



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA/JJ/2512/23

Local Authorities – Heads of Planning

11 October 2023

Dear Colleague,

I have previously highlighted the essential role that the planning system must play in meeting the challenges laid down by the Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at COP15, the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations developed in response to this and in continuing to fulfil our Section 6 duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in Wales [COP15, Biodiversity Deep Dive, Section 6 Duty and the Planning System \(gov.wales\)](#).

The proposed changes to planning policy, which I signalled then, were consulted on between 09 March and 31 May 2023. I very much welcomed the thoughtful and comprehensive responses made to this consultation exercise covering green infrastructure, net benefit for biodiversity, the protection afforded to Sites of Special Scientific Interest and trees and woodlands.

Taking these responses into account I have finalised policy for inclusion in the next iteration of Planning Policy Wales (version 12) programmed for later this year. Given the need to keep up momentum on fulfilling our COP15 obligations and Deep Dive aspirations, however, I am publishing updated chapter 6 policy with immediate effect as an annex to this letter.

The main changes to policy can be summarised as follows:

Green Infrastructure: stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure covering cross boundary considerations, identifying key outputs of green infrastructure assessments, the submission of proportionate green infrastructure statements with planning applications and signposting Building with Nature standards.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Net Benefit for Biodiversity and the Step-wise Approach: further clarity is provided on securing net benefit for biodiversity through the application of the step-wise approach, including the acknowledgement of off-site compensation measures as a last resort, and, the need to consider enhancement and long-term management at each step. The use of the green infrastructure statement as a means of demonstrating the stepwise approach is made explicit. A simplified diagram of the policy approach has been developed (which will be further refined in the consolidated version of PPW12). The importance of strategic collaboration to identify and capture larger scale opportunities for securing a net benefit for biodiversity is recognised.

Protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest: strengthened approach to the protection of SSSIs, with increased clarity on the position for site management and exemptions for minor development necessary to maintain a 'living landscape'. Other development is considered unacceptable as a matter of principle. Exceptionally, a planned approach may be appropriate where necessary safeguards can be secured through a development plan.

Trees and Woodlands: closer alignment with the stepwise approach, along with promoting new planting as part of development based on securing the right tree in the right place.

I intend to issue version 12 of Planning Policy Wales as soon as practicable and will continue to work with stakeholders to provide further guidance to enable the implementation of the vital policy contained in Chapter 6.

Yours sincerely,



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Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change