

Red Kite

Gwent Levels Management Plan

Living Levels Landscape Partnership



Red Kite Environment
Craggatak Consulting
Caroline Butlin-Worrall

February 2022



1 Introduction

This management plan is a major component of a process to determine a legacy for the Living Levels Landscape Partnership (LLLP). The plan reviews the achievements of the LLLP, assesses the policy contexts that are relevant to the management of the Gwent Levels, summarises the key features of the Levels landscape and provides a vision and a set of aims for its management. Finally, it sets out an action plan of objectives and actions in a five-year programme, identifying lead agencies, resources and risks.

Throughout this document we have referred to the *place* as the Gwent Levels, and the *partnership programme* as the Living Levels. The far western end of the area within the Cardiff boundary is not strictly named the Gwent Levels, but to aid brevity we have followed the approach of the LLLP in including it within the Gwent Levels project area.

2 The Living Levels Landscape Partnership

The LLLP is a Landscape Partnership Scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund which aims to promote and reconnect people to the heritage, wildlife and wild beauty of the Gwent Levels. This low-lying area adjacent to the Severn Estuary between Cardiff and Chepstow has been shaped by climate and sea level change and modified since Roman times by people reclaiming land from the sea.

It is a classic 'levels' landscape of fields with an intricate network of drainage ditches and reens that act as field boundaries and allow the land to be used productively. The landscape includes dispersed

villages and remote farmsteads, close to the large urban areas of Cardiff, Newport and the Severnside communities of Caldicot and Chepstow.

The LLLP has been funded for three years, extended for a further year due to the Covid19 pandemic, from 2018 until its completion in March 2022. The programme seeks to conserve and restore the natural heritage of the Levels, to encourage appreciation of its value through interpretation and to inspire people to learn about it and participate in its conservation.

In November 2021 an agreement was reached by partners to create a transition period of 18 months as an extension of the existing scheme to allow time and resources to establish a legacy scheme.

A key background document for the LLLP programme was the Landscape Conservation and Action Plan (LCAP) prepared for the application for LLLP funding. The LCAP presented in detail a review of the Gwent Levels landscape, its dynamics and forces for change, together with a programme of actions under three programme areas; Conserving and Restoring, Understanding and Appreciating and Learning and Engaging.

Much of the background information about the landscape and its threats and opportunities are still relevant for this management plan and will not be repeated here, except in summary. There has been significant progress, of course, in addressing the issues and making positive enhancements, both in managing the landscape and in engaging communities. Much work still needs to be done, though, to protect and conserve habitats, to manage heritage features and to encourage communities, both within the area and in neighbouring

urban conurbations, to understand, participate and enjoy the special landscape of the Levels.

The overall aim for the LLLP, as presented in the LCAP, was to:

...reconnect people and communities to their landscape to provide a sustainable future for this historic and unique area.

It did this through the following strategic aims:

- *Forging a strong partnership, with the community at its heart*
- *Recapturing and enhancing the natural and historic heritage*
- *Celebrating its stories*
- *Providing new opportunities for learning, developing skills, participation and investment*
- *Encouraging and providing access for all*
- *Building capacity and resilience for the long term*

The desired outcomes of the scheme were:

- *The Gwent Levels will be better understood by all those who live in, work on and choose to enjoy the area*
- *The Living Levels Landscape will be better managed; in a better condition and better recorded*
- *People will have developed skills; learnt about the landscape and its heritage*
- *A greater diversity and number of people will be participating*
- *The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit'*

The aim and objectives provided a firm foundation for the LLLP programme and will continue to be guiding principles for this management plan.

3 The purpose of this management plan

This plan is in three parts; the management plan, in sections 1 – 10, an action plan in section 11 and an action plan produced by the Living Levels team as a stand-alone annex specifically for the transition period. Each part will be regularly reviewed during its lifetime, and particularly during the transition period between the end of the LLLP programme and the start of a legacy scheme.

The plan sets out a vision, aims, objectives and actions that will form the basis of a work programme for a project that would maintain and develop the initiative of the LLLP. The actions are a mix of shorter-term necessities and longer-term ambitions. The preparation of the plan is the result of consultation with key stakeholders of the LLLP programme and therefore represents a consensual perspective on the opportunities to further manage and develop the Gwent Levels. The actions are programmed over an initial five-year period but many, particularly the work with communities, would extend beyond this period as ongoing activities.

The management plan is a snapshot of the opportunities for management as perceived at the period towards the end of the LLLP programme. As a new project is developed for its legacy the objectives and actions may be refined according to funding, staffing levels and other opportunities that may arise during the course of the plan's implementation. It should be viewed, therefore, as a 'rolling programme' to be monitored and, if necessary, reassessed at periods during its five-year lifetime. These reviews should also allow for reassessment into a subsequent five-year span.

4 How this management plan was prepared

The aim of the legacy planning process was to determine if there was value and enthusiasm in continuing the partnership to maintain the momentum of its work. Much had been achieved by the programme in conservation and management work on the ground and also in stimulating engagement by communities within and outside the Levels area. There was opportunity to build on the positive momentum and political support generated during the five years of the project.

The legacy planning process involved consultation with stakeholders in the programme, including core partners and other organisations associated with the programme’s work. Consultation involved interviews with stakeholders individually or in groups, using a proforma of questions.

A key requirement of the consultation was to seek a vision and aims for the future of the Gwent Levels that might inform and steer the work and outputs of a legacy project. These may have been similar to the original aims but could reflect changes in perspectives and acknowledge the positive impact the LLLP has made on the Levels.

