

Transport for Wales Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026

The Biodiversity Action Plan has been updated in-line with new guidance published September 2022 by the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales



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Forewords



Leyton Powell
Director for Safety,
Sustainability and Risk
Transport for Wales

Protecting our natural environment for future generations is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

The State of Nature Report 2019 highlighted continued decline in Wales' wildlife along with widespread changes in the abundance, distribution and ecology of wildlife due to climate change. Without a culture shift, we'll continue to lose our wildlife for decades to come.

We must seize all opportunities to embrace greener, more sustainable pathways and value and protect our natural assets that will help us to achieve this, and make it even better for future generations.

Protecting our wildlife is a key part of this objective. Many of our railways, roads and cycle paths are rich in wildlife; home to many different species of flora and fauna that use these habitats for shelter, commuting, feeding and breeding.

It's vital that we consider biodiversity and ecosystems within our natural environment, and value the important contribution we can make to the biodiversity of Wales and the UK as a whole as a transport provider.

The Environment Act and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act provide firm foundations for us to deliver this ambition.




Laura Jones
Ecology and
Biodiversity Manager
Transport for Wales

Our transport networks in Wales have an essential role to play in protecting and enhancing our natural environment.

This Biodiversity Action Plan forms a key component of our wider sustainability aims at Transport for Wales; driving us forward to halt species decline, habitat degradation and protect our biodiversity and ecosystems throughout our operations.

Our aspiration is - and always will be - that transport can positively contribute to the protection and enhancement of our wildlife.



**What Wales is doing
today, the world will
do tomorrow**

**Nikhil Seth,
United Nations Secretary General**

Introduction

Our Biodiversity Action Plan

Our Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) provides the over-arching framework for habitat and species conservation within our company.

This document outlines how we'll protect and enhance biodiversity while delivering a better, more integrated and more sustainable transport network.

This plan forms an integral part of achieving our vision of our operations being undertaken sustainably for safety, performance, the environment, our customers and our neighbours.

Close collaboration and engagement with our stakeholders and local communities to maximise the benefits we can bring for biodiversity forms a vital part of this.

This plan is for all Transport for Wales (TfW) employees and our partners, which are either directly working to protect and enhance biodiversity, or whose work may impact on it in some way.

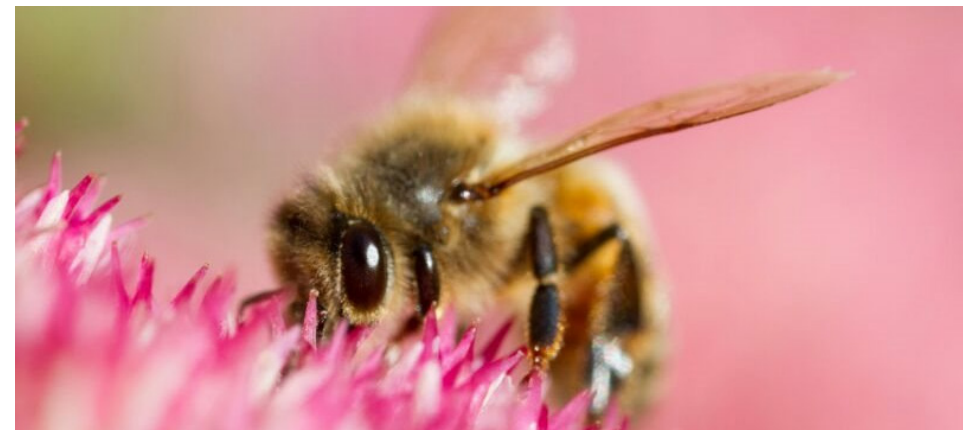
Actions within this plan are proposed over an initial five-year period, which will be subject to review at the end of this duration by the Sustainable Development Team.

This plan is endorsed by the Transport for Wales leadership team and is communicated to all employees and is available to the public and interested parties upon request.

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is a term used to describe the abundance and variety of living things on the earth, from mammals to insects, fungi, trees to wildflowers and the habitats in which they live and the communities they form.

Everyone's well-being - economic, social, cultural and environmental - depends on healthy and resilient ecosystems. The natural environment provides employment and sustains communities across Wales. Thousands work in farming, forestry, fisheries, tourism and recreation, all of which depend on natural resources.



