



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Section 6 biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty: summary report 2022

The Section 6 Duty was introduced as part of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

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Introduction

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 – Section 6 duty sets out requirements for the Welsh Government and other public authorities which are to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems. The duty places biodiversity as a natural and integral part of policy and decision making within public authorities.

Our policies are designed to:

- Maintain and enhance the natural environment through managing land appropriately to create healthy functioning ecosystems.
- Increase awareness of the importance of a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems.
- Support ecological resilience, making the environment healthier for wildlife and people.
- Be adaptive to a changing environment where there is a need to use resources efficiently.

Through the reporting period we have made substantial progress in embedding biodiversity and natural resource management. Below are a representative sample of some of the actions we have taken, which are listed by which *Nature Recovery Action Plan* objective they meet.

Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels

- **Nature Recovery Action Plan** - Plan is Wales Biodiversity Strategy and

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Action Plan as required by the Convention on Biological Diversity drafted in 2015 and refreshed in 2020 to drive transformative change. Its aim is to influence behaviour and investment decisions, to build resilient ecological networks to safeguard species and habitats, addressing the root causes of biodiversity loss, and targeting interventions to help species recover where necessary.

- **Biodiversity Taskforce** – established in 2021 to mainstream the delivery for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience across the Welsh Government and its partners. Key outcomes - *Naturewise* course delivered biodiversity training to 248 people across the public sector who have made 798 biodiversity action pledges; development of a multi-year funding programme and an innovative finance project. Also, an analysis of how the *Dasgupta Review: the Economics of Biodiversity* aligned with Welsh legislation and strategies to inform our policy development was produced.
- **Land Division** - Strategic site development to include full ecological appraisals carried out on strategic development sites to identify habitats and species of importance. In undertaking key duties relating to management of land and existing buildings, annual reviews and assessments are completed to ensure appropriate management is undertaken, for example appropriate management prescriptions for enhanced habitats and species benefits.
- **Wales Transport Strategy** – Transport have developed a Nature Recovery Action Plan including engaging with key stakeholders which sets out key priorities for improving biodiversity on the Strategic Road Network.

NRAP Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management

- **Nature Networks Programme** – 3 year funding programme launched in 2021, designed to improve the condition and the connectivity of terrestrial

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and marine protected sites network, creating resilient ecological networks which will allow our most endangered habitats and species to thrive.

- **Transport** – The strategic road network is made up of 3000ha and actions targeting specific species and habitats include ongoing projects to improve wildlife crossing points, providing hibernacula, bat boxes and wildlife pond creation.
- **National Peatland Action Programme** designed to restore Peatland ecosystems with an annual target of 600-800ha per year. In 2020/21 c.£1.9m was spent and 650ha was restored. For the period 2021/22 c.£2m was spent with 1000ha improved.
- **Marine Protected Area Management** – supports the *Marine Protected Area Network* through the identification and implementation of appropriate measures to enhance protected species and features. Actions include research into climate-based threats and to understand marine litter spread, movement and impact.

NRAP Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation

- **The Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places programme** moved to a 3-year delivery window, and for the period of 2022-25 there are projects addressing biodiversity loss and habitat improvement totalling £4.9 million. Large scale projects include £1.173m for peatland restoration, and each Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty delivering landscape-scale nature recovery projects with values between £128k and £470k.
- **National Forest for Wales** - create new woodland and form a connected network across Wales to help restore and maintain some of Wales' ancient woodlands. Also funded 25 community projects to create or enhance woodlands for local communities.

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- **Woodland Creation Funding** – This will help us reach our target of planting 43,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030. It will also help farmers prepare for the new *Sustainable Farming Scheme*. Woodland created now will contribute to the proposed universal action of farmers having at least 10% tree cover on their farm.
- **Cadw** – For 2022-23 commissioning a series of land management evaluations which will identify recommendations for improving site management to benefit biodiversity.
- **Green Corridors initiative** – designed to provide a range of benefits including nature conservation through native tree and shrub planting along our strategic road network.

NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

- **Beyond Recycling Actions** - Sets out the key actions we will take to make the transition to a circular economy to include developing additional infrastructure to collect and recycle household materials not currently widely recycled.
- **Green Ambition campaign** - To help businesses to improve their knowledge and understanding of resource efficiency. The campaign encourages businesses to take action to mitigate their impact on climate change and supports the Welsh Government ambition towards net zero economy.
- **Business Wales** - Offers a wide range of advice and support on green policies, practices and resource efficiency as well as workshops to business across Wales.
- **GB Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy** – Delivering actions to minimise the risk of introduction and establishment of INNS and reduce their negative impacts through a strong partnership approach. Specific projects include

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tackling invasive fish such as Topmouth gudgeon which has removed the species from 6 sites in Southwest Wales.

- **Nationwide Recycling Scheme for fishing gear** – The scheme was trialled at 6 ports across the country and in its first year, 1.2 tonnes was collected and subsequently sent for recycling.
- **Transport** – Tackling invasive non-native species through the Green Corridors Initiative.

NRAP Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

- **Local Government Climate Change support programme** - £1.5m of funding provided through the WLGA to encourage local authorities to do “once for Wales” to maximise resources and minimise duplication.
- **Carbon Impact Tool** – Development of a tool to enable local authorities to search their land holdings and see the carbon impact (positive or negative) of any proposed change of use.
- **Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling platform** - This partnership with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology delivers both national capability monitoring and strategic monitoring capability for Wales. This has delivered several key strategic reports including the *National Forest Evidence pack*, that presented analysis on the different *National Forest* options on biodiversity.
- **FABLE** – Use of this model to explore four pathways to delivering net zero Wales and to reverse the decline in biodiversity
- **Marine and Fisheries** – Undertaken assessment of the impact of types of fishing gear upon protected features within *the Marine Protected Area network*.

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NRAP Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

- **Biodiversity Deep Dive** – Instigated to develop a set of collective actions to support nature's recovery based on the 30x30 target of protecting and effectively managing at least 30% of our land freshwater and sea for nature by 2030. A group of experts and practitioners identified key themes and published 8 recommendations of specific actions to take forward. These build on existing commitments and are a mixture of new action we can take immediately, a scaling up and acceleration of existing schemes, and longer-term actions.
- **Enabling Natural Resources and Well-Being Grant** – Over 50 projects have been supported which are designed to deliver solutions to improve habitats and biodiversity alongside well-being access to local natural green spaces.
- **Sustainable Management Scheme** – This supports action on managing natural resources across Wales. It directly funds action to tackle the decline in biodiversity at landscape scale and to build on our protected site network and our protected species. It also supports action on the threats to biodiversity such as reducing agricultural pollution and improving soil health and water quality.
- **EU Life Projects** – 6 projects that target the condition and connectivity of the protected sites network.
- **Property Business Plan** – The Plan recognises that delivery is not only about economic growth and property for business but is also about reducing emissions and enhancing the resilience of the natural environment, such as air quality and waste reduction to counter the trend of declining resilience in ecosystems
- **Planning Policy Wales 11** – This embeds biodiversity considerations into the planning process. It requires that planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This

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means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity.

- **Action Plan for Pollinators Taskforce** - Partners include Welsh Government, local government, agencies, individuals and organisations interested in conservation, beekeeping and social issues to exchange ideas and share best practice.

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