The consultation responses have been refined into a vision and a series of aims and objectives which form the basis of this management plan. They are presented in Section 11 below. Suggested actions have been included and these will be refined during further development of the plan.

5 Context

National

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about “sustainable development”. This is the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action in accordance with the sustainable development principle aimed at achieving well-being goals. The Act sets seven well-being goals and gives a description of each. The Act also puts a well-being duty on specified public bodies to act jointly to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of their area by contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals. The Act established a statutory board, known as a public services board, in each local authority area in Wales. These boards must publish a local well-being plan; and the Gwent Levels Management Plan will need to help achieve the aspirations of each well-being plan.



The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires the sustainable management of natural resources. Section 11 directs NRW to prepare and publish area statements to facilitate the implementation of the national natural resources policy. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 strengthens the protection and sustainable management of scheduled monuments and listed buildings.

The Welsh Government’s Natural Resources policy statement (2017) states that Area Statements will play a key role in identifying local opportunities and constraints linked to the national priorities. Each Area Statement outlines the key challenges facing that



locality, what we can all do to meet those challenges, and how we can better manage our natural resources for the benefit of future generations. NRW has published seven area statements. Monmouthshire and Newport lie in the South East Area Statement whilst Cardiff is in the South-Central Area. Each statement develops a series of themes; the Gwent Levels Management Plan should address those relevant to the partnership. This will align the management plan with national priorities and give access to the data that lies behind the area statement.

South East Area Statement themes	South Central Area Statement themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking Our Landscapes • Climate Ready Gwent • Healthy Active Connected • Ways of Working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building resilient ecosystems • Connecting people with nature • Working with water • Improving our health • Improving our air quality

In the Welsh Government’s National Plan (Future Wales), Policy 9 (Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure) states that the Welsh Government will work with key partners to:

- identify areas which should be safeguarded and created as ecological networks for their importance for adaptation to climate change, for habitat protection, restoration or creation, to protect species, or which provide key ecosystems services, to ensure they are not unduly compromised by future development; and
- identify opportunities where existing and potential green infrastructure could be maximised as part of placemaking,

requiring the use of nature-based solutions as a key mechanism for securing sustainable growth, ecological connectivity, social equality and well-being.

There is a suggestion that there will be pilot areas for National Natural Resource Area delineation; a new approach to setting out national planning guidance. The Gwent Levels is likely to be one of those pilot areas. These will not be in place during the life of this management plan, but policy directives may start to emerge. There will be a need to remain flexible.

The Welsh Government has committed to achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030 and net zero by 2050. In 2021, it published its commitment to tackling climate change - Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021-25) sharing the journey, for a better future. In June 2021, the Senedd declared a nature emergency, believing there should be parity between actions taken to tackle climate change and those taken to tackle biodiversity loss. Policy 2 (Nature emergency) in the commitment addresses this. Environmental stakeholders are calling on the Welsh Government to introduce statutory domestic biodiversity targets. This may occur during the life of this plan.

Welsh Government has indicated that it will seek to deliver a National Nature Service to respond to the nature and climate emergencies and help address the economic and social (justice) fallout of the pandemic. It would do this by upskilling and expanding the workforce with good quality livelihoods in a sector shown to have significant job creation potential as part of a green and just recovery. The National Nature Service would be a framework to rapidly establish new and future focused opportunities around skills, jobs and the restoration of Wales’ natural environment, whilst also

better aligning the existing mechanisms in place. As the roll-out of this service is not yet confirmed by Welsh Government, the development of specific objectives around this concept would logically take place later on during the transition phase.

Regional

Strategic Planning Guidance for the South East region of Wales was published in two volumes (January 2000 and July 2001). It considered policy issues for all the principal types of development and use of land and is endorsed by eleven local authorities, including Cardiff Council, Monmouthshire County Council and Newport City Council. The strategy does not direct the regulation of activities, nor the management of land, nor the development of priorities or programmes. But it does identify areas of agreement on common issues and the mechanisms for resolving conflicts.

Through the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Welsh Government has proposed a Strategic Development Plan to cover South East Wales. This includes the local authority areas of Cardiff, Monmouthshire and Newport. On the 12th October 2020, the Welsh Government launched a public consultation seeking views on their intent for the legislation required to establish the procedure for Strategic Development Plans. The South East Wales group are committed to producing a Strategic Development Plan to cover the region supported by site specific Local Development Plans. These will not be in place during the life of this management plan but there may be opportunities to ensure the coordinated planning of development across the Levels.

The First Minister established the Transport Commission to investigate sustainable ways to tackle congestion on the M4 in South East Wales. It reported in November 2020 with the wish to

secure a comprehensive public transport and active travel network as a framework to plan around. There is a recommendation that employment be located within towns and city centres, and not on the outskirts close to the motorway. New developments should be close to an enhanced public transport network. The new Strategic Development Plan for South East Wales can be a master plan for the region, proactively identifying well-connected sites. If adopted, this will change the nature of development decisions upon the Levels.

The First Minister established the Gwent Levels Working Group to explore how the levels could be better protected and managed. The group includes representation from the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, local government, environmental NGOs and other stakeholders. It has four priority areas:

1. Living Landscapes Project (LLP)-Successor/Legacy;
2. Develop Additional Planning Guidance with Local Authorities;
3. Develop a more robust evidence base to inform planning guidance and decisions;
4. NRW Land Management Agreements; *and*

There is a seven-point strategic action plan to address the issues. The Living Levels legacy management plan must compliment this work and avoid duplication.

