



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Trees and Planning in Wales

Planning Policy Updates

TDAG Seminar
16 January 2024

Overview



Background



Policy Changes



Reflections

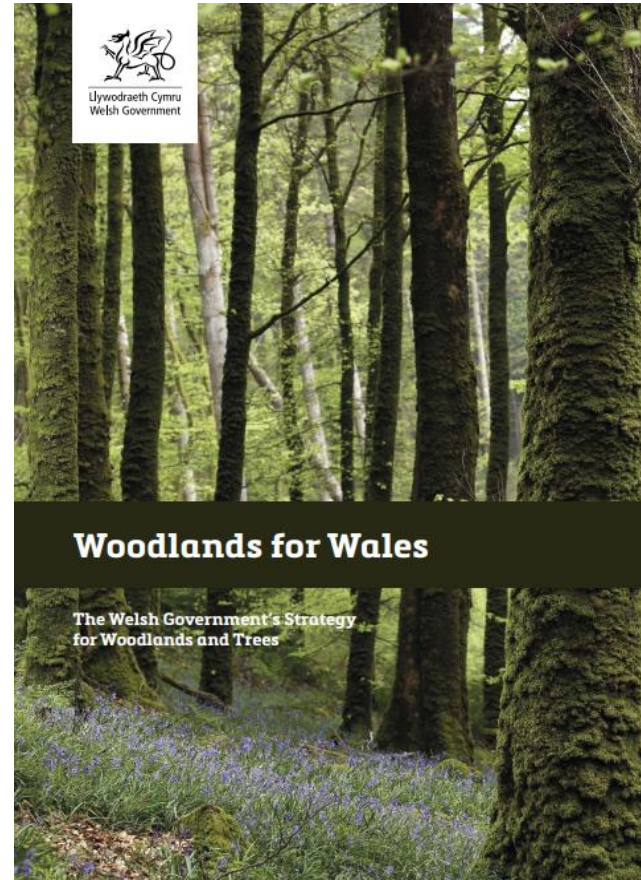
Trees and Welsh Government

Targets:

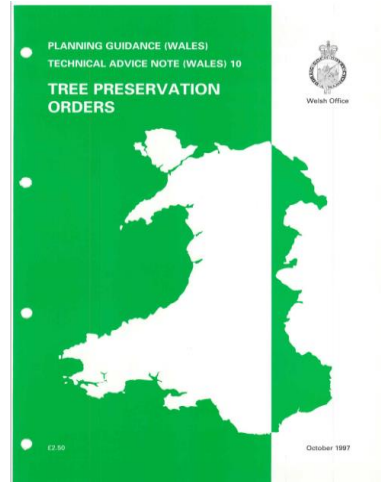
- 43,000ha new woodland by 2030
- 180,000ha new woodland by 2050
- 5,000ha new woodland per annum

Other initiatives:

- National Forest for Wales Liaison Officers
- National Forest for Wales Status Scheme
- Woodland Investment Grant
- Coetiroedd Bach (Tiny Forests)
- National Forest People's Collection for Wales
- Every household in Wales offered free tree to plant
- Trees and timber deep dive (July 2021)



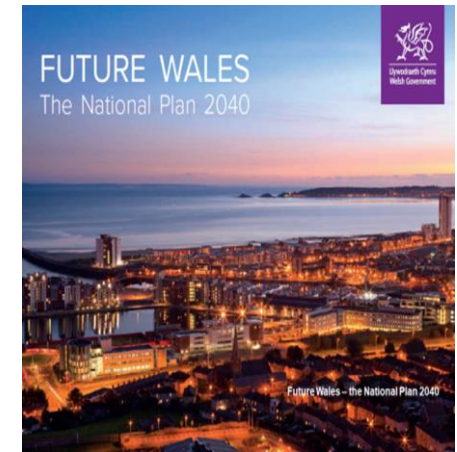
Planning Framework for Trees



October 1997



February 2021



February 2021

Home > Building and planning > National planning policy > Addressing the nature emergency through the planning system: update to Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales

GUIDANCE

Addressing the nature emergency through the planning system: update to Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales

Letter to heads of planning which sets out that updated policy for inclusion in Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales is published with immediate effect.

Read details

Part of: Dear Chief Planning Officer (CPSO) letters: National planning, policy and guidance: national policy

First published: 18 October 2023
Last updated: 18 October 2023

Documents

Addressing the Nature Emergency through the Planning System: Updated National Planning Policy for Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales

PDF 181 KB
This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. Request a different format.

Annex

PDF 407 KB
This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. Request a different format.

October 2023

Prif Gynhydd, Y Cylwyddeth Cynllunio
Chief Planner, Planning Directorate

To: Heads of Planning

23/10/19

Dear Colleagues,

Securing Biodiversity Enhancements

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 11 sets out that planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, local or national and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity (para 6.4.5 refers). This policy and subsequent policies in Chapter 6 of PPW 11 respond to the Section 6 Duty of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The purpose of this letter is to clarify that in light of the legislation and Welsh Government policy requirements, where biodiversity enhancement is not proposed as part of an application, applicants must still be given the opportunity to consider other significant material considerations indicate otherwise it will be necessary to release permission.

