- *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* - Soprano Pipistrelle
- *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* - Greater Horseshoe Bat
- *Rhinolophus hipposideros* - Lesser Horseshoe Bat



## Dormouse

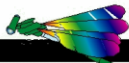


Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) is an European Protected Species meaning that it is an offence to harm or disturb them or their breeding site or place of rest, whether intentionally or by accident.

This action plan sets out a series of targets for continued monitoring of dormouse populations, and appropriate management and designation of potential dormouse habitat. Whilst dormouse have not been surveyed for or recorded in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough there is some likelihood of presence as there is suitable habitat and some indirect evidence.

### Examples of actions

- Identify potential dormouse sites.
- Carry out baseline survey of identified dormouse sites (nest box and nut surveys), and continue monitoring of sites for 5 years.



## Great Crested Newt



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough supports several meta-populations of Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*), which are a European Protected Species, meaning that it is an offence to harm or disturb them or their breeding site or place of rest, whether intentionally or by accident.

This action plan sets out a series of targets for continued monitoring of Great Crested Newt populations, and appropriate management and designation of Great Crested Newt habitat.

Recording, mapping, surveys, positive records, and translocations/mitigation through development, should also be properly collated in order to plan future projects and assess habitat/population loss or gain.

### Examples of actions

- Survey known and potential Great crested newt sites.
- Continued monitoring and management of Great crested newt populations.



## Otter



Otters (*Lutra lutra*) are a European Protected Species, meaning that it is an offence to harm or disturb them or their breeding site or place of rest, whether intentionally or by accident.

There has recently been a marked recovery in Otter populations in the river Taff and its tributaries, however, in order to maintain this it is important to continue to monitor Otter populations, and ensure that habitats are managed and maintained.

### **Examples of actions**

- Fish pass installation.
- Otter holt construction.



## Lapwing



This familiar farmland bird has suffered significant declines in recent years. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough is host to approximately 10 pairs, and is a key site in the Heads of the Valleys Lapwing Conservation Strategy, which aims to safeguard one of the last remaining Lapwing strongholds in Wales. This plan sets out a series of targets and actions aimed at maintaining and increasing the Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) population in Merthyr Tydfil.

### Examples of actions

- Land management.
- Liaise with landowners.





## Education and Raising awareness of Biodiversity



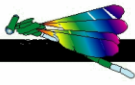
Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership (MTBP) aim to raise awareness of biodiversity, wildlife legislation and policies, and the Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Action Plan. They also aim to encourage local people to use green-spaces and appreciate wildlife, and schools and community groups to get involved in countryside projects.

### Targets

- Promote the education and public awareness of the importance of biodiversity.
- Promote education and raising awareness of individual habitats and species.
- Raise awareness of wildlife legislation, and the MTBAP.

### Examples of actions

- Support local communities to become more aware and involved in local environmental/wildlife/biodiversity issues.
- Regular Eco Club with partner organizations.
- Advice to landowners on the management of invasive species.



## Sustainable Development



Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership (MTBP) support and promote Sustainable Development. The sustainable use and protection of our high quality environment is a critical factor in Sustainable Development.

### Targets

- Promote biodiversity and MTBAP monitoring as a key indicator of sustainable development. (Living within environmental limits).
- Encourage others to use and protect the environment for a sustainable economy and to ensure a strong, healthy society.
- Report and take action against anti-social activities that affect the environment, such as littering, fly tipping, pollution, off-road biking etc.

### Examples of actions

- Support schools to raise awareness of conservation/wildlife/nature issues at a local and global level.
- Open Spaces/ Green Spaces designation, improvement and use.
- Focus on supporting groups and communities with greatest social and economic needs.



## Data Collection and management

In order for organisations to be able to plan, implement and assess the impacts of projects development, plans and strategies there needs to be adequate collection and use of information. To achieve this, the MTBP aim to increase surveying effort for both habitats and species, to increase participation in surveying, and to improve access to and use of survey information through the use of geographical information systems (and other mapping techniques).

### Targets

- Increase frequency of, and participation in, surveying of habitats and species in the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough.
- Improve collation and analysis of survey data and other information, including improved access and use of geographical information systems and other mapping techniques.
- Promote the use of BARS amongst the MTBP, other organizations and members of the public.

### Examples of actions

- Monitor the net habitat loss/gain through analysis of development and planning applications.
- Audit and report on all targets and actions on the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS).
- Provide evidence on qualitative and quantitative changes to the local environment for strategic monitoring as an indicator of sustainable development (overarching principal: using sound science and evidence responsibly).