Local

Each of the local authorities produces a local development plan to guide spatial change and growth within the area, and corporate plans to present each Council's priorities. Though the details vary, the general intent is to promote economic growth and regeneration



whilst protecting the environment and ensure the population's well-being by creating sustainable communities and improving skills and employment opportunities. There is an emphasis on carbon reduction, energy resilience and a green culture. There are also recreation and access strategies, and tourism destination plans. All have an impact on the management and enjoyment of the Levels.

There is a Gwent Public Service Board (which merges the original Public Service Boards for five local authority areas, including Newport and Monmouth. Each local authority retains a local delivery group), Cardiff Council has its own Public Service Board and delivery group; and these boards prepare and publish a local well-being plan. These plans set a series of objectives, some of which will impact on the Gwent Levels. There is regular monitoring and reporting of progress. Public sector partners working on the Gwent Levels will be mindful of the priorities identified in the well-being plans.

Each local authority has developed Climate Emergency Action Plans to set out how to move to a carbon-neutral position. They explain how they will reduce Council carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and how they will work with others to help them reduce their carbon emissions too. This will require action within the Gwent Levels Management Plan.

A Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Gwent Levels was commissioned in 2016 by Monmouthshire County Council as part of the suite of documents required to support a bid for the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership programme. Published in 2017, this Strategy identifies the need and opportunities for improving the area's green infrastructure assets. It also sets out the principles and framework for the planning and delivery of green

infrastructure through the Living Levels Landscape Partnership Scheme. This assessment remains relevant today and informs this legacy management plan.

A Living Levels Visitor Experience Destination Management Plan was published in 2017 to frame an integrated 'destination approach'. The purpose was to increase footfall, economic value and visitor understanding and enjoyment by improving access to, awareness of, and the visitor experience in, the Living Levels. Though the action plan it presents is now in need of a refresh, the principles of the plan still apply. These will influence actions arising from the Gwent Levels Management Plan.

LLLP Landscape Conservation and Action Plan (LCAP)

The LCAP, produced for the LLLP, is the key document that describes the aims of the project and its core programmes. It introduces the landscape of the Levels, both natural and cultural, assesses current users, potential visitors and people's perceptions of the Levels. It critically assesses the threats to the Levels landscape and opportunities for management, justifying the creation of the Living Levels programme. It then goes on to present the structure of the initiative as three core programme areas – Conserving and Restoring; Understanding and Appreciating; and Learning and Engaging.

- **Programme 1 Conserving and restoring**
 - Aim 1 – to conserve, protect and enhance the GL's natural heritage and GI assets
 - Aim 2 – to raise awareness of the importance of the continuous management of this unique landscape for the benefit of the communities living and working in the surrounding area

- **Programme 2 Understanding and appreciating**
 - Aim 1 – to increase footfall, economic value and enjoyment of the GLs by improving access, awareness and the visitor experience
 - Aim 2 – to reconnect the local community with the GL landscape and its heritage by engaging and involving people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities with their local green spaces, sites of heritage interest and the stories of its people

- **Programme 3 Learning and engaging**
 - Aim 1 – to raise awareness of the landscape and its wildlife, heritage and accessibility through creative learning and engagement
 - Aim 2 – to provide skills and training in order to provide a lasting legacy for the programme by enabling ongoing management and care for Levels heritage assets.

The Scheme delivery and governance section of the LCAP determines the programme management, core team job descriptions, the role of the Board and Delivery Group, the Programme Board and working groups. It describes the mechanisms for project management and financial management and assesses risks and opportunities. It also assesses sustainability issues for each of the three programme areas and describes an approach to monitoring and evaluation.

6 Who implements the management plan?

This management plan has been prepared for a legacy Living Levels partnership. Some of the objectives may be led by individual partners, while others may be coordinated or managed by a

‘partnership team’. In practice, the actions will be delivered by partnerships of varying composition and extent.

7 The landscape and heritage of the Gwent Levels

The Gwent Levels, its history, geology and nature, are described in great detail in the LLLP Landscape Conservation Action Plan.

In summary, the Gwent Levels is an area of low-lying land next to the Severn Estuary between Cardiff and Chepstow in South Wales. First separated by a sea wall and drained during the Roman period, the Levels were a patchwork of saltmarsh, reed swamp and peat bogs, before being drained and more intensively managed for agriculture from medieval times. There are periods during history when the Levels were abandoned, and then reclaimed and recolonised.

The Levels consists of a depth of up to 13m of alluvium and peat containing traces of human exploitation and occupation from prehistoric times onwards. There are wooden structures, earthworks and moated farmsteads, as well as surface ridges created to improve drainage. This density of archaeological sites and processes has led to its recognition as a ‘historic landscape’.

The Levels is a matrix of regular and irregular shaped fields drained by a network of reens and ditches first established 1800 years ago. The system relies on the sea wall to prevent inundation by the sea and all water drains by gravity into the estuary.

The low-lying fields and ditches provide a wetland habitat for a rich diversity of wildlife. The network of ditches and reens provides a refuge for rare and endangered species, including one of the best assemblages of invertebrates in the country. Alongside most of the

farms are also historic orchards with local varieties of pears and apples.

The Levels has a variety of designations that help to protect its features including eight SSSIs, including the Newport Wetlands Nature Reserve which is also a National Nature Reserve. There are also Great Traston Nature Reserve and Magor Marsh Nature Reserve and SSSI that are managed by the Gwent Wildlife Trust. The whole of the Levels area falls within the influence of the Severn Estuary SAC and SPA, and is also an Outstanding Registered Historic Landscape in recognition of its historic value.

