



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Mid and West Wales  
Fire and Rescue Service

# Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-23

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Section 6 Duty  
Monitoring Report





# Section 1 - Introduction and Context

**Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service is committed to excellence with a vision to become a world class organisation. The Service recognise the importance to protect the environment and conserve habitats and resources within the 4,500 square miles of predominantly rural countryside the Service cover.**



Every year fire is responsible for the destruction of thousands of hectares of countryside, open space and wildlife habitats. The Service want to work with our communities to build a healthier and more resilient landscape, by developing a more biodiverse countryside for our future.

The Service is a statutory member at the Public Service Boards under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and reports annually to Welsh Government on our Well-being objectives. The Service has embraced our duties and our role as a statutory partner across six Public Service Boards and are committed to working towards achieving the objectives within the Well-being plans.

The Service is committed to minimising its impact on the environment, which is reflected through our Commitments within the Service's Strategic Plan, Environmental Policy, Environmental Management System and Strategies. The Strategic Plan 2022-2027 outlines the Services five-year Commitments, which have been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle and incorporated the five ways of working. Long term, Integration, Involvement, Collaboration, Prevention.

Detailed updates and statistics on impacts on the environment are included in the Annual Environmental Report and 5 Year Sustainability and Environment Strategy, which are both published on the Services external website.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is in place to deliver against the government's commitment to introduce new legislation for the environment and puts in place the legislation needed to manage Wales's natural resources in a more proactive, sustainable and joined up way, outlining the Government's commitment to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 outlines the sustainable management of natural resources in Wales, Section 6 under Part 1 of the Act outlines a Duty for public authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their function and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.

The Service published its first Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-23 in June 2020, in line with the financial year reporting structure. The Act puts in place the legislation needed to plan and manage Wales's natural resources in a more sustainable and joined up way. This is the Services first report to Welsh Government which monitors progress against objectives outlined within the initial Biodiversity Action Plan. The Services' next Plan, Nature Recovery Action Plan 2023-2026, will be published in Spring 2023.



This Monitoring Report provides an overview of the key actions and initiatives that the Service has undertaken over the last 3 years to contribute to the 6 objectives outlined in the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) Wales.

## These 6 objectives of the NRAP Wales are :

### Objective 1

Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels

### Objective 2

Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management

### Objective 3

Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation

### Objective 4

Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

### Objective 5

Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

### Objective 6

Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery.

Since the objectives were published, 5 themes of action have been developed to complement the objectives. The five themes are:

- **Maintaining and enhancing resilient ecological networks;**
- **Increasing knowledge and knowledge transfer;**
- **Realising new investment and funding;**
- **Upskilling and capacity for delivery;**
- **Mainstreaming, Governance and reporting our progress**

The NRAP Wales Objectives, together with the newly developed themes will form a basis of the objectives captured within the Services' Nature Recovery Action Plan 2023-26.



## Section 2 - Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

### What has worked well?

There has been a significant amount of work undertaken in the last 3 years towards the objectives outlined within the Services' Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-2023. These achievements are captured below and were developed alongside the NRAP Objectives in 2019. The following section evidences the projects and achievements made in the last 3 years by the Service.



### Objective 1

Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels

Over the last 3 years, Environment has been included within the Services Corporate commitments. The Services environmental objectives are highlighted within all new starter inductions for both operational and support staff, to highlight the Services commitments and aims. As part of the induction process, awareness on what the Service is doing in relation to Section 6 Duty, carbon emissions, and Annual Environmental reporting is highlighted.

The Services Annual Environmental Report outlines achievements and statistics year on year and includes updates on environmental projects undertaken, which encourages biodiversity to site and directly ties into the Section 6 Duty and NRAP Wales objectives. The current report can be found on the Service external website.

In line with Welsh Government Net Zero Reporting criteria, relevant areas are monitored closely such as buildings, fleet, travel, renewables, waste, energy consumption and supply chain emissions. These are reported annually alongside the Services Annual Environmental report.

In February 2023, the Service successfully maintained its Level 5 Green Dragon Environmental Management System accreditation. This accreditation ensures a top-level commitment within the Service. It demonstrates consideration of the impact Service activities can have on the





environment and commitment towards continual environmental improvements to Service activities and procedures. The accreditation is awarded to organisations that can demonstrate effective environmental management and that take action to understand, monitor and control their impacts on the environment.

Internal Environmental Station Audits are undertaken on a 4-year rotation. These are used to highlight any environmental initiatives that are being undertaken on individual sites, along with areas for environmental

improvement, including encouraging habitats to sites where applicable.

