

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Factsheet



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Overview of the Environment (Wales) Act



Background

In Wales, our nature, land, water and air are our ultimate resource. But, demands on these natural resources are increasing and one of the greatest challenges we face is to find a way to secure healthy, resilient and productive ecosystems for the future whilst still meeting the challenges of creating jobs, housing and infrastructure. The Environment Act helps us to meet this challenge.

Managing our natural resources in a sustainable way

Sustainable management of natural resources is about managing these resources in a joined up way that delivers real outcomes for the environment, people, the economy and our communities. Our aim is to make the most of the opportunities that Wales' natural resources present while safeguarding and building the resilience of natural systems to continue to provide these benefits over the long term.

Central to the Act is the need to adopt a new, more integrated approach to managing our natural resources in order to achieve long-term sustainability.

The Act provides an iterative framework that ensures that managing our natural resources sustainably will be a core consideration in decision-making.

- **The State of Natural Resources Report** – Natural Resources Wales (NRW) must produce a report that gives an assessment of natural resources and how well we're doing to manage them in a sustainable way.
- **A National Natural Resources Policy** – the Welsh Government must produce a national policy that sets out the priorities, risks and opportunities for managing our natural resources sustainably. The policy will take into account the findings of the State of Natural Resources report.

- **Area statements** – NRW will produce a local evidence base, which helps to implement the priorities, risks and opportunities identified in the National Policy and how NRW intends to address these.

The Act also provides NRW with new tools to help manage our natural resources sustainably. Land management agreements allow NRW to work with landowners to manage their land in a sustainable way. Experimental schemes allow NRW to trial new ways of working.

A new biodiversity duty included in the Act helps to reverse the decline and secure the long-term resilience of biodiversity in Wales.

Climate Change

The Act places a duty on Welsh Ministers to set targets for reducing greenhouse emissions and also to set carbon budgets. This will help to accelerate progress against our headline targets and will help build resilience in our environment to extreme weather events. Statutory targets and a more robust governance framework will allow us to better evaluate progress and provide certainty to help drive investment for a low-carbon Wales.

Carrier bags

The Act extends the Welsh Ministers powers so that they may set a charge for other types of carrier bags such as bags for life, in addition to the charge on single-use carrier bags, if evidence shows that the supply and disposal of these types of bags is detrimental to the environment.

The Act also places a duty on retailers to donate the proceeds from the sale of carrier bags to good causes which relate to environmental protection or improvement. An exception is provided for retailers who may wish to continue with any existing arrangement they may have with non-environmental good causes.

Waste

The Act introduces new powers, to increase the amount of materials for recycling, improve the quality of materials available for recycling and making sure that materials that could have been recycled aren't wasted. The new powers enable the Welsh Ministers to:

- Require business and other waste producers such as the public sector to make sure that clean, recyclable materials are separated before they are collected
- Require waste collectors to collect recyclable wastes by means of separate collection
- Ban the burning of recyclable materials in incineration plants
- Ban the disposal of food waste to sewers by businesses and the public sector.

Fisheries for shellfish

The Act ensures that our marine environment in Wales is managed more sustainably. It includes the creation of two new powers for Welsh Ministers, which gives them more control over shellfisheries and provides them with greater confidence to grant longer tenures for sustainable fisheries in the future.

Marine licensing

The Act amends current marine licensing charging powers so as to enable the marine licensing authority to achieve greater cost recovery in relation to the services it provides.

Other changes

The Act also clarifies the law for a number of existing environmental regulatory regimes including land drainage and flood risk management.

Timeline

The Act became law in March 2016.

More information

You can find out more about the Act on the Welsh Government's website at:

<http://gov.wales/environmentact>

You can also subscribe to our monthly e-bulletin by emailing us at:

NRBulletin@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.