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1. Introduction

1.1 The Cardiff Countryside Strategy, Review 2005 updates and replaces the original Countryside Strategy approved by Cardiff County Council. The original Countryside Strategy was approved in January 1998 and had two key aims:

- That the Council, together with countryside related organisations develop a shared vision for the countryside in Cardiff; and
- That groups and organisations undertake initiatives to put these objectives into action.

1.2 These two aims remain valid today. However, it should also be recognised that Cardiff’s Countryside Strategy plays an important role in helping to deliver both National and Council policy. The review process has enabled up to date references to be made to relevant national and local policy. At the national level, CCW have produced guidelines to assist Unitary Authorities prepare Countryside Strategies and the Welsh Assembly Government’s Planning Policy Wales (2002) refers to their role and linkage to the UDP (Unitary Development Plan). Additionally, the Strategy demonstrates how the Council is meeting its statutory responsibilities from national legislation such as The Countryside Act (1980), Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).

1.3 At the Council level, the Countryside Strategy is a mechanism to deliver Council objectives. These include:

- To mainstream environmental and sustainability considerations in all Council plans and policies and to work to become a model of best practice in protecting the environment and advocating the importance of sustainability issues, to the public and partners;
- To protect and enhance the natural and built environment;
- To protect the green corridors, particularly the river valleys, and green spaces of Cardiff;
- To protect and improve Cardiff’s parks, gardens, open spaces, and to promote access to the countryside;
- To work with the Local Health Alliance to promote the benefits of an active lifestyle for people of all ages at every opportunity;
- To undertake full and meaningful consultation with residents of Cardiff during decision making and policy development and to establish formal mechanisms for consulting with diverse groups within the city; and
- To support the voluntary and community sectors, recognising their vital contribution to the city.

1.4 Links to the Local Development Plan Framework are important as the Strategy is a mechanism to assist the delivery of planning policies relating to the protection, management and enhancement of Cardiff’s countryside. Similarly, the Strategy links with other Corporate Strategies such as the Local Sustainability Strategy, Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Local Transport Plan and Health Agenda.
1.5 The Countryside Strategy has a broad remit and is not limited to ‘traditional’ countryside issues. The strategy reflects local needs, particularly regarding raising public understanding and awareness of the importance of Cardiff’s great natural reserve.

1.6 It is a myth that Cardiff does not possess much countryside. Over one third of its administrative area is open space. This is reflected in the wide variety of different landscapes ranging from the Wentloog Levels at sea level to Garth Mountain rising to over 300 metres (1,000 feet) in height. Open spaces, parks, river and stream corridors add to the diversity of accessible green space within the City, providing valuable opportunities for recreation and wildlife, close to where people live.

1.7 The wide variety of countryside and open spaces together with the activities taking place within them creates a unique range of issues, problems and opportunities. It is the role of this Strategy to respond to these issues through a process of dialogue with stakeholders. In this way, locally derived objectives can provide an on-going framework for the delivery of practical initiatives on the ground.
2. About this document

2.1 The review process has provided an excellent opportunity to revisit the Joint Vision Statements (JVSs) in the light of implementing the Strategy for over six years. Both general Strategy objectives and the new Joint Vision Statements have been strengthened and updated. They reflect the strong consensus of opinion about keeping objectives relevant to stakeholders, and about the issues the Strategy must address.

2.2 This document provides an overall framework for a truly on-going process. Each year the Council, together with dozens of external bodies and the general public, carry out a wide range of high quality initiatives. It is therefore of great importance that there are mechanisms in place to effectively organise this work. The review process has been useful in addressing this issue and the following paragraphs set out how an ongoing framework will be implemented.

3. The review process

3.1 The Countryside Strategy was originally prepared with a high degree of consultation and participation with a wide range of stakeholders and the general public. This ensured that the objectives of the Strategy, referred to as, 'Joint Vision Statements' (JVSs), accurately reflected the issues most relevant to the needs of Cardiff. The review process has continued the theme of consultation and participation.

