

Transport for Wales Biodiversity Action Plan 2026-2030





Forewords



Geoff Ogden

Chief Transport Planning and Development Officer
Transport for Wales

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

'The State of Nature report confirms that the biodiversity crisis remains one of Wales' greatest long-term challenges. Across Wales, many of our railways, roads and active travel routes are home to a rich variety of species and habitats. We have a responsibility and unique opportunity to contribute to the solution.

We must take every opportunity to adopt greener, more sustainable ways of working—and to recognise the vital role our natural environment plays in supporting a healthier, more resilient future for generations to come.

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is central to this ambition. We need to protect Wales native species, habitats and ecological connections, including supporting feeding, breeding, shelter and movement for wildlife.

As a transport provider across Wales and its borders, we're in a position to support and improve biodiversity on a meaningful scale.

This Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the principles Transport for Wales will follow to protect, restore and champion biodiversity and ecosystems across all our operations. It is not a one-off commitment, but a living, evolving document—designed to adapt to new evidence, policy and priorities as they emerge.

By embedding nature into everything we do, we'll play our part in reversing biodiversity loss and building a greener, more sustainable Wales.'



Forewords



Laura James

Technical Lead – Ecology and Biodiversity
Transport for Wales

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

‘Wales’ wildlife continues to face serious challenges. The State of Nature data shows that in Wales the abundance of terrestrial and freshwater species has declined by 20% since 1994, while one in six species is now threatened with extinction. Iconic species such as the curlew and the water vole have suffered critical drops. But the picture also holds promise: in some areas, species are recovering where habitats have been restored and given proper protection.

At Transport for Wales, we believe that transport should actively contribute to nature’s recovery. That principle is, and will remain, central to everything we do. This Biodiversity Action Plan is a core part of our broader sustainability vision. It sets out how we will work to halt species decline, prevent habitat loss, and protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems across all areas of our operation, from track maintenance to station design, from vegetation management to community partnerships.

We have a unique opportunity—and duty—to be part of reversing these declines. Our railway lines, embankments, cuttings, verges, stations and associated lands weave through landscapes that are often undervalued but are rich with wildlife: corridors connecting fragmented habitats across our country, refuges for flora and fauna, and stepping stones for wildlife adapting to climate change.

Let’s make transport part of the solution for nature in Wales.’



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 an over-arching framework for how we'll protect and enhance habitats and species.

This plan forms an integral part of achieving our vision of being sustainable while providing an exceptional transport network.

Close collaboration and engagement with our stakeholders and local communities will be vital to fully realise the benefits we can bring to wildlife as part of our operations.

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

Actions within this plan are set out over a five-year period. These will be subject to review both annually and 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. It 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 and 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 [Well Being Objectives](#).

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 the 1970s, increased pressure on Wales' diverse landscapes and seascapes have resulted in both losses and gains for biodiversity. The State of Nature 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.

