

A Living Wales: Welsh Assembly Government Biodiversity Audit January 2012

In November 2010 the National Assembly for Wales' Sustainability Committee undertook an inquiry into Biodiversity in Wales. The report included a recommendation to ensure that biodiversity is mainstreamed across Government. The Committee called on the Welsh Government to complete and publish an audit of how its aspiration to halt biodiversity loss is reflected in the work of all Government Departments and agencies.

Departments were asked to report on the current action they were undertaking, as well as possible future action, in support of this aspiration.

They were also asked to provide a broad estimate of the costs of this action.

Examples of some current action being undertaken are:

- Department for Enterprise and Technology, Science Department's Technical Team have produced two detailed sets of guidance on biodiversity which are being updated to include the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) Duty. This will identify divisional responsibilities under the duty and training will be made available for division teams to reinforce the guidance.
- Invest Wales ensure that applicants for capital grant schemes take the NERC Biodiversity Duty into consideration as part of their project applications
- Welsh Government awarded Green Dragon Level 5, the highest standard, for its entire administrative estate and business processes. The Green Dragon Environmental Management System provides a robust management tool for the organisation to take effective action to reduce its environmental impact.
- The Farming Connect programme offers a range of services that will contribute to halting biodiversity loss. For example, by providing agri-environment training, mentoring on topics such as environment and resource management, meeting cross compliance requirements and covering topics such as Environmental protection, Environmental management & Soil and Nutrient management.
- School curriculum includes explicit reference to biodiversity within Personal and Social Education. For example, specific opportunities occur within science at Key Stages 2 and 3, where pupils investigate the interdependence of organisms and in geography where Key Stage 3 pupils study the characteristics of threatened environments and the possibilities for their sustainable development.

Valuing Divisions' Biodiversity work

- For major trunk road projects the costs associated with biodiversity are between 5 to 15% of the total budget per project
- The Annual Tir Gofal agri-environment payment to farmers is £30M, with forecast payments for 2013 for the Targeted Element of £4M.
- The work that the Economics Sub stream is undertaking as part of the Natural Environment Framework (NEF) programme is intended to provide a) more information on the value of ecosystem services in Wales and b) improved guidance on incorporating environmental costs and benefits in economic appraisals, impact assessments and decision making processes in general. Improving the ability of the Economic Advice Division, and the Welsh Government in general, to include environmental costs and benefits in economic appraisals should help to ensure a more socially optimal allocation of resources and will therefore contribute to the aspiration to halt biodiversity loss.