Importance of the Plan

We have a legal obligation to appropriately safeguard our wildlife and the environment as part of our work. We deliver projects and own and manage land that is important for wildlife – road verges and railway lines for example provide biodiverse habitat mosaics because they are generally subject to less human interference and disturbance. In addition, they provide a rare level of landscape scale habitat connectivity.

Therefore, it's vital that we play our part in helping to protect, conserve and enhance Wales' biodiversity and set out clear targets and actions to show how we are doing this.

Our work on biodiversity is strongly linked to our other priorities as set out in our Sustainable Development Plan.

Nature-based solutions help to reduce the amount of new raw materials we use, reduce our carbon emissions, help to create a more biodiverse environment, enhance and safeguard our natural resources and increase ecosystem resilience to impacts like climate change, habitat management and pollution.

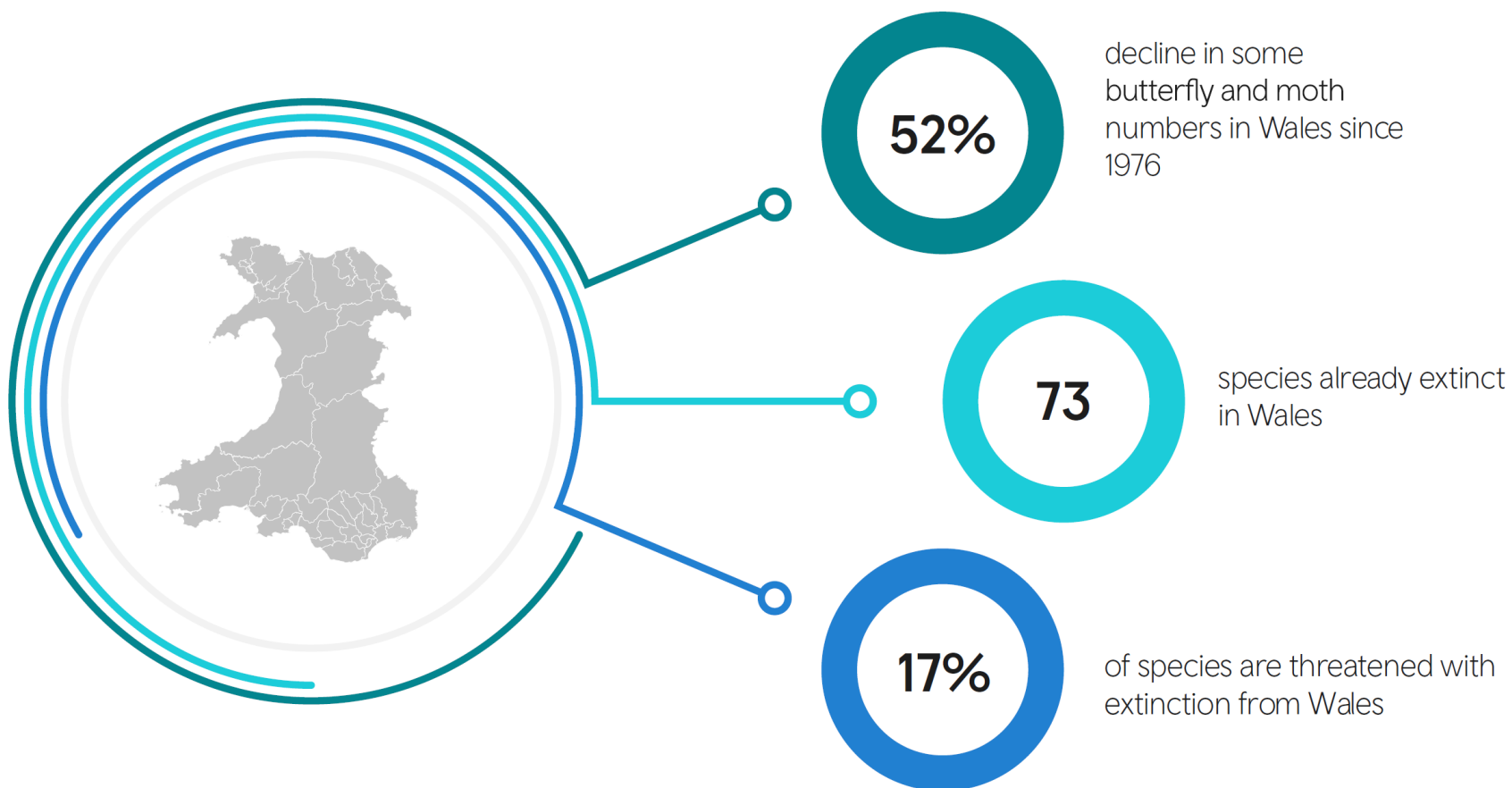
Biodiversity under threat

Since 1970, increased pressure on Wales' diverse landscapes and seascapes has resulted in both losses and gains for biodiversity. The State of Nature 2019 report shows that, on average, Wales' wildlife has declined in recent decades, with some species declining rapidly and others becoming extinct.