It is important that biodiversity and ecosystem resilience considerations are taken into account at an early stage in development preparation and when proposing or considering development proposals. Planning authorities should be proactive and enter appropriate policies into local development plans to protect against biodiversity loss and secure enhancement.

The attributes of ecosystem resilience (PPW para 6.4.5 refers) should be used to assess the current resilience of an site, and the need for maintenance and enhancement post-development. If this cannot be achieved, permission for the development should be refused.

Securing a net benefit for biodiversity within the context of PPW requires a pragmatic response to the specific circumstances of the site. Working through the step-wise approach (PPW para 6.4.2) refers. Biodiversity loss cannot be completely avoided (i.e. maintained), and has been minimized. It is sought that net benefit has a concept for both compensate for loss and seek for and secure enhancement opportunities. A net benefit for biodiversity can be secured through habitat creation and/or long term management arrangements to enhance existing habitats, to improve biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems. Securing a net benefit for biodiversity is not necessarily linear, though understanding local context, it is possible to identify new opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

Yours faithfully,

Neil Kenyon
Prif Gynhydd, Y Cylwyddeth Cynllunio
Chief Planner, Planning Directorate

Section 6 - Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty
Section 6 under Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the S6 duty) for public authorities in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales.

6. Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty
(If a public authority must 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.

October 2019

DOSSLEU CENNYDD
KEEP WILDLIFE SAFE

Building Better Places
The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures
Placemaking and the Covid-19 recovery
July 2020

July 2020

Planning Policy Wales Chapter 6 Updates

- 18 October 2023 – ‘Dear Heads of Planning Letter’ published updating parts of Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales
- 12 week consultation (March-May)
- Minister for Climate Change priority

GUIDANCE

Addressing the nature emergency through the planning system: update to Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales

Letter to heads of planning which sets out that updated policy for inclusion in Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales is published with immediate effect.

[Read details](#) ▾

Part of: [Dear Chief Planning Officer \(CPO\) letters, National planning policy and guidance: national policy](#)

First published: 18 October 2023

Last updated: 18 October 2023

Documents



Addressing the Nature Emergency through the Planning System: Updated National Planning Policy for Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales

PDF 181 KB

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.
[Request a different format.](#)



Annex

PDF 407 KB

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.
[Request a different format.](#)

Details

It is published today (18 October 2023) with immediate effect. This policy will be included in the next iteration of [Planning Policy Wales](#) (version 12).