In early 2023, the Service went live with a new environmental e-learning package which has been endorsed by the National Fire Chiefs Council and FBU (Fire Brigades Union) Lifelong learning. This learning package is for all employees and has been developed to raise awareness in areas such as biodiversity, waste, water, energy conservation and emissions.



  
Mid And West Wales Fire And Rescue Service  
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## Fire and Rescue: Environment Matters

Developed in line with EA and NRW guidance  
Endorsed by NFCC and FBU

  


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## Objective 2

### Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management

The Service have limited areas of green space available on Service land but where there is available space there has been an increase in the planting pollinators and wildflower beds to encourage pollinating wildlife at sites.

A number of Swift boxes have been installed at a number of Fire Stations across Mid and West Wales, such as Pembrokeshire, Carmarthen and Swansea areas. The Fire Service in collaboration with various Local Nature Partnerships and have used Services vehicles to assist in installing boxes on other Local Authority buildings, including schools and hospitals. The photos below show Fire Crews assisting in Swift box installation at Withybush Hospital, Pembrokeshire.

The Services Estates Department work closely with external Gardening contractors to improve green areas on applicable sites. The ground works maintenance has been reviewed

and the cutting regime was changed to twice throughout the year, with grass cuttings left in situ instead of being collected after cutting. Regular meetings are held between the ground maintenance team and our Estates Department to ensure the best management techniques are in place and alternative methods are considered to encourage biodiversity to as many sites as possible.

When needed, we will collaborate with external contractors and ecologists to undertake species surveys at various locations around the Service before starting any development or removal work to ensure no unnecessary or detrimental damage will be done to wildlife at a local level. As a result of this, additional designs and innovations have been considered and integrated into Stations to encourage biodiversity.





## Objective 3

### Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation

A number of Stations have been involved in community engagement projects over the years, using Service land to develop sustainability projects. Small patches of unused green space have been used to create small vegetable patches, wildflower beds or well being areas.

Working closely with the grounds maintenance team, planting of pollinator plants and wildflower beds have been established where possible across the Service sites to encourage pollinators and establish bee lines.

Over the last 18 months, the Service have appointed a contractor to undertake risk assessments and general tree condition surveys to identify possible trees or individual branches that may cause injury if left untreated. Out of 26 locations surveyed, 10 trees needed maintenance to either remove broken branches or required further action.

Included in the survey was an assessment to identify any issues of Ash Die Back disease to which none of the Service trees were affected.

Any significant trees or branches which are cut on Service locations are chipped on site and logs are left in situ to encourage small bug habitats. Larger deadwood habitats have been established in Service Headquarters in Carmarthen from a large felled tree. Part of a tree was left to naturally develop a deadwood

pile to provide cover for small mammals and bugs and a separate pile was create at the rear of the site to develop further microhabitats.

In December 2022, in a response to the Local Places for Nature initiative, the Sustainability Manager met with a small group of specialist members from the National Botanic Gardens of Wales at Service Headquarters site in Carmarthen. This meeting was used to provide a report to advise and give guidance on any beneficial changes to the land, to potentially develop habitat creation as well as advise which native species to plant on site to encourage biodiversity. Areas covered included: hedgerow, woodland, grassland and recommendations for plants for pollinators. A further visit has been scheduled for Spring to allow for further guidance on how small improvements on Service land can encourage biodiversity to the site.

A Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) is currently being implemented at the main transport workshop in Dafen, this will manage the surface water on site more sustainably. This is in the early stages and will be developed over the coming year.

During the redevelopment of Llandrindod Wells Fire Station, a sedum roof was installed to encourage biodiversity to site and a rain garden is being established to allow for sustainable drainage to the site.



## Objective 4

### Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

The Service are keen to reduce the impact of fire on biodiversity across Wales. During 2021, Fire and Rescue Services' across Wales dealt with 2,089 grass fires. Whilst this was a slight decrease on the same period in 2020, the number of accidental fires in 2021 had increased by 24%. By working together with our communities to share knowledge, we hope to provide a better understanding on what the Service can all do to limit the accidental fires from happening and in turn the damage that accidental fires can cause to the environment.

#### Partnership working and collaborations.

The Service has always worked closely with external partners. Opportunities, as a direct result of the Section 6 Duty have developed over the last 3 years including collaborations with :

- Pembrokeshire Local Nature Partnership
- Natural Resources Wales
- Swansea Environmental Forum
- National Botanic Gardens of Wales
- Buglife
- Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership
- Presteign Dark Skies



#### Arson Reduction Team

The Services Arson Reduction Team have been working hard in relation to collaboration and have developed a system mapping localised areas in Wales for a digital map to identify grazing species and developing green spaces for wellbeing and recreation.