3.2 Initial consultation involved formal feedback from all organisations on the Countryside Strategy database. This was followed by a more focused workshop at City Hall in April 2004 for stakeholders to discuss in greater detail some of the key issues raised. The workshop included a SWOT analysis relating to Cardiff’s countryside, together with facilitated sessions on the Joint Vision Statements and opportunities for partnership/mechanisms for delivery. The workshop was well received by participants and provided some excellent material to inform the review process. The consultation draft of the review document was then taken through the political process, and made publicly available for comment, in April/May 2005. This document reflects the main themes arising from all aspects of the review, and was approved for publication at the Council’s Executive Business meeting on 3rd November 2005.
4. Summary of achievements to date

4.1 The following brief summary of progress and achievements to date sets out the context within which the strategy has been developed. The strategy is very much about action, implementation and quality initiatives and will be delivered by a range of bodies as well as the general public. The original Countryside Strategy set out a number of Joint Vision Statements relating to access and recreation, nature conservation and raising awareness of the countryside. A summary of achievements by topic is given.

4.2 Raising awareness, appreciation and environmental education

- The Flat Holm Project continues to deliver the highest standards of environmental education and has secured its Charter Mark status. Extremely positive feedback has been received from day and residential visitors. Recent improvements have included new visitor information and educational material, including display boards, booklets and leaflets together with a ‘sustainable living’ themed day visit. Initiatives continue to attract schools and groups including those from the most deprived areas of the city.

- Publication of a Countryside Directory providing details of countryside related organisations contributing to the Countryside Strategy process. Now updated by the Green Directory, a wider source of information on sustainability and countryside organisations. Both documents have been widely circulated and well received.

- Between 1998 and 2003, the Councils’ Environmental Grants Scheme helped raise awareness of the natural environment through the Small Environmental Grants and Sustainable Schools Grants programmes. Dozens of practical initiatives have been undertaken, all directly involving community groups and/or the general public including schoolchildren. Projects have included tree planting days with local community groups, the production of the Nant Fawr Booklet and video, supporting the Ramblers’ ‘Capital Walks’ programme, a community garden and pond project at Fairwater Community Centre and a variety of biodiversity related schools’ projects.

- Numerous events have been undertaken to raise awareness of different aspects of biodiversity. These have included taking part in the national EcoFun day at St. Fagans, the Woodland Fair, leading walks and facilitating activities during National Biodiversity Week and promoting and implementing the Habitat and Species Action Plans.

- Practical site improvement works, summer holiday environmental projects, environmental education and healthy living initiatives have been facilitated by the St. Mellons Healthy Living Project. Volunteer Groups have been established which continue to benefit the local environment and improve their own health and well-being.

- With regard to on-site interpretation, the Council has erected new information boards in liaison with local groups at well used sites in the city. Local schools, in conjunction with the Park Rangers Service, have also been actively involved in developing the Rhymney Trail Logo and the Wildflower Logo, which is being placed in numerous parks within the city.

- The Council has achieved much through working in partnership with others. For example, prior to 2004, the Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service helped implement the Countryside Strategy by working with landowners, farmers, other organisations and the public to enhance understanding, opportunities and enjoyment of the countryside in north-west Cardiff. More recently, events have been arranged in conjunction with the Black Environment Network and the Minority Ethnic Women’s Network, to facilitate understanding of, and trips to the countryside for ethnic groups not familiar with this resource.
Specific initiatives such as the establishment of the Cardiff Taff Trail Access Group bring together relevant expertise to address local issues. The Taff Trail Access Group has been particularly active in promoting and encouraging events, information and physical improvements to the Trail in Cardiff with the aim of making it more accessible to people with physical or mental impairment. Design students from UWIC were commissioned to produce an Access Pack for the Taff Trail. The focus area was a circular route around Blackweir incorporating a section of the Taff Trail. Following positive feedback from users, it is the intention to produce further packs for other areas of the city, including the Rhymney Trail.

4.3 Access and Recreation

- There is continued support for local user groups and community groups directly involved in the enhancement of local green spaces (‘Friends’ groups), to improve access to, and enjoyment of, the countryside. SAFE (Safety and Facilities for Equestrians) have improved and developed the network for horses, walkers and cyclists in Forest Fawr and Forest Ganol, Tongwynlais. Similar work by ‘Friends’ groups has included undertaking access improvements for walkers and the physically impaired at Nant Fawr Community Woodlands, Cyncoed and Coed-y-Felin, Lisvane;

- Following the success of the Taff Trail, studies have been undertaken, to assess the feasibility of providing sustainable and accessible routes between the urban areas and the countryside. The Council is developing the Ely Trail and Rhymney Trail. The first phase of the Rhymney Trail is open between Rhymney Hill Gardens and Pontprennau Linear Park. Phase One of the Ely Trail is scheduled to start on site in 2005/6

- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced the Local Access Forum and the development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Local Access Forum was formed in 2004 and members will continue to develop further initiatives, reflecting the new Countryside Strategy in the coming years.