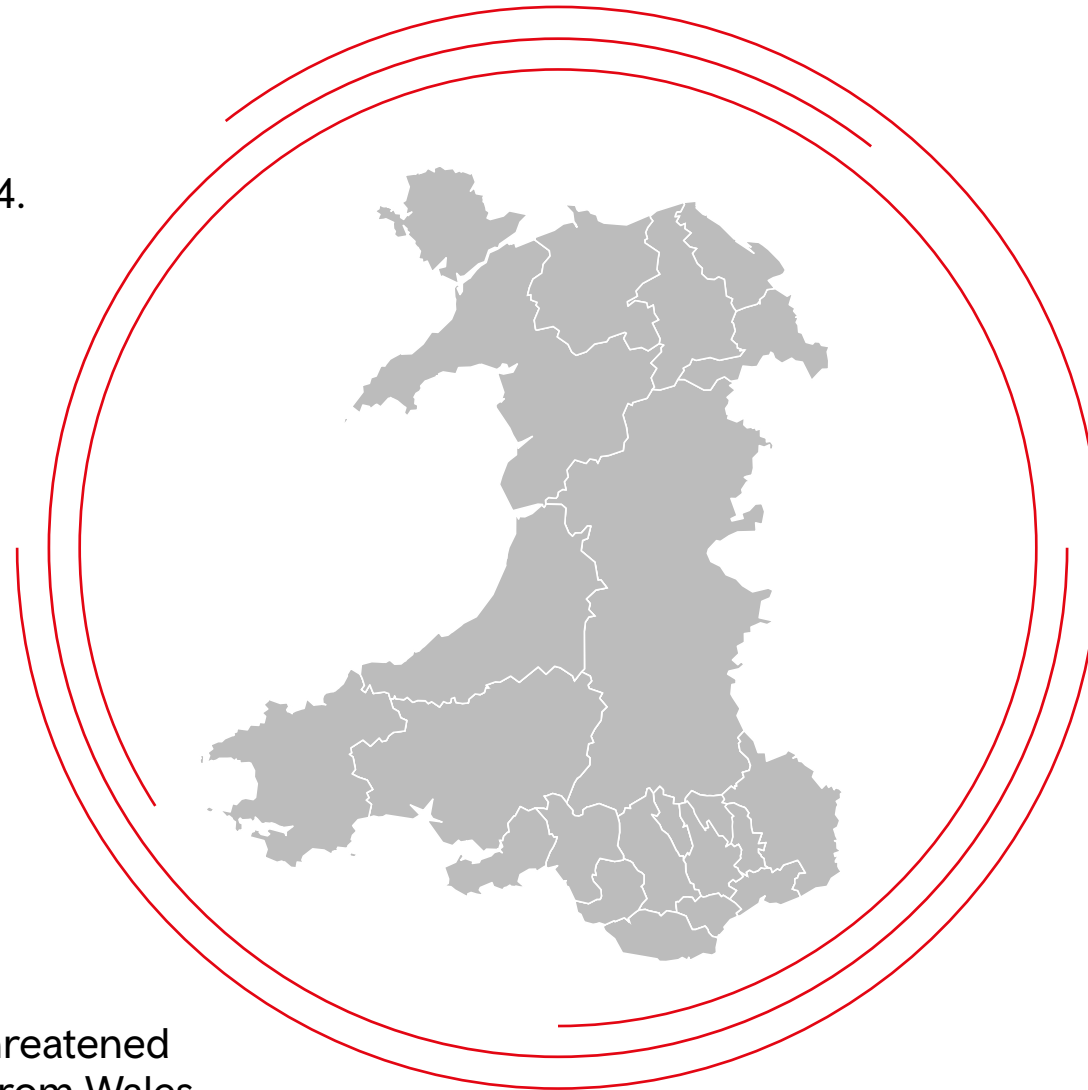
Climate change is also causing widespread changes in the abundance, distribution and ecology of Wales' wildlife, and will continue to do so for decades to come.

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



20%

average decrease of
Welsh wildlife since 1994.



43%

decline in
moth species.

18%

of species are threatened
with extinction from Wales.

Legislation, policy and guidance

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

Collectively these highlight 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 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.





“Globally, around 1 million species of plants and animals are now threatened with extinction. Reflecting this global trend, Wales’ wildlife is continuing to decline, mainly because of the way we manage our land for agriculture, the effects of climate change, pollution, over exploitation and invasive species. This loss of nature threatens ecosystem resilience and nature’s ability to support our society and well-being, and nature’s capacity to adapt to and mitigate against climate change.”

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.

This plan is underpinned by five main objectives:

1. Protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems
2. Communication and transparency
3. Main-streaming best practice
4. Collaboration
5. Supporting biodiversity initiatives





Protect and enhance 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.

Any impacts on biodiversity must be properly assessed and, if these cannot be avoided, appropriately mitigated. We'll ensure there is no overall loss of biodiversity as a result of our operations and use appropriate approaches and guidance to increase and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks throughout our operations.

We'll 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

As part of our growing 'asset database' (which collates a wide range of ecological and other

relevant data within our network) we are better able to establish a biodiversity baseline and to understand what we currently have, need to protect, may impact or can enhance.

This includes being able to identify areas where multiple environmental benefits may be realised. For example, as part of climate change adaptation measures our teams are working on.

In addition to analysis of habitats using desk surveys, satellite and drone data, we'll draw upon other relevant sources of ecological data from environmental records centres and open access databases. This in turn will be supplemented by ground truthing during site walkovers to re-assess and update our habitat and species data where required.

Informed management

Longer term, our ambition is to integrate management measures that maximise ecological benefits across our network as part of routine vegetation management. This includes timing of cutting, reduction of pesticides, coppicing and creation of habitat features for a variety of species.





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 is important so everyone understands what, when, how and why we are undertaking work.

For example, to ensure the integrity of the network, we're sometimes required to remove trees and vegetation which represent a risk to our transport infrastructure.

We recognise the impact this has on biodiversity and how other people, including our lineside neighbours, can be affected by this.

We'll be explicit and transparent about the duration, scale and reasons for our operations and associated work. These will be communicated through a variety of means including 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 lineside neighbours and engaging with our stakeholders, we can work better, together, in achieving our biodiversity goals.



Mainstreaming best practice

We're mainstreaming biodiversity into our operations as standard, always informed by best practice.

We'll mainstream biodiversity in our decision making and operations as standard. 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, while also ensuring health and safety conditions are met.

