

Easy Read



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our plan for securing a sustainable future in Wales

We want to know what you think



This document was written by Welsh Government.
It is an easy read version of ‘Securing a Sustainable Future – Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets for a Greener Wales’.

April 2024

How to use this document

This is an easy read version. The words and their meaning are easy to read and understand.

You may need support to read and understand this document. Ask someone you know to help you.

Words in **bold blue writing** may be new or difficult to understand. They have been explained at the end of the document under 'Glossary of terms'.

If the difficult word or term is used again it is in **normal blue writing**. You can check what all the words in blue mean on page 23.

Where the document says 'we', this means Welsh Government.

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What is this document about?

We would like your views about our plan for a sustainable environment in Wales.

This document outlines what we want to do.

There is a second document with this one, which has the questions in it. It is called the Response Form.



Please fill in the response form after reading this document. Or you can answer the questions online: www.gov.wales/consultations



We would like to know what you think by **30th April 2024**.

About the environment



The **environment** is very important for our health and wellbeing.



But humans have been damaging the environment over time causing environmental **degradation**.



Environmental degradation is caused by things like:

- How people use the land and sea
- Pollution
- Habitat loss
- Climate change
- **Invasive non-native species**





We have declared a climate and nature emergency in Wales, and we need to make changes to improve our **environment**.

We have made this plan to make the environment healthier.

Our plan is to:



1. Set environmental principles in law.
2. Strengthen the way Wales enforces environmental law.
3. Create new targets for biodiversity.



This work is really important for everyone's health as well as our **environment** and **economy**.



Our plan also helps other plans and laws that aim to improve life in Wales. We can only achieve this plan if everyone works together.

Why is a healthy environment important?

Biodiversity and healthy **ecosystems** are very important for our survival.

Ecosystems provide us with **ecosystem services**.



For example, trees produce oxygen and timber, that helps us to breathe and to build houses. They also promote happiness and wellbeing. These are all **ecosystem services**.



These services are continuing to be destroyed by **environmental degradation** and **biodiversity loss**.

**1 in 6
species**

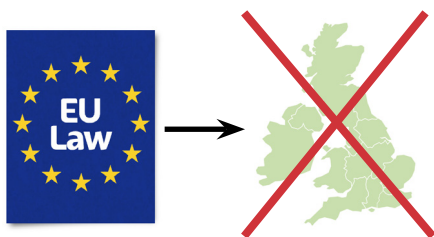
Wales, along with the rest of the world, is facing a biodiversity crisis, with one in six species in Wales at risk of **extinction**.

The loss of **biodiversity** and damage to **ecosystem services** is a threat to our own well-being.

Our plan in 3 parts

Part 1: Setting environmental principles in law

This part talks about how Wales is planning to put new laws in place to protect the **environment**.



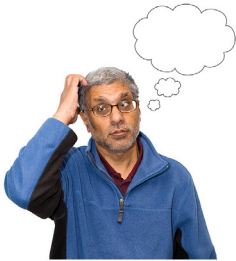
When the United Kingdom left the **European Union (EU)** in 2020, the EU environmental law no longer applied to Wales.

To ensure we still protect our **environment** we want to reintroduce some ‘environmental principles’.



In 2019 we spoke to people like you, and generally people thought that the **EU** environmental principles were good, and that we should introduce a new piece of law to reinstate them in Wales.

The environmental principles are:



- Protecting the **environment** is important and should be considered when making policies and decisions **(integration)**.
- People should think very carefully when making decisions to avoid harming the **environment** **(precautionary)**.
- Always try to avoid harming the **environment** **(prevention)**.
- If something goes wrong and there is **environmental** damage, it should be fixed where it happened **(rectification at source)**.
- Polluters should pay to clean up their mess and environmental damage caused **(polluter pays)**.



We want to bring these principles back to Wales, and support them with an overarching objective, to ensure a high level of environmental protection.



We want the Welsh Ministers to publish guidance to spell out what the environmental principles mean in detail.



We want Welsh Ministers to have to consider the environmental principles, and the guidance on the principles, during the development of all policies and legislation.

If we do all of this, we will be strengthening environmental protection in Wales.

