

Supplementary Written Evidence: Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill

The JNCC's supplementary evidence to the evidence session for public bodies held on the 17th July 2025

Additional JNCC written evidence

Planned statutory biodiversity targets in Wales need to be informed by an understanding of how feasible setting targets at particular levels would be. Scenarios and models can contribute to this by showing how the environment could change under a range of assumptions about which policies are implemented and how. Taking a systems-based approach to this work is important to ensure we incorporate the key potential environmental effects of a wide range of Welsh Government policy actions on the targets and to ensure that targets set do not drive unintended consequences that could be negative for biodiversity.

The biodiversity statutory targets are not yet finalised but will include the following areas, and apply to terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments:

- Reducing the risk of extinction of native species
- Effective management of ecosystems
- Reducing pollution
- The quality of evidence relating to biodiversity, access to that evidence, and its use and application.

Each target must contribute to halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity, in particular through increasing species abundance and/or increasing genetic diversity and/or enhancing ecosystem resilience.

There are two related projects that JNCC are working on:

- **Wales Biodiversity Indicators:** A project to advise on potential biodiversity indicators for Wales, that will support monitoring and reporting against the statutory targets. The initial work under this project is due to be completed in October 2025, with the possibility of continuing to provide advice on indicator development, dependent on Welsh Governments needs and resource availability depending upon project outcomes and indicator viability
- **Scenarios modelling for environmental targets:** A project aiming to use scenarios and modelling to provide evidence that can contribute to decisions

about potential values for statutory biodiversity targets in Wales. The timeline for undertaking this work is influenced by (i) when the metrics that will be used to measure each target are confirmed which will be informed by work within the indicator project above, (ii) the number of metrics selected, and (iii) the complexity of metrics that are selected (metrics chosen will dictate the complexity of the modelling needed to investigate how these could change in future). In the initial Public Bodies evidence session, it was incorrectly suggested that this work would be completed by autumn 2025. JNCC would like the committee to note that this information is incorrect, and the initial discussions around this work suggest it could be concluded by June 2026. However, as mentioned above, the rate at which this work can be undertaken is largely dependent on other decisions around statutory targets definitions and metrics being made, and thus the timeline is somewhat flexible.

Working alongside Welsh Government, JNCC is proposing to produce three to five scenarios of possible changes in the future use of land and sea. These potential scenarios are being constructed following discussions with a wide range of policy and delivery teams in Wales, and they will aim to include several potential options. As an illustrative example, there are different ways in which tree planting targets for Wales could be achieved (e.g. different mixes of broadleaved and coniferous woodland), and these will affect biodiversity differently. An element of the scenarios could therefore incorporate some of the options for the possible composition of new woodland planting. Such information will inform target delivery plans and interactions with other policy areas and government commitments.

The work is being overseen by a Steering Group consisting of Welsh Government Officials, Natural Resources Wales colleagues and external advisers. The Steering Group will review the scenarios prior to their use in modelling impacts on biodiversity. The scenarios will require sign off as appropriate for use by the Senior Responsible Officer within Welsh Government, in line with Aqua Book requirements.

In a later phase of the work, these agreed scenarios will be used to model the future trajectories in selected indicators. The range of values for these indicators, alongside the sensitivity of these values to some of the options for change, will be provided to Welsh Government as advice that can assist in the selection of appropriate target levels.

To note, this work will inform the biodiversity targets which will be set in regulation as required by the Bill. The process of setting the targets in regulation has a specific timeline over and above the target development timeline and has not been included in this note as this is a Welsh Government timeline.