The Wildlife Trust
South and West Wales
De a Gorllewin Cymru

Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION

A Wilder South and West Wales.

Our strategy 2020-2030

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

Introduction

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales covers almost half of Wales, with boundaries extending from Lavernock in the south east, and the Black Mountains in the north east, to Skomer Island, in the furthest west, and north from the Gower as far as the Dyfi, deep in mid-Wales.

The landscape is diverse, with many outstanding opportunities for nature, including mountains and moorlands, bogs and fens, woodlands and grassland, lakes and rivers. The marine environment is equally important: we are a coastal trust, with rugged cliffs, islands, sandy shores, estuaries, salt marshes and, of course, the open sea.

We have very large areas of urban and post-industrial landscape - the places where most people live. These are places which were once ravaged by the impact of heavy industry, but today are full of opportunities for nature's recovery. From a distant perspective these are glorious places, a cultural landscape reflecting much earlier times when our ancestors found some harmony with nature.

But if we look too closely the detail is missing: it is a seriously depleted landscape, a consequence of our recent unhappy relationship with nature.

Welsh wildlife is in peril, and we are losing our precious species and habitats. 17% of all species in Wales are at risk of extinction. Over the past 50 years there has been a 13% decline in the abundance of species, with a 6% decline over the past decade alone, and the rate of decline is accelerating.

There have also been alarming changes in species distribution (the areas which species occupy). Taking the UK as a whole, distribution has declined by 5%, but in Wales the rate of loss is 10%: double the UK rate.

Our wildlife trust has seen some spectacular gains: water voles have been reintroduced to the Gwendraeth Valley and the Puffin population on our Pembrokeshire islands has tripled since the turn of the century.

But these are the exceptions, and we must not be deceived. More widely, Turtle Doves and Corn Buntings have already become extinct in Wales, Curlew are increasingly rare and 25% of moths have declined.

Unfortunately, we are all too easily misled by some of the more obvious, but superficial, changes. Our rivers may look cleaner, but fish are declining, and, although woodland cover has increased, plantation woodlands compare unfavourably with our ancient, native, broadleaf woodlands.

The climate crisis is an urgent, escalating problem. We are already witnessing the disastrous impact on wildlife and we are also in deep trouble.

This is just the beginning: we will experience more losses to wildlife, more violent storms, more flooding, more wild fires, and longer, more frequent, periods of drought.

The global climate has been regulated by nature for millions of years.

It is only now that just one species, humankind, is disrupting that balance.

Our strategy

Our strategy closely engages with The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) strategy.

Our strategy has also been guided by, and is as far as possible consistent with, the Wildlife Trusts Wales (WTW) strategy, reflecting the principles and values which we share with the other Welsh Wildlife Trusts, but also taking account of our local perspective and specific interests. We have adopted the structure developed by WTW for our strategy.

Many of our activities will be carried out in partnership with WTW and TWT.

Please see two additional separate documents: The WTW strategy and the WTW document 'Our Vision for Welsh Wildlife'.

The key contents of the WTW strategy which have direct relevance to the WTSWW strategy:

The Wildlife Trusts in Wales believe that nature is integral to our lives. People are part of nature and all life on earth is mutually interdependent. Everything we value comes from nature and everything we do impacts upon wildlife.

The WTW three key themes and goals aligned with those of the TWT Strategy listed below and shown in a diagram on the following page. The WTSWW will share these goals:

Action for Nature

Key Goal: 30% of land and sea managed for nature by 2030

Action with people

Key Goal: One in four people taking action for nature by 2030

Action on Climate

Key Goal: Achievement of Net Zero by 2030

Guy Edwardes/2020VISION

What
How
Why
Mission and purpose

30% of LAND & SEA

Protecting & restoring wildlife
NATURE RECOVERY NETWORK

ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

BRINGING WILDLIFE BACK

CLIMATE CRISIS

PEOPLE DISCONNECTED from NATURE

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

NET ZERO by 2030

5 WAYS TO NATURE CONNECTION

1 IN 4 PEOPLE taking action

Our vision and key targets

This is the WTSWW specific interpretation of the preceding TWT diagram

Our vision is ambitious and aspirational expression of what we would like to achieve for nature in Wales. The satellites represent both our ten-year targets and the main areas of activity which will help us meet our target.