Updated Policy Areas



Green Infrastructure



Net Benefit for
Biodiversity and the
Step-wise Approach



Protection for Sites
of Special Scientific
Interest

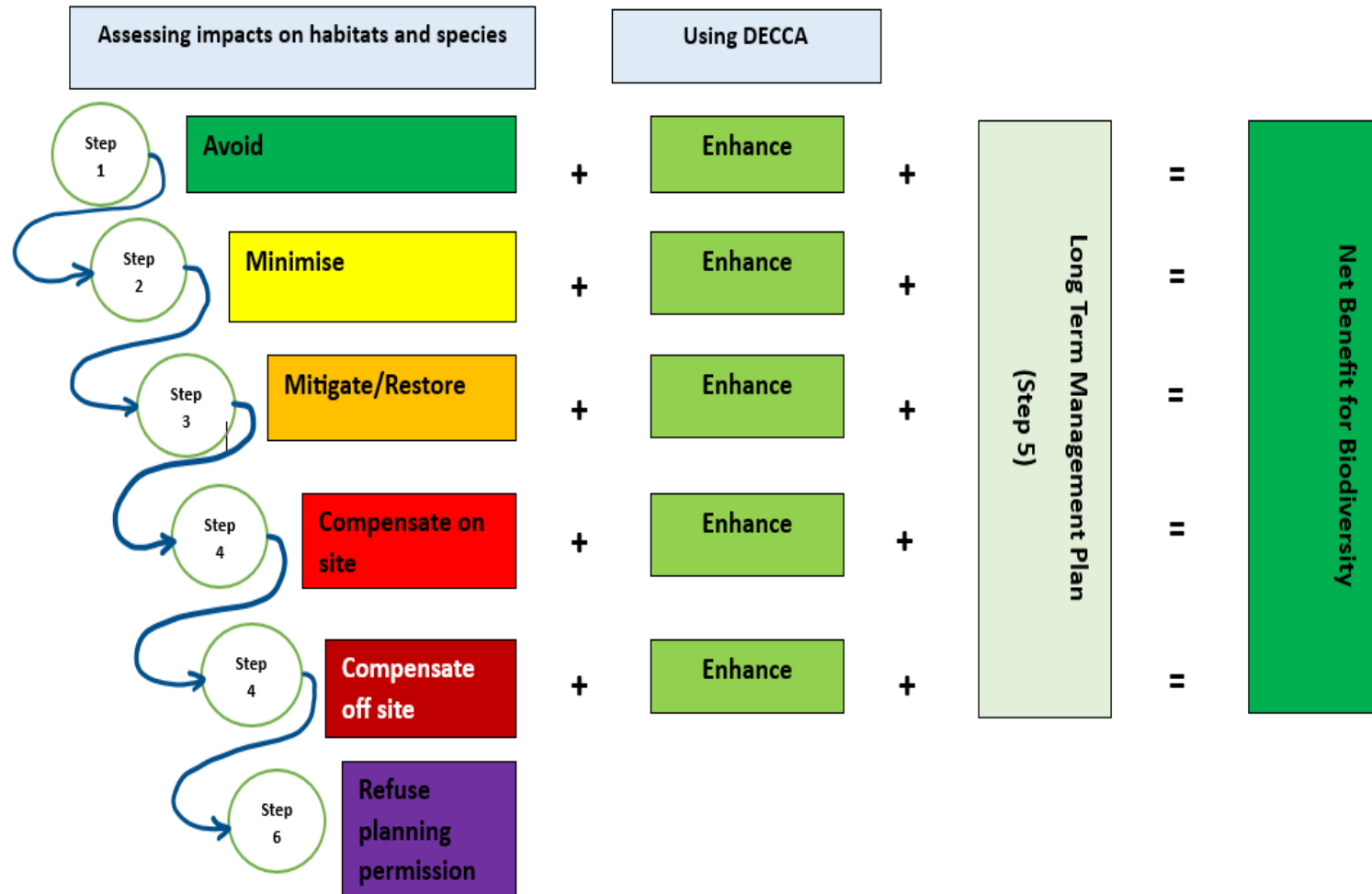


Trees and
Woodlands

A net benefit for biodiversity is the concept that development should leave biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in a significantly better state than before, through securing immediate and long-term, measurable and demonstrable benefit, primarily on or preferably immediately adjacent to the site.

- Driven by legislation (Environment (Wales) Act, 2016)
- Qualitative approach
- Embedded in placemaking
- Proactive, creative and outcome focused

Step-wise Approach



Decca Framework

- Diversity
- Extent
- Condition
- Connectivity
- Adaptability



Net Benefit for Biodiversity

- **Guiding principles** agreed with an external stakeholder, added to the existing (Planning Policy Wales 11) step wise policy structure.
- The step wise approach is now stronger, more prescriptive, and clearer in guiding planning authorities through the process of securing a net benefit for biodiversity;
 - 6 steps
 - Designated sites excluded from site searches
 - Definition of irreplaceable habitat (listed examples include, ancient woodland and veteran trees, ancient hedgerows, and wet woodlands)
 - Avoiding damage to biodiversity and ecosystems
 - Maintaining largest area of functional and connected habitat/existing features
 - Mitigation designed to address specific negative effect = should be like-for-like (priority species and habitat) and in every case build ecosystem resilience within the site (and wider area)
 - Compensation measures agreed in advance (before the loss of biodiversity on site), off site compensation as a last resort
 - New step = long term management plan

Net Benefit for Biodiversity

- Step wise policy is supported by **3 principles** that set out factors that will affect the implementation of the policy:
 1. Establish baseline state of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience
 2. Pre-emptive site clearance works will make it more difficult to secure a net benefit for biodiversity. 'Should not' be done.
 3. All development must deliver a net benefit for biodiversity & ecosystem resilience from the baseline state
- Guidance on sites already allocated in an adopted plan

Trees & Woodlands

- Additional policy strengthening for all trees linking back to the Step-Wise Approach;
- Functional importance of trees, woodlands, groups of trees and areas of woodland restated;
- Ecosystem resilience function of native trees and hedgerows outlined;
- Recognition given to the importance of trees within the countryside;
- Ancient woodland, semi-natural woodlands, individual ancient, veteran and heritage trees and ancient hedgerows identified as irreplaceable natural resources, with significant landscape, biodiversity and cultural value.
- Reframing of general protection policy –

Planning authorities must protect trees, hedgerows, groups of trees and areas of woodland where they have ecological value, contribute to the character or amenity of a particular locality, or perform a beneficial green infrastructure function

Trees & Woodlands (Cont'd)

- New requirement for the planting of new trees, hedgerows, groups of trees, areas of woodland as part of new development;
- New policy requirement on the adoption of canopy cover targets for local planning authorities;
- Retention of trees to be identified within all planning applications (significant trees to be retained & protected);
- 'Service lines' to the site should be included within the application (identifying tree loss);
- Permanent removal of trees, woodland and hedgerows will only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits;
- Compensation planting ratio for trees lost set at 3 for 1, equivalent to the quality, environmental and ecological importance of the tree(s) lost - this must be preferably onsite or immediately adjacent to the site; and
- Higher compensation planting ratios set for woodland and shelterbelt areas.

Reflections/Next Steps

- Changing practice is challenging
- Maintain momentum
- Use your networks
- Full Planning Policy Wales 12 to be published shortly
- Further guidance to be published, but principles are already established
 - Working with Natural Resources Wales to develop a common approach to measure whether a net benefit will be achieved on site – using DECCA
 - Enhancement measures
 - Potential FAQ document



Diolch

Questions?