



Manifesto for the Senedd Election 2026

About CIEEM

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) is the leading professional body for over 9,000 ecologists and environmental managers across the UK and Ireland, including more than 550 working in Wales. Our accredited members provide expert, evidence-based and impartial advice grounded in frontline experience of restoring habitats, assessing developments and advising on sustainable land use. We regularly support governments on environmental law and policy, helping to design robust, workable regulations. Our strong Welsh presence and professional standards mean decision-makers can trust our guidance on delivering nature's recovery and a resilient, prosperous Wales¹.

Introduction

Wales is in a nature and climate emergency. By 2023, 1 in 6 species faced extinction², only 20% of protected habitats were in favourable condition³, and just 40% of water bodies reached "Good" ecological status⁴. These are not abstract statistics to voters; nature consistently ranks among the public's top concerns, alongside the cost of living, the NHS, the economy, and climate change⁵.

Despite strong legislation and policy, Wales's natural environment continues to deteriorate while climate hazards intensify. Recent years have brought record dry spells, drought⁶ and over a thousand wildfire incidents⁷ while increasingly frequent winter storms have caused severe flooding, property damage and community evacuations⁸.

These impacts cut across every aspect of life: physical and mental health, security of homes and livelihoods, disruption to transport, education and access to essentials, the reliability of water and energy supplies, and the resilience of Wales's food system and rural economy. Nature-based solutions can address multiple issues; for example, rewetting peatlands can decrease the risk of wildfires whilst also preventing flooding downstream⁹.

Welsh voters want to see current and future governments take more action to tackle the loss of nature¹⁰. This will be key to long-term prosperity, as well as the avoidance of legal and reputational consequences as Wales strives to meet its net zero and nature recovery commitments.

To deliver a truly resilient Wales, ambition must now be matched by action with: long-term funding and investment, strong and independent regulation, robust monitoring and data, nature-based solutions across all sectors, and investment in the skills and capacity to deliver.



Building a resilient Wales: actions for the Senedd

Combined action to address the climate and nature crises

1. Make working with nature a key component of Welsh Policy

Welsh legislation, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, has set a strong foundation. But to meet climate, biodiversity, and wellbeing goals, nature-based solutions (NbS) must be embedded across all policies. By restoring and enhancing natural environments, such as rivers, wetlands, woodlands, and seagrass, NbS can capture carbon, reduce flood risk, and create healthier spaces, delivering exceptional value for investment.

To accelerate progress, we call for a cross-departmental taskforce to mainstream NbS in national decision-making, delivered locally by multi-stakeholder partnerships that unite communities, public bodies, and investors.

2. Deliver on tree planting targets for climate and communities

We welcome Wales's commitment to the UK Climate Change Committee's target of planting 43,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030. Success depends on strategic planning – putting the right tree in the right place to deliver for nature, climate, and people – not simply expanding non-native forestry. For example, expanding urban canopy cover to 20% would strengthen green infrastructure, providing shade and retaining soil moisture during hotter summers¹¹.

The Sustainable Farming Scheme offers a vital opportunity to integrate trees into farms, benefitting both nature and food production; however, quality expert advice on habitat creation and management, including of trees and woodland, must be guaranteed to secure lasting outcomes.

3. Maintain momentum on peatland restoration

Healthy peatlands are a vital Welsh asset, storing carbon, reducing flood risk, and supporting farming resilience. We are encouraged by Wales's success in restoring 3,600 hectares of peatland since 2020¹², but far greater urgency is needed to meet the 2050 target of 45,000 hectares.

We call on the Welsh Government to accelerate restoration, to collaborate with other UK nations to

introduce a permanent ban on peat extraction under the Internal Market Act, and to ensure planning guidance is upheld, particularly in preventing development on deep peatland.

Protect 30% of land, sea, and freshwater for more space for wildlife & our wellbeing

1. A robust and actionable nature strategy

We welcome the legally-binding nature targets in the Environment (Principles, Governance, and Targets) Bill, but these must be backed by a clear, cohesive, and well-resourced framework. Currently, elements of Wales's nature strategy are fragmented and outdated: the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) needs an ambitious update aligned with international 2030 targets¹³; the Natural Resources Policy (NRP) must be reshaped to fit this framework; and Area Statements should be reviewed with communities to ensure practicality.

Public authorities also need clearer, actionable guidance. Audit Wales has shown many are unaware of their Section 6 Biodiversity Duty¹⁴. This must be addressed by equipping bodies with the tools and support to meet Wales's commitments.

2. Funding for land managers to meet and maintain standards for OECMs

Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) can play a vital role in safeguarding biodiversity beyond designated protected sites and will be key to meeting the current shortfall in Wales's commitment to protect 30% of land, sea, and freshwater by 2030. For land managers to deliver and sustain these areas, long-term funding and incentives are essential. Supporting management of OECMs through reliable financial mechanisms will enable public bodies, communities, farmers, and land managers to plan for and manage land to contribute meaningfully to Wales's nature recovery network, while also providing co-benefits¹⁵.

Furthermore, OECMs could encourage collaboration between NGOs, landowner groups, research institutions and, in some cases, local authorities, to pool resources that include funding, in-kind contributions, and technical support.

3. Ensure enough funding and staff to deliver commitments to nature

Past and existing funding streams have supported critical action for biodiversity to date; however, resources remain far below what is needed to tackle the nature emergency,

leaving public bodies unable to meet their duties. Many local authorities report that insufficient and shrinking budgets, reliance on short-term posts, and underfunded maintenance of projects like tree planting have widened Wales's nature funding gap¹⁶.