Nature Emergency target:

30% of land & sea for nature by 2030

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A future where wildlife is abundant, resilient and secure; where opportunities for nature, both in our urban and rural environments, are optimal; where extensive, interconnected natural habitats are robust and sustainable, providing opportunities for the full range of native species.

Climate Crisis - target:

Net 0 CO_2 by 2030

People disconnected from nature - target:

1 in 4 people taking action by 2030

Key themes with goals

1. Action on nature crisis - Key Goal: 30% of land and sea

Today, 17% of species in Wales face extinction, and the future of once-common wildlife is uncertain. In Wales, at least 666 species are in decline and 73 species have become extinct since the 1970s. It is critical to help nature recover now.

The main findings of the Natural Resources Wales report, 'Protected sites baseline assessment 2020', which identifies the condition of wildlife features on SACs and SSSIs, were:

An estimated 24% of features are favourable

Around 44% of features are in unfavourable condition

Around 36% of features are not in a desired state

(Note: the final category 'not in a desired state' is misleading. In reality, these are features where the status is unknown. If we apply the precautionary principle, we must assume, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that these features are unfavourable.)

Mark Hamblin

On 30 June 2021 the Welsh Senedd declared a nature emergency.

The focus of our wildlife trust - our key driver - will be nature.

If we look after nature, nature will look after us. Our survival as a species on this planet is inextricably dependent on the survival and prosperity of all life, human and non-human.

We must tip the balance from loss to recovery. Today, we have a fragmented mosaic of isolated opportunities for wildlife, but tomorrow we could create the connections and deliver a larger, more resilient, sustainable and coherent network of both healthy habitats and populations of species.

We believe that working with nature, enabling, as far as possible, the natural processes with minimal intervention, is the surest way of helping nature to recover. We want change everywhere: in our countryside and in our villages, towns and cities; we want everywhere to become great places for people and for wildlife.

We want to optimise opportunities for wildlife wherever and whenever we can.

We do not need everything everywhere, but there must be a place for everything somewhere.

We want farming to be at the forefront of change: driving nature's recovery, restoring and conserving precious soils, providing opportunities for wildlife and contributing to a much healthier and more prosperous future for us all.

The Lawton review concluded that, in order to create a coherent and resilient ecological network, we need more, bigger, better and joined up spaces for nature. Currently, 12% of land in Wales is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and 69% of Welsh seas are Marine Protected Areas.

Designations are critical in protecting our most vulnerable wildlife but must be actively managed to achieve favourable conservation status. Our aim is for at least 30% of land in Wales to be protected, connected and positively managed for nature. Our aim for the recovery of our seas is to seek an ecosystem-based approach to build resilience against increased pressures.

Only MPA's that are recovering will form part of the 30% target. Ensuring 30% of land and sea is in recovery is not enough. Our second aim is for a return to the abundance of common and diverse wildlife throughout the entire landscape fabric of Wales.

The highest priority will be allocated to the following activities.

We will:

Promote the intrinsic value of wildlife.

Ensure that all of our nature reserves are managed sustainably for the species and habitat features that they support. We will, whenever possible, work with nature and adopt a minimal intervention approach which will enable natural process to deliver our desired outcomes.

Use our nature reserves as exemplars, promoting the contribution that protected land makes to conservation and taking opportunities to increase the influence of our nature reserves on the landscape.

Develop major habitat restoration projects to help create the bigger, better and more joined up spaces for nature.

Ensure that, as far as possible, all our monitoring, recording, management and promotional work is science based.

Monitor, record and raise awareness of terrestrial habitats and species, giving particular attention to monitoring and surveillance on all our nature reserves.

Monitor, record and raise awareness of marine habitats and species, giving particular attention to the globally important populations of seabirds on our seabird islands and bottle-nosed dolphins in Cardigan Bay (1 of only 2 semi-resident/ breeding populations in the UK).

Ensure that all the important features on our reserves are at favourable conservation status or recovering.

Develop our acquisition strategy which rationalises our existing land holdings, identifies actual and potential opportunities for increasing and strengthening our existing reserves, and that guides the acquisition of new reserves. We will seek opportunities for establishing urban reserves. We will identify and map areas for recovery and restoration.

Develop formal policy guidance for the planning and management of our nature reserves.

Undertake work to save endangered or rare species, carry out reintroductions where the science suggests species would have been part of the ecosystem, and promote an abundance of more common species and habitats in the wider countryside.

Collaborate with TWT to advise farmers and landowners and advocate more strongly for farming for wildlife, using the Less is More approach.