In 2021, the Station personnel worked with Presteign Dark Skies Group to reduced light emitting from Presteigne Station allowing for an increase in presence of nocturnal wildlife.

The Service have undertaken a lot of community engagement work with private forestry owners to manage their areas to protect ancient species of trees and identify where they are in terms of tactical planning

Firebreak cutting with the i-cutter machine has been established in collaboration between the Fire Service and external partners to occur annually between December and mid-March in a variety of locations including: Brecon Beacons National Park sites, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park sites, Common land across Gower, Rhos and Crynant Commons and areas in Swansea that are a high risk of arson, such as Kilvey Hill and Garngoch Common. Breaks are planned with several partners based upon historical fire data, sensitivite site protection, biodiversity support and community benefits such as access for recreation and wellbeing.

Arson Reduction Teams work closely with Schools to raise awareness of the devastation impact of fires to communities and habitats.



A Fire Service Burn Team, is in the early stages of being developed. This is a team of 4 or 5 wildfire trained personnel, to carry out a planned and supervised burn under specified environmental conditions to remove fuel from a predetermined area of land. The Team can be used to highlight how to extinguish an already established fire and also establish prescribed burning teams to set areas alight while not causing damage to wildlife and helping species that thrive from burnt areas.

Collaboration between the Fire Service, National Trust and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, to discuss land management to reduce fire risk and mitigation strategies that could be implemented in areas that were badly affected by fire during summer of 2022.

The Services Farming Liaison Officer works with local communities to use the i-cutter to establish access areas to previously difficult

to reach places. This has a positive impact with the local community and gives access to previously unused areas. This aligns to the Public Service Board objectives of cohesive communities.

Land Management Groups developed with Fire Service Liaison Teams, such as Arson Reduction Team, have been a big success over the years. These groups include Gower Commons Group, Gower and Swansea Wildfire Group, National Parks working groups and the Healthy Hillside Project. The Wildfire Charter for Wales was also developed in 2023.

The Service work closely with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to ensure incidents are managed without having a detrimental impact on the environment. Fire Appliances hold an environmental Grab Pack to ensure there is minimal impact to flora and fauna as a result of incidents.





### Operation Dawns Glaw

This is a multi-agency taskforce of specialists from key agencies across Wales who are committed to reduce, and where possible eliminate the impact of grass fires across Wales. The taskforce was initially set up to tackle incidents of deliberately set grass fires, whilst the initial focus was on reducing incidents of antisocial behaviour and arson, more recent work has concentrated on assisting farmers and landowners in ensuring the safe execution of their land management plans.

This operation works to build networks and collaborate with a number of external organisations to assist in improving natural areas and biodiversity in various areas of mid and west Wales. The collaborations also ensured that areas of special interest and high-risk Common Land is managed effectively to reduce fire loading and help reintroduce animals to graze the areas.

More information on this can be found on the Services external website:  
[#Dawnsglaw - Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service \(mawwfire.gov.uk\)](https://www.mawwfire.gov.uk)

## Working together to Protect our Countryside and our Country



Operation Dawns Glaw, a multi-agency task force of specialists from key agencies across Wales has reformed to reduce, and where possible, eliminate the impact of grass fires across Wales.



## Objective 5

### Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

In 2020, the Service signed a new waste contract which allowed all Service waste to be collected by a single contractor instead of 6 different contracts. This allows for a simpler way to collate and monitor data, ensuring waste data is more accurate in terms of weights and separation to correct waste streams. Only 1% of Service waste ends up in landfill, with 99% being recycled, recovered, or used for energy and anaerobic digestion. Posters are now circulated Service wide to raise awareness of waste data by Station.

Sustainability and Environment Group Meetings are held quarterly where biodiversity and the Biodiversity Action Plan objectives are discussed as a standard agenda item. Updates are given by individual Departments and Divisions on environmental projects where applicable.

In February 2023, the Service successfully maintained the Level 5, Green Dragon EMS accreditation for the 9th year in a row. This is an annual external audit which ensures continual environmental improvement and monitoring across all aspects of the Service. This includes Service activities, environmental reports, monitoring process and procedures,

guidance documents and communications to staff. It allows the Service to be confident that all relevant environmental legislation is being adhered to and ensures environmental impacts resulting from Service activities remain low. Auditors attend a small selection of Service locations to undertake a site audit and to review paperwork.

