

## The Nature Recovery Plan for Wales objectives

### **Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.**

Placing nature at the centre of decision making is essential to address the underlying cause of biodiversity loss. In 2011, the UK National Ecosystems Assessment (UK NEA)<sup>7</sup> identified the underlying cause of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation:

*'The natural world, its biodiversity and its constituent ecosystems are critically important to our well-being and economic prosperity, but are consistently undervalued in conventional economic analyses and decision making.'*

A lack of awareness, and subsequent valuation of the critical contribution that our nature makes to our well-being and livelihoods, means we often do not account for that contribution in decision making, at all levels of society, from individuals, through local authorities, to businesses. This can lead to damage or overexploitation of our nature. There is also a lack of mechanisms to support this accounting. For example, 'income foregone' does not adequately account for the value of ecosystem services provided by a farm habitat.

### **Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management**

Species and habitats are wonderful and awe-inspiring and we have a moral obligation to protect them and their genetic variety for future generations. They are the building blocks of our ecosystems and their functioning from which we derive many services and benefits, and we need to ensure we have resilient populations of species to support these.

Sites designated for nature conservation play an important role: they are a key mechanism for maintaining natural diversity required for resilience, and disproportionately contribute to a wide range of ecosystem services and benefits.

Sites are designated for nature conservation purposes to protect and enhance our rarest habitats and species, and the best examples of our natural biodiversity and geo-diversity in Wales. These environments are complex, often ancient, systems with great richness and genetic reserves of plants and animals.

The traditional approaches to nature conservation based on designated sites and the protection of species and habitats have had notable successes and we will continue to use these approaches. Our protected sites and species are a core resource, but they can become isolated, and outside pressures on sites can make management challenging.

### **Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation**

Degraded habitats are ones which no longer support the full potential of our native wildlife. In order to safeguard our protected species and to improve the resilience of more widespread species and habitats, we need to restore networks of habitats to a healthy condition across Wales, both on land and in the sea.

Restoration of degraded habitats and habitat creation will build the resilience of our natural environment through taking action on the four attributes of resilience:

- Increasing diversity
- Increasing ecosystem extent through reducing fragmentation
- Increasing connectivity within and between ecosystems
- Improving habitat condition.

This resilience will also increase the ability of species and habitats to adapt to other pressures including climate change.

**Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats**

The UK NEA identified changing land management practices, through agriculture and urbanisation, pollution and invasive non-native species as key pressures leading to habitat and species loss and fragmentation. This, together with acidification and eutrophication, has changed the quantity and quality of habitats and the species they can support.

In the marine environment key pressures include unsustainable human activity, climate change leading to the warming and acidification of the world's seas and oceans, and the introduction of invasive non-native species.

It is vital to anticipate, prevent and mitigate the causes of biodiversity loss at source, using both our legislation, and innovative and holistic nature-based solutions.

**Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring**

To help nature to recover we need to inform the delivery of action by a better understanding of the ecology and science of our habitats and species, their status and trends, and the pressures and drivers leading to changes.

**Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery**

Underpinning our action, we also need a governance structure that is fit for purpose to support and deliver action on the ground. We need to ensure we have the skills, expertise, personnel and functions in place to deliver.

**It is essential that these objectives inform all of our approaches to reversing the loss of biodiversity, across all of our policies, strategies and programmes.**