



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill: biodiversity impact assessment

Biodiversity impact assessment on the impact of the bill for reform of the Senedd.

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Introduction

The Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales contains 6 objectives to reverse the decline of biodiversity which should be used to assess the impacts on biodiversity. They can also help develop and guide actions to comply with the S6 duty. They have been simplified as a set of questions to guide you through the impact assessment.

These questions should be considered whether your proposal has a land management element or not, although some will be particularly relevant if your policy area relates to land management in any way.

You should take a pro-active approach to considering the potential impacts on biodiversity – this is one area where unintended consequences are often overlooked, either through lack of awareness, or because it is difficult to assign a monetary value to biodiversity.

Moreover, the duty requires that we positively seek opportunities to maintain and enhance biodiversity, both directly (where the intervention involves land management or construction), and indirectly (for example, where there may be an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity). In completing this assessment consider how enhancing biodiversity and promoting resilience of ecosystems contribute reciprocally to the aims of your policy or project.

Consider Questions 1 - 9 for ALL policies:

Embedding biodiversity

1. How will your proposal integrate biodiversity into

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decision making?

Have you considered the impacts and positive opportunities for action for biodiversity at the early stages of thinking or project design?

- What impacts will procurement have on biodiversity, including global biodiversity?
- Are products sourced sustainably?
- Does your project include the use of materials or practices harmful to biodiversity?

In broad terms, measures to increase the size of the Senedd will improve its ability to conduct policy and legislative scrutiny, including examining:

- the extent to which biodiversity has been integrated into decision making
- the Welsh Government's understanding and awareness of the importance of biodiversity, and
- the Welsh Government's capacity for biodiversity action.

Does it require partners and beneficiaries to consider the impacts and opportunities for positive action for biodiversity at the early stages of thinking and project design?

- Is the consideration of biodiversity a requirement of funding applications and project specifications?
- Does your evaluation of these seek to ensure that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced?

The Senedd aims to be exemplar in sustainability and environmental performance. As one of the leading public institutions in Wales, it recognises its responsibility to reduce its impact on the environment and operate in an environmentally responsible manner in all its activities.

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The Senedd publishes a Sustainability annual report, which includes Biodiversity. The annual report summarises the Senedd's environmental performance, progress against targets over the previous year, and provides information on its future plans. The Senedd Commission's [annual report for 2021-2022](#) notes that the Commission has made positive progress on biodiversity, including:

“a significant increase in the Tŷ Hywel garden area, utilising what was previously a stone-covered area to add in new pollinator-friendly plants and a second small pond to support invertebrates. We are also investigating the site's ability to support hedgehogs, in order to help reduce the decline of these wonderful animals. In partnership with National Trust, and with the support of the Commissioner for Sustainable Development, Janet Finch-Saunders MS, we have recently introduced a new Bug Hotel area to the Tŷ Hywel garden. This features bug boxes for creatures such as solitary bees and spiders to nest and overwinter in, as well as being an area where the trunk of the Senedd Christmas tree can be left to become an insect habitat. The Pierhead Bees project has continued throughout the pandemic, with the bees taking little heed of the changing working patterns of staff, and indeed public life in general in their normally-busy surroundings of Cardiff Bay. Overall they increased their honey crop again this year. Without extracting any from the new third hive, the other two increased their honey productivity by almost 30% this year.” ”

As set out in the RIA, changes in the physical infrastructure of the Senedd to accommodate an increased number of Members are expected to be internal in nature. It is not anticipated that this will have negative impacts on habitats or species through changes in land use or negatively impact upon the Senedd Commission's Carbon Strategy, which previously committed it to a doubling of the green space on the estate.

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It is not anticipated that changes arising from the Senedd Cymru Bill will negatively impact on positive progress reported by the Senedd.