Our natural environment is under significant pressures and threats. Pressures upon wildlife come from many different sources, including agricultural management, urbanisation, pollution, hydrological changes and increasing presence of invasive non-native species. Climate change is also causing widespread changes in the abundance, distribution and ecology of Wales' wildlife, and will continue to do so for decades to come.

We need to act now so that future generations can have access to clean air, water, food, raw materials and opportunities to enjoy nature.

Biodiversity under threat



Legislation, policy and guidance


Objectives and aims in this plan have been informed and led by relevant wildlife legislation, plans and policy (Appendix 1) including the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

This legislation and guidance collectively recognise the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, and the steps which must be taken by public bodies - including those responsible for transport infrastructure - in order to protect and enhance these in Wales.

We'll report our compliance, actions and progress on our biodiversity targets and goals annually to the Welsh Government under the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty in Section 6 of Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

This plan will be updated and when necessary to reflect changes in the regulatory framework.



A close-up photograph of a brown and orange butterfly perched on a green leaf. The butterfly's wings are spread, showing a mix of brown, orange, and dark brown patterns. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

'Environmental pressures are causing global biodiversity declines at rates not previously encountered in human history...Nature plays an essential role in providing food, energy, medicines and genetic resources. The ecosystem services resilient habitats provide - like flood defence and carbon dioxide removal - will also be lost... If changes aren't made now, losses of biodiversity and the negative impact on nature's benefits to people will continue.'

State of Natural Resources Report,
Natural Resources Wales

Aims and objectives

The aim of this Biodiversity Action Plan is to provide a strategic overview for biodiversity conservation within Transport for Wales and set out what information, data and measures are needed for us to monitor these targets and demonstrate our progress with these.

This plan is underpinned by five main objectives:

1. Protect and improve biodiversity and ecosystems
2. Communication and transparency
3. Mainstreaming best practice
4. Collaboration
5. Biodiversity initiatives



Protect and improve biodiversity and ecosystems

We'll ensure any impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems are properly assessed and mitigated

In line with the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, we'll ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to protect against biodiversity loss, secure enhancement opportunities and promote the resilience of ecosystems in our operations.

We'll trial appropriate processes - for example Welsh Government's approach to Net Benefits for Biodiversity - to ensure we can deliver a reliable and accurate measure of our impacts on biodiversity and mitigate these where necessary.

From 2024 onwards, we'll ensure there is no overall loss of biodiversity as a result of our operations and seek to increase and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems as part of this.

Whilst understanding any potential impacts as a result of our work, we'll also embed these principles into our policies, strategies and everyday business activities.

Integral elements to achieving this in the long term will include:

Data collection and sharing

By creating an 'asset database' i.e. collating a wide range of ecological data within our network, we will be able to establish the biodiversity baseline and as a result better able to understand what we currently have, need to protect, may impact or can enhance in our operations.

This includes allowing us to identify when we are maintaining or increasing biodiversity in the work we are doing. This in turn allows us to prioritise work based on 'predict, prevent, and enhance' rather than 'react and mitigate'.

In addition to high level analysis of habitats using desk top surveys, we'll draw upon other reliable sources of data from environmental records centres and open access species/habitat databases. This in turn will be supplemented by ground truthing during site walkovers to re-assess and/or update our habitat and species data.

Informed management

Longer term, our asset database will inform our annual vegetation management plans and provide specific site level management plans to protect and/or enhance biodiversity in any given area.

Users will be able to log into the database and see where the potential ecological issues and opportunities (such as offset projects with local stakeholders) have been identified. This information will also allow us to implement route-wide strategies for biodiversity during routine vegetation management.