The Gwent Levels is predominantly under agricultural use with around 600 individual farmers and landowners managing 125 active farms. The soil quality, favourable climate and ready access to water result in high quality pasture that yields high volumes of meat and dairy produce.

The Levels landscape is used by local communities and visitors for outdoor activities including walking, cycling and birdwatching, and for fishing and wildfowling alongside the estuary.

8 Key issues for the Gwent Levels

The LLLP programme was established to address two main threats to the Gwent Levels landscape:

An increasing disconnection from the landscape by growing sections of the community, resulting in loss of heritage features due to reduction in traditional land management of the Levels, together with associated knowledge and skills with these methods:

An under-developed 'vision' and 'sense of place' for the long-term future of this landscape. This is leading to inappropriate development; missed opportunities for tourism and inward investment; and increased negative impacts from local conurbations such as fly-tipping and litter.

9 Achievements of the LLLP

The key tangible outputs of the LLLP programme have been:

- 26km of open field ditches restored
- Aquatic plant and invertebrate life returning
- 150+ willows pollarded
- 160+ trees planted
- Relict orchards restored and restocked
- Skills learned and volunteers enthused
- 27ha of land managed for the shrill carder bee
- 30+ fly-tipping cases investigated, and 7 prosecutions made
- 62,000+ unique visits made to the website
- Marketing and new interpretation at 10 gateway and visitor hubs
- New pre-history display at Newport Museum
- 'People of the landscape' sculptures installed
- Walking and cycling routes created
- PROW network upgraded and improved
- 17 community hubs funded
- Autumn and winter films and history animation made
- 110+ events and activities delivered with over 10,000 attendees
- Creation of RATS – 37 history volunteers
- 52 oral histories recorded
- 73 schools, 1000+ primary pupils and 150+ college students reached
- Over 600 volunteers participating and £150k of volunteer hours

The outcomes of the programme have been considerable. One of the main achievements has been the mass mobilisation of people from very different circles and across the entire landscape. This has created a real revival of interest and enthusiasm in the Gwent Levels across a breadth of audiences from residents, landowners and farmers, visitors, business owners, volunteers, to politicians with influence over important policy decisions affecting the Levels.

The public engagement side of the programme has been at least as important as the ecological restoration side. The heart of the Living Levels programme has been about reconnecting people with their history, their environment and with other people, in the sense of communities coming together in and around the Levels. The huge programme of events, skills training and volunteering has had overwhelmingly positive feedback, with people consistently reporting learning new things about their local area as a key reason for enjoyment.

The learning programme has sown the seeds of interest amongst young people from primary age up to tertiary. The partnership with Coleg Gwent has seen the Living Levels staff working with Coleg tutors to embed the Gwent Levels as a study course with photography, arts and drama students. This is a departure from the typical ecology subjects, helping to reach a far broader demographic through their peer networks. A diverse range of people have also been involved in volunteering from local residents to corporate groups as well as accommodating groups with special needs.

This work is leading to an injection of passion and pride in this landscape on a significant scale. Events have frequently been sold out, there have been volunteer waiting lists and there has been an

increase in the number of visits at some key destinations. There has also been an excellent response from press and media through coverage on programmes such as BBC's Countryfile and regular appearances in more localised press and media. A new Friends of the Gwent Levels campaigning group has very recently been established, with several of their founding members being closely involved with Living Levels activities.

The midterm evaluation noted that Living Levels is making a very significant contribution to the area's heritage and to the way people engage with this landscape.

This work has translated into real and sustained pressure for policy change which is beginning to lead to a change in the way the Levels is being valued, managed and protected, fulfilling the key objective and purpose the partnership set out to achieve. Evidence for that change lies in recent political decisions and announcements, significantly by Climate Minister Julie James MS.

There is also a suite of other policies being prepared that will strengthen protection for the Levels in the planning system. Although this is the collective output of a very large number of organisations and individuals, the work of the partnership has really helped to organise information and coordinate awareness-raising activity around the importance of the Levels.

10 Vision and aims

Vision

The Gwent Levels is widely recognised and celebrated as a unique place within Wales, for its abundant wildlife, intricate, hand-crafted



landscape, and deep, rich history. It forms a thriving part of our natural and cultural heritage, with a powerful sense of place that enriches people’s lives. The Levels is a resilient, working landscape, highly valued by residents and visitors alike, that makes a positive contribution towards combatting the effects of climate change and reversing biodiversity loss.

Aims for the Gwent Levels

- A. The conservation and management of the Gwent Levels are informed by authoritative data, gained through ongoing research and monitoring.
- B. The Gwent Levels is a working landscape and an exemplar of landscape-scale conservation, where management involves integrating productive farming with conserving biodiversity, recreation and historic assets, resulting in resilient ecosystems and cultural landscapes.
- C. The Gwent Levels is a landscape where farmers and landowners are valued both as producers of food and other public goods; and as contributors to nature recovery.
- D. The Gwent Levels is a place where people understand and appreciate the landscape, its history and wildlife habitats; where they can access and enjoy its nature and culture; value its benefits for better health and wellbeing; and are inspired to support its protection and management.

- E. The Gwent Levels supports healthy, resilient ecosystems, its footprint is carbon negative and people understand the importance and urgency of preparing for and adapting to climate change.
- F. The economy of communities in and around the Gwent Levels is stimulated through the development of visitor facilities and local supply chains that enhance a sense of place and keep maximum benefits of tourism within the local economy.
- G. The historic, cultural and ecological integrity of the Gwent Levels are conserved and enhanced through the development and application of harmonised and consistent planning and economic development policies across all local authority areas.