- A ‘Walking for Health’ scheme has been successfully developed through a partnership between the Council, Cardiff Health Alliance and Health Promotion Wales. The Council’s Parks Rangers have acted as walk leaders on the pilot programme and volunteers have since been trained as walk leaders to carry out a series of regular walks which are promoted each year. New opportunities funding has been secured for a co-ordinator, and the scheme is now being developed across the city.

4.4 Landscape

- Over recent years, there has been growing recognition of the role of landscape assessment to provide a sound basis for countryside planning and management. Prior to 1999 there was no up-to-date, detailed landscape assessment that described and evaluated the varied landscape of Cardiff. In line with Countryside Strategy JVS’s, the Council (in partnership with the WDA and CCW) commissioned consultants to undertake a comprehensive landscape study for Cardiff. The study was completed in 1999 and provides a framework for understanding, effectively managing and enhancing the landscape as well as informing planning policies and development control decisions.

- The Deposit UDP includes Policy 2.42, Special Landscape Areas and 2.43, General Landscape Protection, both of which aim to ensure that development maintains and strengthens positive attributes of the landscape and seeks to mitigate or remove, rather than compound the negative influences. The Deposit UDP also includes a number of countryside and biodiversity policies that are designed to protect, manage and enhance these interests.
• Countryside Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is currently under preparation and will be a valuable tool in helping to ensure that the landscape and countryside implications of development proposals are fully considered in the development control decision making process.

• The Council and the Vale of Glamorgan jointly fund a Coed Cymru post. The Coed Cymru officer provides a free advice service to all woodland owners. During the last few years, Woodland Grant Scheme funding has been secured for a number of woodlands including privately owned woodlands at Creigiau Park and Council owned woodlands. Coed Cymru have also helped facilitate the long term productive and ecological management of woodlands through product and market development.

4.5 Biodiversity

• A Local Biodiversity Action Forum was established following the approval of the Countryside Strategy. It consists of a collection of organisations and individuals representing a cross section of biodiversity interests. The Group meets three times a year and has proved very successful in helping to develop initiatives that protect, manage and enhance the City’s biodiversity. It is also a forum for sharing information and best practice.

• In November 2001, with the help and advice of the Cardiff Local Biodiversity Action Forum, “Wild about Cardiff” Cardiff’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan was launched. It raises awareness of the importance of biodiversity and explains how action is being taken to respond to local factors. Of particular importance is the preparation of 16 Habitat and Species Action Plans (HAPs and SAPs) that set out in detail a range of actions required to ensure the favourable conservation of a wide range of valued habitats and species within Cardiff. Further HAPs and SAPs will be developed and implemented in conjunction with local groups and organisations.

• Significant work has been undertaken on the Woodlands HAP through a number of woodland biodiversity projects, carried out in conjunction with local groups. Additionally, effective partnership working has helped deliver a range of initiatives including a comprehensive otter survey, pond restoration projects and raising awareness/promotional activities.

• Biodiversity SPG is being prepared. This document will clarify the complex hierarchy of nature conservation policies and guidance contained in the Local Development Plan Framework. User-friendly guidance is being prepared to help ensure that decisions are made in accordance with prevailing policy.

• The Flat Holm Site of Special Scientific Interest is being managed in accordance with a Management Plan agreed with CCW. This work is explained in the environmental education package provided to visitors.

• In partnership with other Local Authorities and relevant associations, a Strategy for the Severn Estuary has been prepared along with a Single Scheme of Management that will help to ensure future uses and activities will not adversely affect the special qualities and characteristics of the Estuary.

• Regional biodiversity partnerships continue to be maintained and strengthened. For example, regional working has secured agreed detailed methodology and criteria for the designation of local sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCs).
5. Joint Vision Statements

5.1 The review process has provided an excellent opportunity to revisit the Joint Vision Statements (JVSs) in the light of implementing the Strategy for over six years. Both general Strategy objectives and the new Joint Vision Statements have been strengthened and updated. They reflect the strong consensus of opinion about keeping objectives relevant to stake holders, and about the issues the Strategy must address.

5.2 This section of the strategy is split into the topic areas originally contained in the Countryside Strategy with an additional topic added to address issues identified through the review process. Each topic is covered in the same way, commencing with a brief overview summarising relevant changes since the first edition and concluding with the new JVSs.