Control INNS (invasive non-native species) on our own land. This will include implementation of the strictest biosecurity measures on our island nature reserves.

Take a minimal approach to managing ash trees infected with ash dieback, only controlling trees which pose a threat to our staff, the general public and any property.

David Parkyn

We will forge new partnerships to drive forward nature's recovery.

Our plans and decisions will be based on sound scientific evidence.

Working with WTW and other partners we will:

Contribute to the general improvement of monitoring/surveying of wildlife in Wales to increase our shared knowledge and ability to direct appropriate advice and resources.

Increase our shared capacity to defend against unsustainable activity in the marine environment, call for greater protection of marine species and advocate for the management of our marine protected areas.

Continue our work in the wider countryside, to raise public awareness of, monitor and record Invasive Non Native Species (INNS), and influence policy to ensure an effective system of INNS control. This will include marine INNS.

Contribute to the mapping of our Living Landscapes and Livings Seas work in Wales by 2022 to identify opportunities for connectivity and action needed to achieve our vision for Wales. This process will highlight the critical role nature reserves, local wildlife sites, marine protected areas and urban green spaces will play in nature's recovery.

Take part in the development of a suite of policies and position statements, based on evidence and sound science, that support our conservation work across Wales, ensuring a strongly aligned approach to the challenges wildlife faces. This will include action to reduce the use of pesticides on our own land and our use of plastics.

Continue to work with universities, building robust case studies from our projects. Our research will contribute directly to the development of conservation practice and to the evidence needed to inform legislation to protect wildlife and wild places.

Collaborate and pool resources to give a Wales-wide response to national infrastructure and major development schemes, ensuring that decisions are in line with Wales' progressive legislation, recognising these as issues for us all, regardless of the actual location.

Join in campaigns for the diversity of the Welsh marine environment to be recognised by Welsh Government so that protection and management of our seas takes account of the complexity of habitats and wildlife, achieving an ecologically coherent network of MPAs between Welsh inshore and offshore habitats by 2024.

Join in campaigns for government-led Marine Megafauna and Seabird Conservation Plans to identify actions to allow marine wildlife to recover, achieving favourable conservation status by 2030.

Work with national and local government and other partners to influence the management of public green space and seek green infrastructure improvements to assist in the recovery of nature.

Engage with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, National Park Authorities and Local Authorities to ensure they play their role in nature's recovery through investment, leadership and setting 2024 targets on nature's recovery within their management plan and strategic planning process.

Call for local authorities to publicly recognise the ecological crisis and to build robust responses into their strategic plans, including green infrastructure, accessible natural green community spaces and preventing developments that damage wildlife and natural habitats.

Be the voice for nature and campaign with others for a reduction in commercial and private use of pesticides, a ban on single-use plastics and a reduction in the use of other plastic products and a ban on the use of peat-based compost by 2023.

We will support TWT, WTW and other appropriate partners, but not take a lead role, in the following activities:

Monitoring the obligation of public bodies and Welsh Government agencies to report their work in achieving nature's recovery. When we feel this is lacking, we will be a voice for nature through campaigns and by building case studies to demonstrate good and bad practice.

Ensuring that new fisheries policies incorporate ecosystem quotas to allow fish and marine populations to recover.

Securing the creation of a new, independent and robust enforcement agency to replace the European Court of Justice in Wales.

Working with partners and UK colleagues to influence devolved and Westminster Governments and building a greater understanding of devolution within the Wildlife Trust movement.

Ensuring that nature's recovery is the fundamental focus of new land management payments in Wales.

Driving forward the new environmental growth economy, to take forward sustainable growth in line with the principles set out in the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act.

Advocating for new policies for agriculture and fisheries that respond to the climate and ecological crisis. This will include new measures to tackle pollution in its many forms, such as focusing resources on repeat offenders, which has worked effectively in Scotland.

Alexander Mustard/2020VISION

2. Action with people - Key Goal: One in four people taking action for nature by 2030

We are committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) we will ensure fair treatment and opportunities for all. We will not tolerate prejudice and discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender assignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Equality means that we will ensure that everyone has the same opportunities. Diversity means that we will value all individuals for the different perspectives that they offer. Inclusion means that everybody is encouraged to participate in nature's recovery in ways that suit them.