Aim for a Living Levels legacy partnership and scheme

- H. The momentum of the Living Levels Landscape Partnership is maintained and developed through a legacy partnership that shares resources through coordinated action, that helps deliver corporate and shared objectives, and collectively delivers an agreed programme of actions.



11 Objectives and actions

This table provides a scheme for the management of the Gwent Levels in the Transition phase, and for a subsequent five-year period.

The table is arranged with the **Aims** in yellow headings, under which there are **Objectives** and **Actions**. The **Year** column shows the Transition period as **T** and the subsequent years as **1, 2**, etc. The **T** column is linked to the stand-alone annex action plan for the

Transition period. No start date is shown for year 1, though it is likely to be in autumn 2023. The other columns are:

- Champion** – This will be the advocate person for each action.
- Resources** – The other organisations that should be involved, and requirements for delivering the actions.
- Risks** – The likely risks for delivering the actions.
- Drivers** – The policy contexts for each action, or objective.

No	Objectives	Actions	Year					Champion	Resources	Risks	Drivers
			T	1	2	3	4				
<i>To be confirmed and updated by partnership group</i>											
Aims and objectives for the Gwent Levels											
A The conservation and management of the Gwent Levels are informed by authoritative data, gained through ongoing research and monitoring.											
A1	Support the development of a robust data collection, research, recording, citizen science and monitoring system for habitats, species and the historic environment.	Research A1.1 Identify gaps in data and knowledge. Establish what data partners hold, how up to date it is, and if/how it can be accessed for use by the partnership. Publish a gap analysis and seek commitments to secure and supply new data.						PM (team)	NRW, GWT, SEWBRc, RSPB, Buglife, BBCT, FOGL, LAs all to supply data	Data availability and system compatibility (GIS), costs of data	GL, of 60 SSSI feature condition assessments 70% are unknown, 17% are unfavourable and 13% are favourable. NRAP "invest in improving our evidence and monitoring for the long term" GLWG action FW establishes need to "Develop a more robust evidence base to inform planning guidance and decisions."



		<p>Training A1.2 Prepare and deliver a training and support scheme for volunteers to gather data to inform the habitat management programme and monitoring impacts of land management.</p>						SEWBRcC, GWT to deliver some of the training	SEWBRcC, GWT to deliver some of the training	Data quality, capacity to support large numbers of volunteers – may need additional staff e.g vol officer	Post-Covid recovery skills agenda Wellbeing plans – meaningful engagement with nature NRAP “understand the role that nature plays in our lives, livelihoods and well-being”
		A1.3 Work with NRW, GWT, Colleges, Universities, schools and interest groups to develop a programme of skills development linked to the recording and monitoring programme.						NH Officer	NRW/ SEWBRcC re data standards, Coleg Gwent and Universities for delivery	Supervision/ training of students, data quality	Covid 19 Green recovery, National Nature Service? NRAP “demonstrate the value we place on biodiversity through governance, and support for skills and capacity”
		A1.4 Develop links with the emerging National Nature Service (NNS) and its objectives to develop skills and understanding about nature in young people.						NH Officer	NRW		NRW: Green recovery plan WG’s economic policy (reconstruction mission – Well-being Economy; Foundational Economy).
		<p>Develop programme A1.5 Continue, and develop further, the LLLP habitat and species recording and monitoring volunteer programme.</p>						NH Officer	NRW, GWT, SEWBRcC, RSPB, LAs all to advise and sign off - consult BBCT/Buglife	Duplication of effort/ creating added value compared to existing monitoring, data quality needs to be guaranteed – projects may	Improving evidence base for place-based decision making, area statements etc State of Natural Resources Report – SoNaRR2020



										be identified during transition that change these objectives	
		A1.6 Deliver a programme of citizen science projects and other related activities based on the training programme.						NH Officer (team)	SEWBRcC, GWT	Data quality, capacity to support large numbers of volunteers – may need additional staff e.g vol officer	NRW Evidence Report 90: Monitoring Review – Citizen Science and the Delivery of Monitoring in NRW.
		A1.7 Support the RATS group of volunteers in their recording of archaeology and history of the Levels and conveying the findings to a wider audience.						CE Officer (team)	CADW to advise/ support	Capacity to support – needs CADW or GGAT to support technical side	Update HER (very out of date for GL)
		Encouraging academic research A1.8 Explore and encourage partnerships with universities, colleges and schools to prepare and deliver research programmes in data recording, ecosystem management and archaeology.						TBD		Capacity to prepare, manage and deliver	Strengthen evidence base? Ensure data collection are robust, standards upheld etc

B The Gwent Levels is a working landscape and an exemplar of landscape-scale conservation, where management involves integrating productive farming with conserving biodiversity, recreation and historic assets, resulting in resilient ecosystems and cultural landscapes.