General Joint Vision Statements

5.3 When the Countryside Strategy was originally prepared in the mid 1990s, the Council was at an early stage in developing a Local Agenda 21 process. However, the sustainability agenda has evolved and become increasingly important. It is therefore appropriate to update JVSs in a way which recognises the key aim of mainstreaming sustainability (to encourage sustainable living through practices and development which meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs). JVS 1 succinctly summarises the updated aim.

5.4 The importance of raising awareness and understanding of the natural environment continues to be a dominant theme in Cardiff and is reflected in JVS 2.

5.5 The Countryside Strategy process has proved very effective at bringing together a wide range of countryside related bodies in order to develop and implement shared objectives. Partnerships have proved fruitful, with forums such as the Local Biodiversity Action Forum and Local Access Forum coming together to ensure discussion and co-ordination. The success of partnership working over the last six years has been reflected in high quality initiatives on the ground. In this respect, a key theme has been enabling others to help implement common objectives. The new JVS 3 has been broadened to reflect the proven value of working in partnership.

5.6 Reviewing progress is essential to continued success. The formal review of the Countryside Strategy has clearly demonstrated the added value of effective review JVS 4 reinforces the value attached to understanding change and reviewing progress. The Countryside Strategy is an on-going process and mechanisms have been built in to ensure that outputs remain relevant and of value.

5.7 This strategy is written for Cardiff; it seeks to reinforce and promote the distinctive qualities of Cardiff in the light of local needs. JVS 5 re-iterates this point and also stresses the importance of raising the quality of Cardiff’s natural heritage.
General Joint Vision Statements

JVS 1: Promote sustainable living and deliver sustainable initiatives in the countryside.

JVS 2: Raise awareness and understanding of the natural environment, with particular reference to Cardiff.

JVS 3: Continue to develop the network of countryside related organisations and partnerships to realise the vision statements set out in this strategy by:

- Gathering, sharing and using information effectively;
- Implementing initiatives and projects;
- Exploring ways of addressing issues which adversely affect the quality or sustainability of Cardiff’s natural environment;
- Working in a co-ordinated and mutually supportive way;
- Encouraging the wider public to get involved; and,
- Securing funding and making best use of resources.

JVS 4: Understand and monitor change, review progress and respond to new problems and opportunities, as part of an ongoing process.

JVS 5: Safeguard and raise the quality of Cardiff’s natural heritage with special regard to the particular characteristics of Cardiff – its people, issues and natural resources.
Raising awareness

5.8 Raising awareness has been highlighted as a key theme of Cardiff’s Countryside Strategy in JVS 2, and has been identified as a major theme through the review process. This section contains more detailed objectives relating to this topic.

5.9 Cardiff has a large urban population (over 300,000 people) situated very close to areas of open countryside and urban green-spaces. This can place a variety of intense and specific pressures on the countryside. The urban population’s knowledge of countryside related issues, recent problems and changes can be limited. Inhabitants of Cardiff do not share as close a relationship to the countryside as exists in many rural areas of Wales. This can create problems, including particular groups within the population being unaware of the opportunities that the countryside can offer. Additionally, sections of the population do not have the ability to access these green spaces, especially the wider, more rural areas.

5.10 Raising awareness and education of the whole community, especially under represented countryside users, is important because it allows a greater understanding of the issues that affect the countryside and of the multiple opportunities that it can offer. Understanding the environment more fully can be delivered through a number of methods.

These include:
- The effective use of websites;
- Working with schools and higher education establishments
- Increasing public involvement through partnerships with other organisations.

In this context, it is of fundamental importance that improved environmental education, better visitor information and a wider understanding of the natural environment are fully recognised. JVSs 6 and 7 give these issues due weight.
Raising awareness

JVS 6: Develop the co-ordinated promotion, interpretation and marketing of features, literature and events which seek to widen awareness, understanding and appreciation of our natural environment.

JVS 7: Develop new initiatives to engage more people’s interest and involvement in conserving and enhancing Cardiff’s natural environment.
Access and recreation

5.11 Significant changes have occurred to legislation since the original version of this strategy was prepared, most notably through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2002 (CROW Act). The CROW Act is designed to extend the public’s ability to enjoy the countryside whilst also providing safeguards for landowners and occupiers. In particular, the CROW Act will:

- Create a new statutory right of access to open country and registered common land;
- Modernise the public rights of way (PROW) system through the preparation of a PROW Improvement Plan;
- Give greater protection to Sites of Special Scientific Interest; and,
- Strengthen wildlife enforcement legislation.