People are part of nature and must play a role in nature's recovery through their choices as consumers and voters and through inspiring others through positive action. We are at a tipping point and need to act now to harness peoples' energy. Research has shown that the support of at least 25% of a population is needed for any large-scale social change. Our vision is to see 1 in 4 people actively playing a part in nature's recovery.

We all need natural green spaces: we need a connection with nature, and we know that time spent with nature significantly improves our quality of life. We know that nature keeps us alive and that it can have an enormous positive impact on our wellbeing in terms of both our mental and physical health. As we lose our connection with nature, our health suffers and our wellbeing declines.

We will focus on equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience the joy of wildlife in their daily lives. We are 'Wild About Inclusion', and increasing the diversity of our staff, Trustees, volunteers and members is crucial to our success in bringing about nature's recovery.

We want all children to grow up with equal opportunities to enjoy nature: to hear a soaring spring chorus of birds and the hum and buzz and chirruping of nature in summer. We want them to experience clouds of butterflies, wildflower grasslands alive with grasshoppers and other insects, and rivers and streams full of fish.

We want more room for wildlife in our towns and cities, parks and gardens full of wildflowers and bird song, tree-lined streets and green places for people.

We want a future where most people care for our natural environment and our wildlife; we want them to respect nature and to enjoy nature.

Tom Marshall

David Tipling/2020VISION

Emma Bradshaw

The highest priority will be allocated to the following activities.

We will:

Embrace the principles and use the techniques of 'Team Wilder' to empower communities to take action for wildlife. We will give people the tools, confidence and voice to campaign to save wild places and to create and secure living landscapes and living seas.

Use the Team Wilder approach to develop the way we work with and support Local Groups and volunteers to build a dynamic network of individuals and communities taking direct action for wildlife.

Increase our supporters by 50% by 2030, diversifying ways in which new audiences can engage with and support us.

Develop natural history skills among volunteers and build connections between different generations. We will monitor the state of nature locally, involving more people in deciding what is needed for wildlife.

Celebrate and showcase how people are helping nature to recover on land and at sea and the achievements of the Wildlife Trusts and our volunteers, building case studies and stories that can inspire action by others.

Strengthen our commitment to engaging through Welsh and English, and diversifying our traditional structure of engagement, welcoming people of all ages and people from ethnic minorities. We will be proactive in this work, seeking guidance from these audiences about changes they would like to see.

Lead people to a greater understanding of the countryside and inspire connections with all wildlife, in the sea and on land– not just the rare or charismatic species. We want to raise awareness of the marine environment and demonstrate that it has as much diversity as terrestrial habitats and species.

We will reinforce existing, and forge new partnerships, to **inspire ourselves and others, to empower communities and individuals, to develop citizen science and to promote health and wellbeing.**

Support wildlife ambassadors and future environmental leaders to inspire others in our communities.

Join campaigns to encourage individuals and communities to take action for wildlife at home or in their local area, and to take action to address the climate and ecological crises.

Work with land managers, businesses and industry leaders who are committed to taking action for nature's recovery, and will celebrate successes to inspire others.

Work with education providers to build confidence in outdoor learning.

We will support TWT, WTW and other appropriate partners, but not take a lead role, in the following activities:

Bringing together sustainable land management with outcomes for people, communities and wildlife, including reducing social isolation, improving physical and mental health and encouraging individual action for wildlife. We will endeavour to embed this approach within the health sector. (Nature is vital for health and wellbeing. Our work as a movement in the health and wellbeing arena has helped change policy.)

Advocating sustainable wildlife tourism, with codes of practice to protect the wildlife that tourists want to experience.

Advocating for policies that support and fund schools to deliver outdoor learning and ecological literacy.

Campaigning for natural history/ecology to become a new core subject at GCSE and A-level.

Peter Cairns/2020VISION

3. Action on Climate - Key Goal: Achievement of Net Zero by 2030

Despite everything that we know, we continue to recklessly squander our life support system; this must come to an end. We must reverse the direction of change and we must begin today.

Public perception and understanding of environmental issues is growing. Programmes such as 'Blue Planet 2' have opened people's eyes to the desperate plight of our global environment. We have become aware of plastic pollution, of the impact of palm oil plantations, and our reliance on carbon-based fossil and biofuels which are driving and accelerating climate breakdown.

Media coverage of global drought, hugely destructive storms and the vast wildfires in Australia and the Americas remind us, almost daily, of the large-scale climatic changes. There is a surge in public interest following environmental catastrophes, but this attention is often short-lived.