B1	Develop an interconnected nature and landscape recovery strategy based on sound scientific data, aimed at encouraging more sustainable management of the Levels that will halt the decline in biodiversity and provide a resilient ecosystem of connected habitats as homes for nature.	B1.1 Develop a spatial nature recovery strategy and an integrated habitat management programme to inform the development of future Living Landscape projects. This should focus on priority habitats to create significant wildlife corridors and green infrastructure, making reference to the GIS and LCA strategies and the habitat restoration work undertaken through the LLLP.						PM (team) NH officer in support	All core partners to advise and sign off, GLWG, Buglife and BBCT consultees?	Quality of data to inform plan, scope of plan, timing of WG wider policies and strategies to inform/feed in	Area statements, NRP principles, nature recovery action plan for Wales 2020-2021 – maintaining and enhancing resilient ecological networks/nature networks etc requires spatial action at LS scale and ecosystems approach Delivery mechanisms should include SSSI Land Management Agreements such as S.16, and other grants. GLWG action framework “Explore opportunities offered by Section 16 SSSI Management Agreements and other funding mechanisms to ensure that landowner interest for entering management agreements is met. NRP policy -principle 1 deliver nature-based solutions + ensure favourable condition of protected sites WG’s commitment to climate and nature emergency (NRAP etc) Julie James’ recent statement on the
		B1.2 Implement the strategy, including a programme of ditch restoration, focused on priority areas identified in the strategy, working closely with farmers and landowners.						PM (team), NH officer in support	All core partners to advise and sign off – WG/GLWG, Buglife and BBCT consultees?	Timing and availability of wider policy/grants to support	
		B1.3 Further develop a programme of action for the SSSIs and explore ways to support NRW’s assessment and monitoring of SSSIs, including SSSI Land Management Agreements and ensuring landowner interest is met.						NH officer	NRW, GWT, BBCT, LAs, Buglife (possibly other partners too)	Availability of capital, quality of spatial plan	
		B1.4 Identify other initiatives with similar objectives to maximise						NRW	NRW, GWT, BBCT, LAs, Buglife		



		opportunity and value e.g. Natur am Byth!							(possibly other partners too)		protection and management of the Gwent Levels
B2	Enhance understanding of the impacts of sea level rise on the Levels, its habitats and communities.	B2.1 Prepare and implement a strategy to mitigate, and adapt to, the impacts of sea level rise.						NRW	NRW, GWT, LAs		
B3	Seek the enhancement of water quality within the Levels system.	B3.1 Explore how partnership working can support statutory duties to regulate and improve water quality.						NRW	Welsh Water, LAs	Requires buy-in from NRW & WW and capacity to deliver (beyond core LL team capabilities to deliver)	Water Framework Directive
		B3.2 Research and identify pilot project opportunities that tackle diffuse pollution.						NRW, supported by NH officer? TBD	Welsh Water, LAs	As above	NRW: Diffuse Water Pollution in Wales Issues, solutions and engagement for action.
		B3.3 Scope opportunities for partnership work to maintain, enhance and restore floodplains and hydrological systems to reduce flood risk and improve water quality and availability.						NH Officer/NRW? TBD		As above	
B4	Seek protection of the historic landscape through sensitive management of historic landscape	B4.1 Scope a project with CADW to provide advice and support to landowners and tenant farmers on appropriate management of						CADW	GWT/NRW	Dependent on Cadw to lead	Planning policy Wales, Historic landscape designation, HER record outdated



	features, buried archaeology and historic artefacts.	land with archaeological and historic features.									
C The Gwent Levels is a landscape where farmers and landowners are valued both as producers of food and other public goods; and as contributors to nature recovery.											
C1	Champion more sustainable farming methods, linking food, farming and people, and helping farmers transition to more sustainable land management.	C1.1 Work with Welsh Government, the Gwent Levels Working Group and relevant agencies to develop and deliver a strategy for promoting and supporting a transition to sustainable farming in the Levels.						Unsure who should lead on project development – NRW, GWT? TBD	RSPB, Farming Connect, Buglife, BBCT	Timing of WG policy on future farm policy – will detail be there to plan?	Sustainable Farming Scheme post CAP
		C1.2 Further develop the orchard restoration and management programme aiming at restoring more orchards during the programme period.						NH Officer	GWT	Capacity/ funding	
		C1.3 Provide support network for orchard owners to enable them to manage and restore their orchards, including providing a volunteer workforce to assist owners.							NH Officer	GWT	Capacity/ funding
C2	Support farmers and landowners to maximise their adoption of the Sustainable Farming Scheme as a replacement of the CAP, securing	C2.1 Work with Welsh Government to secure an advisory and funding package appropriate to the specific characteristics of the Levels.						TBD	NRW/GWT/ Farming Connect/ RSPB	Timing of WG farm policy – may need to phase later, Steve Spode work may inform	GWLG/ Steve Spode work may inform



	environmentally enriching management of the land while sustaining farm incomes.											
<p>D The Gwent Levels is a place where people understand and appreciate the landscape, its history and wildlife habitats; where they can access and enjoy its nature and culture; value its benefits for better health and wellbeing; and are inspired to support its protection and management.</p>												
D1	Encourage access and participation by groups and communities, particularly under-served communities, aimed at making a measurable change to people, for their mental and physical wellbeing, promoting more active lifestyles and developing environmental responsibility.	D1.1 Review and refresh the audience development plan and plan priority actions to ensure continued high levels of interest and engagement with the LL.						CEO (team)	All partners consulted and sign off			RSPB SNTP strategy
		D1.2 Research, develop and monitor a pilot outreach programme of activities targeted specifically at underserved communities.						CEO (team) or maybe RSPB through SNTP work? TBD	All partners consulted and sign off			Well-being assessments and priorities for LAs, RSPB SNTP strategy
D2	Promote the Gwent Levels as a location for green prescribing and for activities that help with social wellbeing and inclusion.	D2.1 Research best practice with social prescribing and acting on the best knowledge available, and seek to facilitate links with primary care services in South East Wales to explore opportunities to develop green and social prescribing using the Levels.						CEO (team) or maybe RSPB through SNTP work? TBD	All core partners consulted and sign off	Capacity to research and deliver, competition with similar projects?		Well-being assessments and priorities for LAs, RSPB SNTP strategy