Communication and transparency

We promise to communicate and engage with our staff, stakeholders and the public about the work we're doing and why

Being open and transparent about our operations – both internally (including our line-side staff) and externally, to our stakeholders and the public, is important so everyone understands what, when, how and why we are doing the work that we do.

For example, to ensure the integrity of the network we are sometimes required to remove trees and vegetation which represent a risk to our transport infrastructure and (therefore) the communities in which we work. We recognise the impacts this has on biodiversity and how others, including our neighbours, can be affected by this.

We'll be explicit and transparent about the duration, scale and reasons for our operations and associated work, which will be communicated through a variety of means including bespoke links on our website and through our social media platforms. These will include detailed information on what to expect, and how any given area of our work ties into this plan.

By working with our neighbours and engaging with our stakeholders, we can work better, together, in achieving our biodiversity goals.



Main-streaming best practice

We're main-streaming biodiversity into our operations as standard, always informed by best practice

We'll mainstream biodiversity in our decision making and operations as standard; where appropriate governance is embedded and signed off at board, department and project levels. This will secure the inclusion of biodiversity alongside delivering our construction and maintenance works and asset management, whilst also ensuring health and safety conditions are met.

Fundamental best practice principles for ecology and biodiversity will be applied in line with our Net Benefits for Biodiversity objective, always applying the mitigation hierarchy in each instance:

Avoid > Minimise > Mitigate > Offset.

By taking this approach, we can better manage our environmental risks adaptively by planning, monitoring, reviewing and, where appropriate, changing our actions.

This includes routinely seeking opportunities to enhance the resilience of our ecosystems through protection, connection, enhancement and creation of these in our operations, such as targeted vegetation management and strategic tree planting.

While doing this, we'll also explore opportunities for integrating wider ecosystem service delivery, such as carbon, water and flood management.

Training for our staff and contractors will form an integral part of this objective, with appropriate resources in place for all staff who need it.

Our land asset managers, engineers and line-side staff will be advised and trained on identifying habitat management opportunities and risks for biodiversity.

By working closely with our staff and stakeholders to support change, we will create a culture shift where biodiversity is embraced on all levels.

Our projects: Core Valleys Lines

Appropriate inclusion of biodiversity will form an integral part of vegetation management and standard protocols on the Core Valley Lines.

For example, frequency and timing of cuts, critical areas for protection and opportunities for enhancement.

This includes targeted and appropriate long-term control and management and biosecurity as standard for invasive non-native species and diseases, which can cause our native species to decline.

For example, ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is a chronic fungal disease that has already devastated many ash trees across Europe and could lead to the loss of over 90% of one of our most common broadleaved trees.



Collaboration and engagement

Collaboration and engagement with stakeholders, wildlife organisations and local communities is hugely valuable and is essential to ensure the continued longevity and success of any biodiversity conservation work we do now, and in the future

By working closely with others, we can make better, more informed decisions - for example linking a project's Net Benefit for Biodiversity with local nature conservation priorities.

Over the next five years, we plan to work closely with key bodies, organisations and groups, such as:

- Welsh Government
- Community partners
- Pesticides Action Network
- The Tree Council
- Local Wildlife Trusts
- Natural Resources Wales
- Network Rail
- Wales Biodiversity Partnership
- Wales Invasive Non-Native Species Group
- Local nature conservation groups

We also participate in Community Rail; a government strategy that aims to engage local people in the development and improvement of the railway environment.

Community Partnerships are groups of committed people working with the rail industry and Local Authorities to promote railway lines and improve stations, services and access.

Through this we can improve our understanding of the current and future needs of our communities, which will positively influence our operations





Our projects: Station Adopters

Our Adopt a Station scheme aims to improve links and relationships with local communities near railway stations.

Through these partnerships we can promote the use of green spaces and infrastructure at or around our stations to enhance the resilience of ecosystems. We plan to increase the number of adopted stations in the next few years.

We have many great examples where volunteers maintain station gardens to a very high standard, even winning national awards.

Biodiversity initiatives

Our commitment to biodiversity extends far beyond simply doing what we're required to do - we want to do everything we possibly can to maximise biodiversity and we have ambitious visions for how we can do this. We want to exemplify as a leader in urban and rural transport networks and in promoting Wales as leading the way as a first-class sustainable tourist destination.