The establishment of the Local Access Forum (LAF) which replaced the countryside access forum (formed as part of the original Countryside Strategy) will help in the delivery of many of the aims. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (which came into force in October 2004) will have impacts for existing and proposed recreation facilities.

5.12 The Review has therefore taken account of these changes in making some amendments to JVSs. However, the overall thrust of the JVSs remains consistent with the original document and recognises the importance of this topic. In particular, it is recognised that Cardiff’s countryside and green spaces should be an accessible resource for all of society (JVS 10). The provision of relevant information is vital to help people gain full access to, and use of, the countryside (JVS 8). This may need to be targeted at specific groups of people who currently make little use of the countryside.

5.13 Cardiff has a large urban population; therefore large pressure is placed on the countryside directly surrounding it. Good connections between urban and countryside areas are needed to encourage access and improve recreation facilities. Gateways to the wider countryside have been established by the previous strategy; the Taff Trail provides a corridor from the Bay to the countryside surrounding the city. Other important trails that link the City to the wider countryside continue to be developed including the Ely and Rhymney Trails. This will help to increase people’s access to the countryside, and provide green links within the city. JVSs 9 and 12 identify the value of strategic networks of routes for all user groups.

5.14 Recreation in the countryside can create potential conflicts; the new CROW Act and the LAF will have implications in this area. Conflict in the countryside can result out of differences between various countryside users or between users and landowners. It is important that the development of countryside recreation tries to limit potential conflicts and harmonise different uses (JVS 11).

5.15 Many parts of the countryside are in private ownership. This means that the role that landowners could play in providing for the countryside recreation needs of the population is unclear. This strategy identifies the need to work with appropriate landowners to help explore this area, alongside the Local Access Forum, which brings together private landowners and users of the countryside (JVS 13).
Access and Recreation

JVS 8: Provide and promote information relating to opportunities for informal recreation.

JVS 9: Develop and implement coherent networks of routes for all user groups which facilitate access:
• To local opportunities for access and recreation including parks, river corridors, common land, open access land, publicly accessible woodlands, and other areas of green space.
• Links between existing and new residential areas and the wider countryside

JVS 10: Improve access to and enjoyment of the countryside for all.

JVS 11: Reconcile conflicts which may occur in the countryside between:
• Different user groups and landowners
• Recreation and nature conservation
• Landowners and those who abuse private Property

JVS 12: Implement the provisions of the CROW Act, 2002 including the development and implementation of a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

JVS 13: Explore the potential role of privately owned countryside in providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and leisure.
Landscape

5.16 Cardiff contains a range of landscapes whose distinctive characteristics reflect a range of natural and man made processes. The previous countryside strategy set out the task of producing a detailed landscape assessment of Cardiff, outlining the different character areas. The successful completion of this exercise has resulted in a greater knowledge of Cardiff’s landscape and has helped to identify specific areas that need greater protection. This new up to date information, based on the Countryside Council for Wales approved LANDMAP methodology, has been able to inform the practices of the planning system, including development control and the UDP process.

5.17Whilst the Landscape Study has been completed, acquiring further knowledge about the landscape of Cardiff continues to be of importance in this version of the strategy. For example, the Strategic Environmental Appraisal Directive will require Unitary Authorities to more rigorously appraise the environmental implications of Council strategies. The collection of more detailed, up-to-date information on the landscape will therefore be vital in delivering the European Directive. JVSs 14 and 15 will require additional information, whilst also encouraging initiatives on the ground to conserve and enhance features of Cardiff’s landscape.
Landscape

JVS 14: Continue to develop our understanding of the landscape in Cardiff through an analysis of the issues which are shaping its appearance.

JVS 15: Develop initiatives to conserve and enhance the landscape in Cardiff.
Biodiversity

5.18 Since the Countryside Strategy was originally approved, significant progress has been made in providing a more coherent framework for the consideration of biodiversity related issues. Most notably, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan has been approved and contains a range of specific actions targeted at particular habitats and species. The Local Biodiversity Action Forum has also proved to be an effective mechanism to bring together a wide range of local interests. The review process has recognised progress made but obviously much remains to be done.