An improved back-office systems allows for more accurate monitoring and recording of utilities, Estate defects and waste. The improved data collection has allowed for awareness posters for energy consumption and waste within the Service to be circulated to highlight consumption at individual locations. These figures are highlighted and discussed within Divisional area meetings and within the Service Sustainability and Environment Group Meeting.

The data taken from the back office is used to report to Welsh Government on the Net Zero reporting required from all Public Sector Organisations and within the Service Annual Environmental Report.





## Objective 6

### Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery.

As a Statutory member of Public Service Boards (PSB), the Service are involved in a collaborative approach to sharing information and projects. The Service have representation at a number of PSB Groups in all 6 Counties aimed at Climate change adaptation and mitigation and Nature Recovery for that area.

An example of successful collaboration through the PSB Group includes successfully obtaining funding in 2021, from NRW through the Swansea Public Service Board subgroup, this funding was used to create firebreaks on Common Land in the Swansea area. This was a collaboration between members from the Swansea PSB Working with Nature Group including Swansea Council, NRW and the Fire Service which resulted in a positive impact on the areas ecosystems.

Environmental Audits, both internal and external and carried out regularly to ensure compliance. The Station Environmental Audits are completed on a 4-year schedule with the higher risk sites such as the main transport workshop audited annually. Between 2020 and 2023 the Service has undergone external audits from Green Business Centre and Audit Wales, along with submitting annual reports to Welsh Government in relation to Net Zero Reporting.

The Service is currently developing a Decarbonisation plan which will be finalised by Summer of 2023.

To ensure a consistent reporting arrangement, the Services Sustainability and Environment Group meetings are held quarterly, these are chaired by the Corporate Head of Organisational Risk and run by the Sustainability Manager. An elected member of the Fire Authority acts as the Environment Champion and attends the Sustainability and Environment Group meetings. The meetings include updates on environmental projects, the Biodiversity Action Plan, quarterly consumption statistics and updates on Service environmental objectives. As a further means of governance, any large-scale environmental projects or reports, such as the Annual Environmental Report, are subjected to the Service Corporate Governance arrangements, reported through Directorates, Service Leadership Team and Performance and Scrutiny Committee for comment and approval.



## What have the barriers been and what will be different for the next 3-year BAP?

There have been a number of barriers in relation to the objectives outlined within the NRAP Wales. The Service owns a minimal amount of land where only a small impact towards biodiversity improvements can be made specifically on Service sites, as such it is felt that more impact can be made while assisting external organisations through collaboration work.

There is limited budget to be able to develop large scale environmental projects specifically for biodiversity improvements.

Regardless of the limitations, the Service will continue to build partnerships with external organisations across the 6 unitary authority

areas within the Service area, working with the network of organisations already established and endeavour to form new collaborations.

As a result of COVID-19 a number of projects and Groups were placed on hold. A specific Biodiversity Action Plan Working Group was formed to monitor and encourage wider participation across Service personnel which due to lockdown did not reach it's full potential and will be reinvigorated in the next year. This group will feed into the Sustainability Group, this will ensure that the objectives remain relevant.





## Section 3 – Conclusion and Review of Section 6 Duty

**Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service is committed to working towards the objectives outlined within the NRAP from Welsh Government. This duty has encouraged collaboration with external organisations to deliver on the duty and those organisations to reach out for assistance in this area**



This Report shows that the Service has made significant steps forward, working towards the objectives outlined within the Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-23 and the objectives in the Nature Recovery Action Plan Wales. Further objectives will be outlined in the Service Nature Recovery Action Plan 2023-26

There has been an increased awareness within the Service in relation to protecting and enhancing biodiversity not only on Service sites but across the area the Service protect. Key areas continue to be raised and discussed within the Sustainability and Environment Group and key personnel will be involved in working towards new objectives over the next 3 years.

The Service employs a Sustainability and Environment Manager to implement and report on environmental objectives. This is done through an Annual Environmental Report and the 5-year Sustainability and Environment Strategy.

A Biodiversity Action Plan Group has been established following on from the Section 6 Duty to help implement and develop the Plan. This Group will help implement biodiversity projects and action and help steer the Service in particular, for non-operational targets.

The Services' Nature Recovery Action Plan 2023-26, formally Biodiversity Action Plan, will be published in line with the Services financial year reporting schedule and will be available on the external website in Spring 2023.



## Social Media

We encourage you to keep an eye on our social media channels for updates

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# Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-23

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## Section 6 Duty Monitoring Report



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