		D2.2 Facilitate the development of a pilot scheme for green prescribing.						Lead to be established following D2.1 – could be new partner?	All core partners consulted and sign off	As above	NHS Wales
D3	Work closely with schools and youth groups in the area to introduce them to the Gwent Levels and explain its features as an essential part of curriculum-based learning.	D3.1 Continue to develop the programme of activities for schools and youth groups, focusing on both local communities, and underserved communities.						GWT via learning working group lead (currently Kathy Barclay? TBD)	Learning working group	Capacity/ funding to maintain activity	RSPB SNTP strategy
		D3.2 Continue, and further develop, the programme of learning materials, bringing together a broad range of stakeholder organisations and groups to share and promote resources.						GWT via learning working group lead TBD	Learning working group	Capacity/ funding to maintain activity	
		D3.3 Maintain the learning working group.						GWT via learning working group lead TBD	Learning working group	Capacity/ funding to maintain activity	
D4	Further develop relationships with further education colleges and universities, to create activities for students in a range of disciplines.	D4.1 Maintain and further develop contacts with further and higher education colleges / universities to explore opportunities for student projects in arts, media, ecology and other courses.						CEO (team)	RSPB, GA, GWT, NRW, LAs, FOGL + Universities and College partners	Capacity/ funding to maintain activity – may need to establish with one establishment eg CG and then roll out further in later years	Covid 19 financial recovery RSPB SNTP strategy



D5	Explore opportunities for corporate participation in the management of the Gwent Levels, through sponsorship of management and public engagement activities, and participation in Corporate Social Responsibility schemes.	D5.1 Identify potential business partners for corporate participation in the management of the Gwent Levels.						Unsure who to lead? Too much for team in transition? TBD	Need to identify lead and partners	Capacity to develop activity – may need to phase in later	Welsh Government Corporate Social Responsibility Framework Document
		D5.2 Develop relationships with key businesses in the region to initiate opportunities for sponsorship of activities and/or use of the Levels for CSR schemes.						Unsure who to lead? Too much for team in transition? TBD	Need to identify lead and partners	Capacity to develop activity – may need to phase in later	Welsh Government Corporate Social Responsibility Framework Document
D6	Reduce the incidence of fly-tipping and to develop a common approach to fly-tipping across the area.	D6.1 Building on the resources developed by the LLLP, enhance awareness of duty of care responsibilities to ensure proper disposal of household and business waste.						NRW/FTAW	LAs	Capacity/ funding to support	Waste Management Plans
		D6.2 Ensure Fly-tipping incidents are routinely and consistently reported.						NRW/FTAW	LAs + community groups	Data reporting and quality issues – are these ongoing?	
		D6.3 Catch and prosecute perpetrators of fly-tipping through multi-agency enforcement processes.						NRW/FTAW	LAs (define the 'multi-agency agents!')	Dependent on agreements for multi-agency enforcement processes – in place?	



E The Gwent Levels supports healthy, resilient ecosystems, its footprint is carbon negative and people understand the importance and urgency of preparing for and adapting to climate change.													
E1	Seek appropriate opportunities to maximise sequestering of carbon in land and water management, and to seek ways to adapt to the likely impacts of climate change.	E1.1 Review and commission research and studies into impacts of climate change on the Levels and possible mitigation projects that could be piloted on the Levels.							NRW? Or additional staff resource? TBD	GWT, NRW – is this an academic project?	Scope – not sufficiently defined at present – needs further breaking down/thinking to develop a brief	National Plan Future Wales: Policy 9 Area Statements NRP – aligning responses to climate and nature emergency to ensure e.g. tree planting in right place!	
		E1.2 Work in partnership to identify where land could be managed differently to sequester carbon and build resilience.							Additional staff resource?	NRW, GWT	As above	Welsh Government: Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021-25) sharing the journey Local Authority Climate Emergency Action Plans	
		E1.3 Feed the learning outcomes of the research into further programme development.							Lead once established above				
		E1.4 Identify and publish the carbon footprint of the Gwent Levels in line with agreed carbon budgeting protocols.							NRW?				Welsh Government: Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021-25) sharing the journey
E2	Raise the awareness by communities in and around the Levels to the impacts of climate change.	E2.1 Prepare and deliver a climate change awareness programme for communities using volunteers.							CEO (team)May need commissioned work to support?			Common goals of partners	



		E2.2 Work with landowners and communities to better understand how climate change might impact them and what climate adaptation involves.									
<p>F The economy of communities in and around the Gwent Levels is stimulated through the development of visitor facilities and local supply chains that enhance a sense of place and keep maximum benefits of tourism within the local economy.</p>											
F1	Further develop and refine the accessibility and visitor experience of the Levels to highlight its unique sense of place and encourage exploration and spend in the wider area.	F1.1 Establish and maintain a sub-group for destination management and marketing staff from partner authorities and organisations to sustain the common approach to marketing the Levels as a recreation and tourism destination.						PM, LA DMOs	LA DMOs		Visitor experience destination management plan (GL) and LA destination plans
		F1.2 Collect further data on tourism in the Levels by collecting volume and value figures and undertaking regular visitor surveys to assess visitor spend and preferences. This data will be an essential precursor for F1.3.						LA DMOs	LA DMOs		Visitor experience destination management plan (GL) and LA destination plans
		F1.3 Review and update the Living Levels visitor experience Destination Management Plan to identify and scope further opportunities to deliver high quality visitor experiences in the Levels in support of						NCC? TBD	All core partners to sign off-commissioned work may be needed	Capacity and funding to deliver – no team Access/ Interpretation resource	Visitor experience destination management plan (GL) and LA destination plans,