2. Has your proposal ensured biodiversity is accounted for in business decisions?

- Has it considered whole of life costs which include the value of biodiversity and natural resources within the cost benefit analysis, even if this is an informal process?
 - Have you thought about how enhancing biodiversity can help deliver across WG's activities for example, to support active recreation, education, flood prevention, and local food growing. (For example, green roofs help to provide wildlife habitats, reduce energy consumption and improve drainage systems.)
- Has it considered the long term costs of degradation of biodiversity and natural resources, and the potential for savings for health and well-being, flood risk etc?
- Can it encourage partners and beneficiaries to take these costs and savings into account?

Changes in the physical infrastructure of the Senedd to accommodate an increased number of Members are expected to be internal in nature. Biodiversity is not significantly impacted by this proposal.

3. How does your proposal improve understanding and raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity, encouraging others to act?

- Can you work with partners and beneficiaries to promote understanding of biodiversity?

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- Can you promote the benefits of access to biodiversity through the delivery of public goods and services such as social care, community development, health and recreation?
- Can you provide, or source, specialist training where necessary?
- Can you link to other communications strategies and initiatives for biodiversity, for example award schemes, local events?

As previously noted, in broad terms, measures to increase the size of the Senedd will improve its ability to conduct policy and legislative scrutiny, including examining:

- the extent to which biodiversity has been integrated into decision making
- the Welsh Government's understanding and awareness of the importance of biodiversity, and
- the Welsh Government's capacity for biodiversity action.

Beyond this, the proposal does not impact on directly on improving or raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity. However, as noted above the Senedd publishes a Sustainability annual report, which includes reporting on its to maximise opportunities for biodiversity.

Improving our evidence, understanding and monitoring

4. Have you used the best available evidence of biodiversity to inform your proposal and this assessment?

You must have regard to:

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- the lists of species and habitats of principal importance published under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act
- the State of Natural Resources Report
- any relevant area statement published by NRW.

If your proposal is in regard to construction or land management directly or indirectly, it should reference biodiversity records available through:

- Local Environment Record Centres
- Atlas of Living Wales
- Lle

Beyond the broad impacts arising from increasing the capacity of the Senedd to conduct scrutiny, including in relation to biodiversity, biodiversity is not significantly impacted by this proposal.

5. Have you used up to date knowledge of the key impacts on biodiversity to make evidence-based decisions?

- Do you know what the drivers of change and key negative factors are which could arise from your proposal?
- Are you satisfied that these do not apply or have been avoided?

Beyond the broad impacts arising from increasing the capacity of the Senedd to conduct scrutiny, including in relation to biodiversity, biodiversity is not significantly impacted by this proposal.

6. Can your proposal contribute to our body of knowledge for biodiversity?

- Can it support citizen-science initiatives, and monitoring schemes?

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- Have you ensured that any biodiversity data collected is made publicly available?

Beyond the broad impacts arising from increasing the capacity of the Senedd to conduct scrutiny, including in relation to building our body of knowledge for biodiversity, the proposal will not contribute to our body of knowledge for biodiversity.

Governance and support for delivery of biodiversity action

7. Can your proposal support biodiversity action in any way?

- Can staff get involved in practical action?
- Can you fund action directly, or indirectly?
- Can you support partnerships and/or collaboration for local and community-based biodiversity action?

Beyond the broad impacts arising from increasing the capacity of the Senedd to conduct scrutiny, including in relation to biodiversity, biodiversity is not significantly impacted by this proposal.

8. Can your proposal help to build capacity for biodiversity action?

- Can you support skills acquisition and training?
- Does your proposal ensure the appropriate level of qualifications of those involved in decision making regarding biodiversity?

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- Can your proposal fund capacity building for biodiversity action?

Beyond the broad impacts arising from increasing the capacity of the Senedd to conduct scrutiny, including in relation to biodiversity, the proposal does not help to build capacity for biodiversity action.

9. Have you recorded decisions and actions to maintain and enhance biodiversity?

Not applicable.

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