Part 2: Making an Environmental Governance Body for Wales



It is important that Wales have a strong **environmental governance body** in order to have a healthy and sustainable environment.



An environmental governance body is an independent watchdog to make sure certain **public authorities** play by the rules and protect the environment.

Why does Wales need this?



When the UK left the EU there was no longer a watchdog for investigating compliance with environmental law and for taking enforcement action against certain **public authorities** when rules were broken.



We want to create a new environmental body that will improve our ability to promote, preserve, and look after our environment.



In 2019 we spoke to people like you to find out if you liked the idea of a new **environmental governance body** and how it might work. There was a lot of support for the idea.

Since then, the ‘Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales’ has been working hard to make sure environmental law in Wales has been functioning. However, they do not have enough power to make organisations follow the law.

What will this watchdog do?



Some of the things we want the new governing body to do are:

- Monitor and advise Welsh Ministers on the development of environmental law and policy in Wales.
- Receive complaints from the public about possible failures of **public authorities** to follow the law.



- Investigate situations where someone (like a government agency) might be breaking the environmental rules.
- Provide enforcement if the rules are broken. This may range from having a conversation to going to court.
- Monitor the implementation and compliance of environmental law. This will include monitoring targets that have been set in law to improve the environment, and reporting on how well the Welsh Ministers and the relevant **public authorities** are doing to meet the targets.
- Provide expert advice to Welsh Ministers and **public authorities**.
- Work in partnership with other organisations.
- Write a document telling us its plan about how it will meet its purpose and objectives.

Who will they oversee?



- Welsh Government officials (like Ministers).
- **Public authorities**, which includes organisations like **Natural Resources Wales** that protect the environment.
- Some private companies doing important work related to the environment (like water companies).



What won't they do?

They won't replace other watchdogs like **Natural Resources Wales** who already deal with specific environmental problems.



They won't investigate every single complaint – and they can decide when and what issues they want to look into in more detail.

Funding and governance:



- The governance body will be independent from the Welsh Government.
- The body will be funded directly by the Welsh Government.
- It will be led by a commission of experts appointed by the Welsh Ministers.

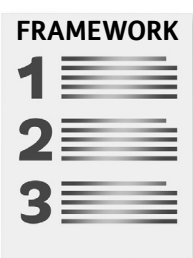
Part 3: Targets for the protection and restoration of biodiversity

Wales is facing a **biodiversity** crisis.



Tackling the nature emergency will require urgent as well as long-term action to deliver the change needed.

We want to be a **Nature Positive Wales!**

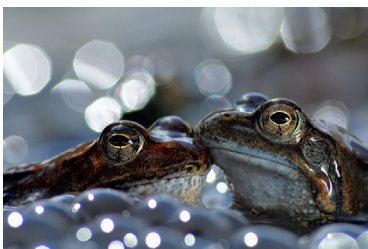


To achieve this, we are proposing a **strategic nature recovery framework** with **statutory biodiversity** targets.

Within this framework we want:



- **Statutory Biodiversity Targets** – we will set an overall aim (a headline target) and supporting targets to protect and restore **ecosystems** and species.



- **A clear strategy** – we will produce a Nature Recovery Strategy. This will provide the long-term vision of a nature positive Wales.
- **An action plan** – a Nature Recovery Action Plan will include the specific actions needed to achieve the targets and the long-term vision of the strategy. This action plan will be updated every 4 years.
- **Local plans** – **public authorities** will create Local Nature Recovery Plans to contribute to the national goals. These will consider the specific areas and evidence for local actions that support the national Nature Recovery Action Plan.



- **Effective monitoring and reporting** – we will regularly check to see if the goals are being met.

We are suggesting that the headline target is:

‘Reverse the decline in biodiversity with an improvement in the status of species and ecosystems by 2030 and their clear recovery by 2050’.



Then, the targets will address different aspects of the nature crisis, like:

- Protecting existing habitats and species.
- Restoring damaged ecosystems.
- Reducing threats to nature, like climate change and pollution.

Wales is committed to the **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity** and its **Global Biodiversity Framework** goals. Our new targets will be based on the **Global Biodiversity Framework**.



Experts will use science and data to make sure the targets are achievable and make sense for Wales.