We'll be investing in a range of features that will enhance biodiversity, such as:

- We'll commit to a green infrastructure fund every 5 years to support our Station Improvement Plan initiatives such as green roofs on bike shelters and living walls at stations.
 - We'll develop Green Stations and increase station artwork to ensure stations are characterful and promote reflect their local landmarks.
 - We'll support a Biodiversity Initiative Fund which will encourage charities and academic institutions to implement initiatives such as habitat boxes, bug hotels and wildlife gardening around our rail network and in the wider environment.
 - We'll identify opportunities to maximise biodiversity gain on our land assets that will have a quantifiable benefit, including restoring degraded ecosystems and using hedgerow planting as replacement boundary fencing as alternative boundary structures where possible.
 - We're working on a range of initiatives aimed at protecting pollinators including reduction of pesticides when undertaking land management and pollinator friendly planting.
- These initiatives include identifying suitable investment and funding opportunities to help us achieve our goals.





**Appendix 1:
Legislation, policy and
guidance**

**Key UK legislation, plans and policy
for biodiversity and conservation
in Wales and the UK**

Legislation, policy or guidance document	Description
The Environment (Wales) Act 2016	The Environment (Wales) Act puts in place the legislation needed to plan and manage Wales natural resources in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way. The aim is to sustainably manage natural resources in a way and rate that meets the needs of present and current generations without compromising the needs of future generations. The Act also contains a duty for the Welsh Ministers prepare and publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitat of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales. Section 7 in the Act replaces the duty in section 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
DECCA Framework	Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has developed a framework for evaluating ecosystem resilience based on five attributes and properties specified in the Environment (Wales) Act. This is referred to as DECCA: Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Aspects of ecosystem resilience
The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. Under Section 10 (1) of the Act there is a requirement for key indicators known as National Indicators. Those relating to ecology are: National Indicator 43 - Areas of healthy ecosystems in Wales and National Indicator 44 - Status of biological diversity in Wales.
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the principal mechanism for the legislative protection of animals, plants and habitats in the UK. This includes prevention of spread of invasive plants in the wild listed under Schedule 9 of the Act.
The Habitats Directive	The Habitats Directive 1992 (Directive 92/43/EEC sets out the legal framework requiring EU member states to protect habitat sites supporting vulnerable and protected species, as listed within the Directive. The need for an assessment of impacts on Natura 2000 sites (the collective name for European designated sites, including SPAs and SACs) is set out within Article 6 of the Directive. The Directive is transposed into UK law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) (the "Habitats Regulations") and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Legislation, policy or guidance document	Description
The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019	This Order allows for the enforcement of the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation 1143/2014 on the prevention and management of invasive alien plant and animal species in England and Wales, including the relevant licenses, permits and rules for keeping invasive alien species. These are species which pose a risk of adverse impacts across the UK, such that targeted action across the UK is required.
The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017	The regulations set out a procedure for identifying those projects which should be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and for assessing, consulting and coming to a decision on those projects which are likely to have significant environmental effects on biodiversity, cultural heritage, soil, climate, water and landscape.
Planning Policy Wales 2018	Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales (including biodiversity and ecological networks) as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation.
Natural Resources Policy 2017	The focus of this Natural Resources Policy (NRP) is on improving the way natural resources are managed. This is a key part of the delivery framework for the sustainable management of natural resources established by the Environment (Wales) Act. It is also vital if current and future generations are to continue to enjoy the benefits they provide. As such, it is also key to the delivery of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
The 25 Year Environment Plan 2018	Sets out goals for improving the environment within a generation and leaving it in a better state than we found it. It details how we in government will work with communities and businesses to do this. This includes clean air and water, thriving plants and wildlife, reducing risks from environmental hazards, sustainable use of natural resources, mitigating climate change and enhancing biosecurity.
The Second State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR2020)	Natural Resources Wales SoNaRR report sets out the state of Wales' natural resources and builds on the evidence base in the first SoNaRR (2019). The report illustrates some of the key challenges, priorities and opportunities for the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR).

Legislation, policy or guidance document	Description
United Nations Environmental Programme Convention on Biological Diversity 1992 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000	<p>The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides a statutory framework for biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>The Act places a duty on Government Departments and the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity and maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity.</p>
Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) for Wales	Integrates and reflect the Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy (NRP), aligned with the latest evidence, priorities, Welsh Government's objectives and reporting obligations, stakeholder actions on biodiversity and identifies further action needed both in the urgent short term and the longer term.



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