5.19 The JVSs have therefore been updated to reflect the completion of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (JVS 17) and also to reflect the wide range of other actions required to effectively work together to safeguard and enhance Cardiff’s biodiversity resource. In this respect, JVS 16 focuses upon the need to manage and enhance specific sites whilst JVS 18 identifies the importance of raising awareness of biodiversity interests. Therefore, it is hoped that initiatives will be aimed at all sections of society: the general public and those involved in the development control decision making process, so that development proposals and decisions can be made with a fuller understanding of relevant biodiversity interests, legislation and guidance.

5.20 JVSs 19 and 20 are consistent with the original Countryside Strategy and reflect the value attached to providing access to sites, and also to monitoring. In this respect, work will continue to develop relevant biodiversity indicators together with utilising up-to-date biological databases. JVS 21 has specifically been added to recognise the valuable role played by formal biodiversity networks, particularly the Local Biodiversity Action Forum (now called the Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership).
Biodiversity

JVS 16: Promote the retention, enhancement and appropriate management of areas and features of biodiversity value.

JVS 17: Encourage initiatives and develop opportunities that implement Cardiff’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

JVS 18: Improve the appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity.

JVS 19: Improve accessibility to areas of biodiversity value providing this does not impair their inherent quality.

JVS 20: Monitor the extent and quality of biodiversity interests within the city.

JVS 21: Work in partnership through the Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership and other biodiversity networks.
Supporting a working countryside

5.21 This is a newly raised issue and chapter for the Countryside Strategy. Its inclusion has resulted from a strong consensus following the review process. The title, ‘Supporting a working countryside’ is considered to best represent the views expressed. At the heart of this topic lies a desire to assist farming and other appropriate activities in the countryside that contribute to the well being of the countryside both in terms of land management and the wider social, economic and recreational benefits brought with those activities.

5.22 The rural economy of the countryside is constantly transforming, with significant changes now occurring that challenge traditional practices. There is a new ethos in much of the farming industry, highlighted by changes to farm subsidies and planning guidance, with much emphasis placed on farm diversification. These new influences need to be fully understood to enable proper support and to help ensure that existing farming businesses function as efficiently as possible.

5.23 The countryside we see and visit in Cardiff today reflects hundreds of years of activities. Although this countryside is not remote and ‘rural’ in a wider Welsh context, the Landscape Study has confirmed it has special characteristics and its own inherent value. Farming and other activities taking place in the countryside have helped to shape this valued resource. Therefore, the long term sustainable use and management of land is vital to retaining and enhancing the countryside’s characteristics. CCW’s ‘Tir Gofal’ countryside management grant scheme represents an excellent model for securing sustainable management along these lines. However, wider work is required to fully understand and respond to the current pressures and trends that may challenge long standing farming businesses and have consequent adverse effects on the quality, condition and use of the countryside. JVS 22 and 23 are intended to provide an appropriate framework for further actions to address this important issue.
Supporting a working countryside

JVS 22: Develop a better understanding of the economic factors which are shaping Cardiff’s countryside.

JVS 23: Identify and promote mechanisms and initiatives, which will encourage landowners to conserve and enhance Cardiff’s natural heritage.
6. Future Actions - Implementation, Monitoring and Review

6.1 This document provides an overall framework for a truly on-going process. Each year the Council, together with dozens of external bodies and the general public, carry out a wide range of high quality initiatives. It is therefore of great importance that there are mechanisms in place to effectively organise this work. The review process has been useful in addressing this issue and the following paragraphs set out how an on-going framework will be implemented.

6.2 Actions will be organised on a financial year basis, from 1st April to March 31st. This ensures consistency with financial systems operated by the Council and partners. Additionally, it links in well with CCW's annual (financial year-based) Partnership Programme that secures funding for agreed initiatives that deliver Countryside Strategy objectives.

6.3 A key new initiative to help review progress and plan ahead for the next year is the introduction of an Annual Countryside Strategy Review Forum. This will have the following aims:

• To provide an update on initiatives undertaken in preceding months
• For all parties to share information and best practice
• To consider suitable projects for the following financial year

6.4 Additional mechanisms that provide meaningful dialogue between the Council and key stakeholders will continue to be supported. These meet on a regular basis throughout the year and provide an opportunity for ongoing and proposed works to be discussed. These include:

• Local Biodiversity Action Forum
• Local Access Forum

6.5 Progress on delivering initiatives will be monitored throughout the year to assist effective delivery. This will feed into an annual report that will set out current initiatives delivering Strategy objectives, and look forward to potential projects for the coming year. The report will be available for discussion at the Annual Forum, and sent out to countryside related and community organisations and groups on the Countryside database.