We want the targets to be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.



These targets will be written into law to make sure they happen.

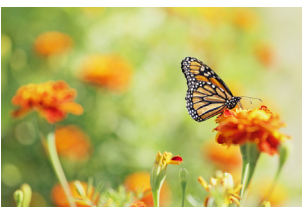
Monitoring the Wales Nature Recovery Framework: Keeping Track of Progress

We want to make sure that the proposed Wales Nature Recovery Framework designed to save **biodiversity** is actually working. Here's how we plan to monitor progress.

Data and Indicators:



- We'll use data on things like animal populations and habitat health to track progress towards the targets. This data might come from citizen science projects, government agencies, or research institutions.
- We'll develop indicators – these are like mini-goals that help measure bigger progress. For example, tracking the number of butterfly species in a certain area could indicate overall insect diversity.



Reporting:

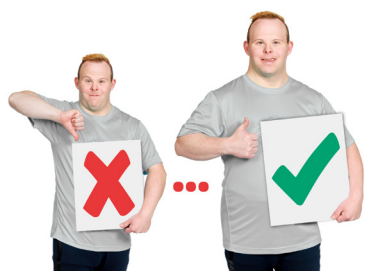


- **Natural Resources Wales** will report on the **biodiversity** targets as part of their annual State of Natural Resources Report. This report will give everyone a clear picture of how things are going.



- The Welsh Ministers will also publish a statement before the Welsh Parliament (Senedd) every few years. This statement will say whether the targets have been met and explain how.
- **Local authorities:** They'll monitor and report on their own actions within their Local Nature Recovery Action Plans.

Independent Scrutiny:



- The new **environmental governance body** that we have proposed in Part 2 of this document will have the power to check up on how the Welsh Ministers are doing with the plan. This governance body can make sure things are on track and suggest improvements if needed.

International Cooperation:



- Wales is part of a global effort to protect nature, so we'll also be monitored by international organizations and agreements, such as the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and the [Global Biodiversity Framework](#). This helps ensure everyone is working together towards the same goals.



- Overall, the monitoring system will be designed to be comprehensive, transparent, accountable, effective and adaptable. This means everyone can see how things are going and hold the government accountable for its promises.

Timeline of this plan



The plan we have been talking about in this document will be introduced into law before the end of the current Senedd term in 2026. The **biodiversity** targets will be included as soon as possible after this, when we are sure they are the best that they can be for **biodiversity**, habitats and ecosystems.

Glossary of terms

Biodiversity

The variety of all living things on Earth.

Ecosystem

An ecosystem is made up of all the biodiversity and non-living things in an area. This includes all the plants, animals, and other living things that make up the communities of life in an area.

Ecosystem Services

These are essential services that humans need such as clean air, water, soil health for food production, climate regulation, medicines, fuel, fibre and timber, as well as supporting our health and wellbeing. For example, trees produce oxygen and timber, that helps us to breathe and to build houses. They also promote happiness and wellbeing. These are all ecosystem services.

Economy

How much money the country has and the amount of goods and services that it consumes and produces.

Environment

This is where people live. It is the land, the sea, the air and everything that lives in and on it.

Environmental degradation

Damage to the environment which is caused by things like building more houses and roads, pollution, farming methods, climate change, and invasive non-native species.

Environmental governance body

An environmental governance body is a watchdog to make sure everyone plays by the rules and protects the environment.

European Union (EU)

A group of countries in Europe whose governments work together.

Extinct

When there are no individuals of a species left alive, that species is extinct. Extinction is permanent; when a species disappears, it is gone forever.

Global Biodiversity Framework

Is an agreement of targets to protect nature by 2030, organised by the [United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity](#).

Invasive non-native species

An invasive non-native species is a species that has been introduced to an area where it does not naturally exist and has the potential to cause harm to the environment, the economy, or to human health.

Natural Resources Wales

The organisation that looks after our environment for people and nature in Wales.

Public authority

An organisation mostly or completely funded by a government which does things on their behalf e.g., Transport for Wales operates trains for the Welsh Government.

Statutory

Something that is decided or controlled by law.

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

An international agreement between lots of countries for the conservation, sustainable use, and fair sharing of biodiversity.