

Biodiversity Plan

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Introduction

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016, introduced by the National Assembly for Wales in May 2016, aims to enable the proactive, sustainable and joined-up management of Wales' natural resources. Central to its implementation is the emphasis on ensuring an integrated approach to managing natural resources in order to achieve long-term sustainability.

For the purposes of the Act, Aberystwyth University is considered a public authority. Section 6(1) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 notes that,

“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.”

In accordance with the requirements of Section 6(6) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the following document provides a plan of proposed activities to ensure compliance with the above statement.

Associated Activities

The protection, preservation and enhancement of biodiversity represent critical objectives for Aberystwyth University throughout its activities. The University must acknowledge the broad range of activities and processes included within its operations, and consider and address the effects on biodiversity and ecosystems in the way those activities are undertaken. As such, the University intends for this Plan to apply to a range of activities and projects being undertaken or planned in the area of biodiversity and wider environmental management. The commitment to strengthening biodiversity and associated ecosystems is not only prevalent in the objectives of this Plan, but across other schemes and developments that are being actively pursued by the institution.

The University is proud of its status as the first University campus in Wales to achieve the Green Flag Award, having been first awarded the accolade in 2015. In July 2016, Aberystwyth University retained the Green Flag Award at its Penglais Campus, whilst also gaining the award for the Llanbadarn Campus for the first time. The Green Flag Award, a UK-wide partnership delivered in Wales by Keep Wales Tidy with support from Natural Resources Wales, is the mark of a high quality park or green space. The award is judged by green space experts who visit applicant sites and assess against eight strict criteria which include horticultural standards, cleanliness, sustainability and community involvement. The award requires the submission of a Grounds Management Plan which includes proposals and action plans for the enhancement of biodiversity. The University welcomes the Act as an opportunity to showcase and enhance the biodiversity objectives formulated within the Grounds Management Plan and elsewhere across the University.

The University is also currently working towards achieving compliance with BS EN ISO 14001, which provides a framework for the development of an effective Environmental Management System (EMS). To achieve this objective, the University currently subscribes to the EcoCampus phased-implementation platform for higher education institutions. Participants gain recognition at each



stage of the process through a series of awards from bronze through to silver, gold and platinum, with the final Platinum Award conforming to the requirements of ISO 14001.

Within its requirements, the standard includes five main considerations, as illustrated by Figure 1:



Figure 1

In November 2016, the University was awarded the EcoCampus Gold Award in respect of its Environmental Management System (EMS). In the development of the EMS, specific procedures have been produced and disseminated to relevant staff which aim to encourage and protect biodiversity through addressing the risks and opportunities relating to biodiversity management on University grounds, and minimise potentially damaging or harmful environmental impacts from the University's activities.

Biodiversity Objectives

In respect of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the University's initial proposed objectives and associated actions to achieve compliance are as follows:

- i. **Encourage the inclusion of biodiversity considerations in decision making activities across the institution;**
 - Ensure relevant processes include consideration of biodiversity issues during decision making and feasibility stages;
 - Development and introduction of an effective Environmental Management System (EMS) which includes biodiversity considerations and impacts at its core;
- ii. **Facilitate effective governance and support structures to enable the achievement of the University's Biodiversity Plan objectives;**

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- Embed biodiversity issues and considerations within the activities of the appropriate University governance Committees and Groups;
 - Establish clear policies and procedures which provide clear expectations for staff and students in respect of biodiversity;
 - iii. Improve staff and student awareness and engagement with biodiversity issues;**
 - Engage staff and students in biodiversity and environmental awareness activities;
 - Develop awareness of biodiversity and ecosystem protection matters through the availability of appropriate training and resources;
 - iv. Promote the development and (where possible) restoration of wild and natural habitats across the University's grounds;**
 - Introduce and enhance wildflower areas, including local or native species, or species appropriate for local conditions, where possible (*see Figure 2*);
 - Manage and control invasive species which can cause damage to the environment or wider ecosystem (e.g. Japanese Knotweed) in accordance with relevant legislation and guidelines;
 - v. Alter maintenance and upkeep processes to reduce the impact of University activities on ecosystems;**
 - Consider and adapt maintenance activities, such as grass cutting and hedge trimming, to reduce impact on ecosystems and habitats during active months;
 - Increase use of organic and/or environmentally friendly products for grounds maintenance activities;
 - vi. Protect and encourage the safeguarding of species and habitats found across the institution;**
 - Introduce specific preservation arrangements for species known to habit University grounds e.g. bird boxes, bat boxes, etc.;
 - Facilitate opportunities for natural habitat creation through and following maintenance and development works (*see Figure 3*);

The consideration and ultimate approval of this plan and its associated objectives by the University Council demonstrates the institution's senior level commitment to enhancing and preserving biodiversity through its actions and activities.



Figure 2 Example of wildflower meadow which has been introduced on University Grounds



Figure 3 Example of log piles left following tree works to facilitate and encourage insect habitats

Associated Objectives

In exercising its responsibilities under this Act, and in pursuit of the above objectives, Aberystwyth University will also seek to align its activities with the primary objectives of the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales:

1. Engage and support participation and understanding to **embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels;**
2. **Safeguard species and habitats** of principal importance and improving their management;
3. **Increase the resilience of our natural environment** by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation;
4. **Tackle key pressures** on species and habitats;
5. Improve our **evidence, understanding and monitoring;**
6. Put in place a framework of **governance and support** for delivery.



Review

In accordance with the continual improvement ethos of the University, this plan may be subject to change or amendment at any point during its implementation, and will be regularly reviewed to consider any additional resources published, such as any relevant area statements. The University will also monitor and adapt its practices accordingly in response to any changes in relevant legislation and/or recognised best practices for the promotion and preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems. Any changes to University strategies to which this plan is associated will also prompt a review of its contents.

Aberystwyth University welcomes the opportunity to be able to provide an update in relation to its activities in pursuit of these objectives, which will be published as a report before the end of 2019, in accordance with the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Appendix

This report has been produced with consideration for the following documents:

Environment (Wales) Act 2016: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents/enacted>

Welsh Government Natural Resources Policy Statement:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents/enacted>

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) 2016:
<https://naturalresources.wales/our-evidence-and-reports/the-state-of-natural-resources-report-assessment-of-the-sustainable-management-of-natural-resources/?lang=en>