We are witnessing the beginnings of the sixth global mass extinction, should be enough to convince everyone that we need urgent global and local action today. Although 89% of the Welsh population claim that they are concerned about environmental damage, only 7% place environmental degradation among the critical issues facing Wales.

We must change this; we must find ways of convincing people that the health of the natural world is as important as their own health and that of their families and friends. People must understand that our species cannot survive alone on this planet.

Natural climate solutions can provide around one third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 to stabilise warming to below 2°C, whilst simultaneously tackling the ecological crisis.

Our Trust will prioritise the restoration of habitats that capture and store carbon, including the marine environment, peatland, fens, semi-natural grassland and woodlands.

However, we cannot tackle the climate crisis alone, and solutions depend not just on local action but on broader debates and transformative change across society. We will work with WTW to tackle all these issues.

The highest priority will be allocated to the following activities:

We will collectively, staff and Trustees, develop and adopt a shared ethical position to guide our activities and responses to all climate change issues.

We will calculate our carbon footprint and develop a carbon reduction strategy and annual action plans with goal of reaching net zero by 2030.

Working with TWT, WTW and other partners we will:

Campaign for the recognition of the impacts of climate change on nature on land and at sea and the role of nature-based solution in mitigating climate change.

Be clear on our approach to carbon offsetting and net biodiversity gain.

Deliver blue carbon projects that restore marine and coastal habitats.

We will support TWT, WTW and other appropriate partners, but not take a lead role, in the following activities:

Advocating for the reform of the agriculture and forestry sectors, recognising how farming systems can benefit nature and climate, but we will also highlight bad agricultural and forestry practices.

Advocating for the requirement that any subsidised land uses designed to combat climate change contribute to nature's recovery. For example, the need for woodland creation to ensure the right tree is planted in the right place, prioritising natural regeneration, ecological connectivity and a mix of appropriate native species.

Luke Massey/2020VISION

Resources

In 2002 the Glamorgan and West Wales Wildlife Trusts merged but there followed a period of deepening financial instability until 2009 when a 5-year Financial Recovery Plan was implemented successfully. Financial recovery was achieved through releasing assets, investing in membership recruitment and retention and trading activities, improved financial management and control and broad cost savings. We currently operate budgets that are close to break-even and have between 3 and 4 months' unrestricted financial reserves.

In the last few years we have faced further challenges with reduced grant support from Natural Resources Wales. In general, growth in income is not keeping pace with rising costs and we are falling behind in our ability to invest in our staff and assets. Our plan to deliver an ambitious programme of work to meet the climate and ecological crises is currently constrained by limited resources, particularly staff capacity.

We are committed to growing sustainable and unrestricted income streams in order to have sufficient capacity to deliver this strategy.

We will review unrestricted income generation from three main sources: earnt income through DWT Enterprises, earnt income through WTSWW and fundraising through WTSWW and develop a prioritised and costed plan for improvements. DWT Enterprises is the name given to our trading subsidiary and covers the operation of the cafes and shops in our visitor centres (other than Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre), and visitor accommodation.

We will investigate other possible sources of income that we don't currently pursue.

We will develop a suite of Cases for Support to ensure that grant applications are focussed on projects that best help us deliver our strategy.

Staffing

Our staff numbers are very low compared to other Trusts of a similar geographic size, and we rely on our staff being flexible and multi-skilled to cover a range of roles. Throughout the period of financial recovery we reduced the money spent on support staff costs and kept overall management staff costs level. Staff salaries and pension contributions fell behind those of other Wildlife Trusts while we were seeking cost savings and this inequality is compounding over the years. We need to correct this imbalance to properly invest in and recognise the importance of the staff as our most important asset and to ensure continuity of staff posts.

Within the period of this strategy, or earlier, if possible, the Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring that pension contributions and salaries rise to above average Wildlife Trust levels.

We will seek to empower and promote the wellbeing of all staff, through creating an open and supportive culture where everyone feels inspired, safe and cared about.

We will invest in staff capability/competencies through training opportunities and collaboration with others. Our staff will feel confident and have the knowledge and skillsets to engage and advise on all the priority activities identified within the strategy.

Wilder FUTURE

Ross Hoddinott2020VISION

Cronfa Treftadaeth
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Mewn Partneriaeth â Llywodraeth Cymru
In Partnership with Welsh Government