		local businesses, hubs and community venues.								during transition	
		F1.4 Further develop the destination brand and the way that the experiences are presented and packaged to target specific market segments.						DMOs			
		F1.5 Develop and deliver projects that improve accessibility of hubs and gateways for people of all abilities and capacities.						TBD	Hub and gateway staff	Capacity and funding to deliver -may need to phase in later with larger team?	
		F1.6 Promote the use of hubs and gateways, and other visitor facilities, through websites (Living Levels but also partner and LA websites, Visit Wales and WCP) social media and a shared marketing strategy.						TBD	LL core team, LAs, core partner comms/market ing officers, Visit Wales, WCP officers (NRW)	Capacity and funding to deliver	
F2	Maintain and, and where possible improve, the connection between the Gwent Levels and cities, towns and villages, enabling people to access the Levels.	F2.1 Ensure existing promoted routes are in usable condition.						TBD			
		F2.2 Further develop and deliver opportunities for creating coherent links between existing walking and cycling routes into and across the Levels for leisure and active travel, building on the extensive Glynn Teague report						TBD			



		prepared for Living Levels and in light of new opportunities.									
		F2.3 Develop a footpath care group to help remedy basic maintenance and management issues that occur on the PROW network. Nurture and train the group to deliver a range of practical maintenance tasks.						Core team, volunteer? PROW staff of LAs?	LAs, GWT, NRW, RSPB (via centres with PROW crossing them)	Capacity and funding to deliver support required and staff	
F4	Develop mutually beneficial relationships between local businesses and communities, particularly for local farming produce, accommodation and crafts, to stimulate the growth of the local economy through place-based produce and services and through the development of businesses exploiting evolving digital technologies.	F4.1 Develop a common approach to supporting local businesses.						TBD	LAs	Scope – ill-defined at present...too vague	
		F4.2 Develop local supply chains to maximise benefits to local communities and prevent, or reduce, tourism leakage						TBD	LAs	Capacity and funding to deliver	
<p>G The historic, cultural and ecological integrity of the Gwent Levels are conserved and enhanced through the development and application of harmonised and consistent planning and economic development policies across all local authority areas.</p>											
G1	To identify and promote the special	G1.1 Define the forces of change affecting the socio-									



	qualities and features of the Gwent Levels; and define their sensitivities to change.	economic, cultural and natural heritage of the Levels.									
		G1.2 Define the inherent sensitivity to change of the Levels landscape in terms of both its character as a whole and the individual elements contributing to character.									
		G1.3 Commission and publish research and monitoring on the impacts of cumulative development on the Gwent Levels to inform national and local land-use policy.									
G2	Offer information and advice on the development of policies and programmes to secure the integrity of the special qualities and features of the Gwent Levels, informed by the legacy Landscape Character Assessment and Green Infrastructure Strategy.	G2.1 Engage with Strategic and Local Development Plan consultation programmes.									
		G2.2 Ensure that Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Gwent Levels secures the integrity of the special qualities and features of the cultural and natural designations found across the area.									GLWG action framework refers to development of a "natural resources and ecosystems masterplan for the Gwent Levels.
G3	Participate in national and local	G3.1 Support the development of a National									Policy 9 - Gwent levels has been identified as one of



	initiatives seeking to develop policies and programmes associated with natural resources, nature recovery and net benefit for biodiversity.	Natural Resource Area delineation for the Gwent Levels.									the 9 National Natural Resources Areas in Future Wales
		G3.2 Prepare briefing papers on the options and process; to consider the implications of the NNRA Strategic Development Planning and the Local Development Plan framework									GLWG action framework priority 3 – developing SPGs based on LDPS until such time the SDP is in action
		G3.3 Support the development of a Net Benefit for Biodiversity strategy by the Welsh Government as part of its 2023 Nature Recovery Action Plan.									
Aim and objectives for a Living Levels legacy partnership and scheme											
H The momentum of the Living Levels Landscape Partnership is maintained and developed through a legacy partnership that shares resources through coordinated action, that helps deliver corporate and shared objectives, and collectively delivers an agreed programme of actions.											
H1	Establish a mechanism that secures the long-term legacy of the current programme.	H1.1 The LLLP Board to agree a mechanism for a legacy scheme and seek appropriate approvals.									
H2	Secure sufficient funding for a core project team that can then harvest funds and grants to support project development.	H2.1 The LLLP partnership to secure funding to support a legacy scheme and to fund a core project team.									



H3	Develop close engagement between partners, developing common aims and achieving objectives through collective effort.	H3.1 Establish Board, Steering Group and relevant working groups and a project team.										
		H3.2 Develop a system of regular communication between partners and staff.										
		H3.3 Hold an annual general assembly meeting for all partners and other stakeholders.										
		H3.4 Hold an annual public meeting to raise awareness of the project and its outputs.										
H4	Maintain the current branding of the Living Levels and the continued updating of the website.	H4.1 Ensure all current branding is transferred to the legacy scheme and that the LLLP domain and website are maintained and the website regularly updated.										
H5	Develop a programme of work that is delivered by the project team, by a network of supported groups.	H5.1 Refine this management plan into detailed annual work programmes, identifying costs, delivery agencies and schedules.										
		H5.2 Establish a delivery working group to monitor the work programme										
H6	Act as a directory of information about the Levels, as a	H6.1 To maintain and develop a repository directory of data on										



	repository of specialist data and knowledge.	habitats, species, historic environment and histories.										
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--