Fundamental best practice principles for ecology and biodiversity will be applied in our operations, always applying the mitigation hierarchy in each instance:

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

This includes seeking opportunities to enhance the resilience of our ecosystems such as vegetation management and tree planting.

Avoid >> Minimise >> Mitigate >> Offset

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 frontline staff will be advised and trained on identifying habitat management opportunities and risks for biodiversity.

Working closely with our staff and stakeholders to support change, we'll create a culture shift where biodiversity is embraced at all levels.

Aligned to TfW's Socially Responsible Procurement objectives, we will (where relevant) work with our supply chain to conserve and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems. Our procurement strategies will consider biodiversity alongside other environmental factors, gaining commitments from the supply chain where biodiversity could be affected by their work.



Our projects: Core Valley Lines

Inclusion of biodiversity forms 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.

For example, ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is a chronic fungal disease that could lead to the loss of over 90% of the ash 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.

Working closely with others, we can make better, more informed, more impactful decisions. For example, partnering with local nature conservation groups to share data, maximise benefits and more effectively realise shared goals.

We work closely with key bodies, organisations and groups, including:

- Welsh Government
- Natural Resources Wales
- Community partners
- Invasive non-native species groups
- Local Nature Conservation Groups
- Wildlife Trusts
- River Trusts
- Network Rail

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. We plan to increase the number of adopted stations.

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





Supporting biodiversity initiatives

Our commitment to biodiversity extends beyond simply doing what we're required to do - we want to do everything we possibly can to maximise biodiversity. We want to be a leader in urban and rural transport networks and in promoting Wales as a sustainable tourist destination.

We'll continue to invest and support a range of biodiversity initiatives, such as:

- Support and trial advances in ecological innovation including remote monitoring equipment, alternative invasive species management and artificial intelligence species identification.
- Identify opportunities to maximise biodiversity gain on our land assets that will have a quantifiable benefit. For example, restoring degraded ecosystems and using hedgerow planting as replacement boundary fencing as alternative boundary structures where possible.
- Trialling and installing prototype green infrastructure designed for railway settings
- Collaborate with and support academic institutions to research important questions in relation to biodiversity within railway environments
- Work on a range of initiatives aimed at protecting pollinators including reduction of pesticides and using pollinator friendly planting in landscaping schemes.
- Allocate funding for external biodiversity initiatives to support non-governmental organisations, charities and academic institutions to implement biodiversity initiatives within and surrounding our network.





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

Legislation/Policy	Description
The Environment (Wales) Act 2016	<p>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.</p>
DECCA Framework	<p>Under the Section 6 Duty of the Act public authorities are required to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions. 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.</p>
The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	<p>The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 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. The five ways of working under the WFG Act: Collaboration, Integration, Involvement, Long term, and Prevention. As of June 2024, TfW are a recognised public body under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WFGA) and now have the legal responsibility to embed the Act through our everyday processes, operations, people and culture.</p>



Legislation/Policy	Description
	<p>Of notable relevance is maintaining and enhancing the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide under the Resilient Wales goal: 'A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change'</p>
Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill	<p>The Bill was introduced into the Senedd in June 2025. The aim of the environmental principles provisions is to establish a robust framework for environmental governance in Wales. This framework seeks to address three core challenges: combating the combined impact of climate and nature emergencies, protecting the environment from harm, and responding to changes in environmental governance structures following the UK's departure from the EU.</p> <p>The key purposes of the Bill are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establish environmental principles and an environmental objective- Establish an independent environmental governance body, the Office of Environmental Governance Wales ("the OEGW")- Establish a biodiversity target setting framework aimed at halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity in Wales
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	<p>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.</p>



Legislation/Policy	Description
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).
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.



Legislation/Policy	Description
	<p>Chapter 6 now requires that developments deliver a net benefit for biodiversity, stating: 'development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity. In doing so planning authorities must also take account of and promote the resilience of ecosystems.'</p>
30by30 Framework for Wales	<p>30by30 is otherwise known as Target 3 of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), agreed upon by 196 countries, including Wales through the UK. Sits within Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales. Includes set of criteria that areas reported under the 30by30 target need to meet, aligning with the requirements of the Kunming-Montreal GBF and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).</p>
Natural Resources Policy 2017	<p>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 (Wales) Act 2015.</p>
United Nations Environmental Programme Convention on Biological Diversity 1992	<p>Global treaty to provide a legal framework for biodiversity conservation. Public bodies in Wales, including the Welsh Government, must consider the CBD when exercising their functions and have a duty to conserve biodiversity.</p>
The State of Natural Resources Report 2025	<p>Natural Resources Wales SoNaRR reports sets out the state of Wales' natural resources and builds on the evidence base in the first and second reports. The report illustrates some of the key challenges, priorities and opportunities for the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR).</p>



Legislation/Policy	Description
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.