A clear statement of the true cost of implementing Wales's nature strategy is urgently needed. We call for a comprehensive nature finance strategy that quantifies investment needs and lays the foundation for long-term, sustainable funding from both public and private sources.

Scale up nature restoration to limit flooding and reduce river pollution

1. Set legally-binding targets for restoring land and protecting habitats

We welcome the inclusion of binding nature targets in the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) Bill as a vital step for long-term recovery. But their success depends on timely delivery, proper resourcing, and clear guidance.

Targets should be set within 12-18 months of royal assent, not three years. In parallel, the Welsh Government must review departmental biodiversity resources¹⁷ and provide strong guidance to ensure public authorities can meet their duties effectively¹⁸.

2. Local Nature Partnerships - Foster collaborations between government, businesses, NGOs, and communities to pool resources and expertise for restoration efforts

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) play a vital role in delivering biodiversity projects, nature-based solutions, community engagement, and green skills development. Yet short-term funding limits their ability to plan, staff, and deliver lasting impacts.

We call on the next Welsh Government to provide long-term investment to secure the future of LNPs and maximise their contribution to nature recovery and community wellbeing.

3. Ensure that catchment- and nature-based solutions are central to future water industry investment planning

The proposed creation of a Welsh water regulator¹⁹ offers a key opportunity to embed catchment- and nature-based solutions in regulation and investment planning. To realise this, policy and regulatory barriers must be reviewed, risk

aversion among companies and regulators addressed, and the five-year Price Review cycle reconsidered to better support long-term, nature-based innovation.

Grow the green economy to create jobs and bring down the cost of living

1. Clarity and ambition for nature finance

The next Welsh Government should work with stakeholders, including ecologists, to set clear objectives for Nature Finance, defining the ecological, climate, and community outcomes it is intended to deliver. Establishing these objectives will provide the certainty and transparency needed for investors, land managers, and NGOs, while ensuring that funding genuinely supports biodiversity recovery, climate resilience, and coherent delivery across related policy areas.

2. Investment in green jobs and training to increase confidence in green careers

Short-term funding for green jobs undermines skills development, sector capacity, and confidence in nature-based careers. Wales already faces critical expertise shortages in areas like forestry and water, worsened by ageing, shrinking workforces. The results of Welsh Government's Nature Workforce Survey²⁰ confirms that these are widespread and persistent barriers to achieving meaningful progress in addressing the climate and nature crises.

We call on the Welsh Government to back the proposed [nature service for Wales](#) as national infrastructure for apprenticeships, training, and re-skilling, supported by long-term funding to secure stable, rewarding green jobs.

3. Recognise and invest in the value of green infrastructure

Green infrastructure is essential to tackling urban challenges such as flooding, air pollution and rising temperatures, while delivering cleaner air and water, resilient communities and healthier places to live, as demonstrated by cities that are leading in its delivery, such as Paris²¹. However, the loss of specialist advisory capacity within Natural Resources Wales (NRW)²² will inevitably weaken delivery in Wales.

We urge the next Welsh Government to champion green infrastructure by embedding it in all infrastructure planning, ensuring expert advisory support, and prioritising investment that delivers both biodiversity gains and climate resilience.

Establish robust monitoring to prevent loss of green space and prevent pollution

1. A strong, well-resourced and independent monitoring, advisory and regulatory body

NRW plays a central role in managing the nation's natural assets but remains chronically under-resourced as its responsibilities expand. From monitoring marine and freshwater systems to enforcing pollution controls and delivering "30 by 30" targets, NRW's workload is growing faster than its capacity.

We call on the Welsh Government to ensure NRW has stable multi-year funding that is adequate to meet its statutory environmental duties in Wales, resolve legacy and governance issues, and ensure that operational capacity and technical evidence are maintained as policy demands evolve. This could, in part, be addressed by applying the 'polluter pays' principle to ensure industries contribute fairly to monitoring and enforcement costs.

2. A strong environmental protection body established

Lessons from the [Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales](#) (IEPAW) highlighted a number of key needs for the forthcoming Office for Environmental Governance Wales (OEGW), including that it must be fully independent, with control over its operations, communications, information management, and procurement. The lessons also show that strong enforcement powers only work when backed by sufficient funding and expertise²³.

We call for a ring-fenced budget for the OEGW, agreed on a cross-party basis to ensure long-term oversight capacity beyond Senedd election cycles.

3. Create a centralised public database on green spaces and biodiversity

Underfunded monitoring has left major gaps in Wales's environmental evidence base, making it harder to plan and track nature recovery. Key uncertainties remain on peatland condition, marine pressures, freshwater habitats, and protected areas, undermining accountability and the "30 by 30" goal.

We call for consistent and sustained funding for monitoring and mapping green spaces and biodiversity hotspots, maintaining robust, publicly accessible data for restoring Wales's nature.



Conclusion

Wales stands at a critical crossroads, where transformative action for climate, nature, and communities is both urgent and achievable. Realising ambitions for a resilient Wales will require stable funding and investment, strong and independent regulation, robust monitoring and data, cross-sector effort to deliver nature-based solutions, and investment in our green workforce.

CIEEM supports governments and decision-makers with the creation and implementation of policy by providing independent, evidence-based advice and insights from ecological practitioners. We are ready to support the design of practical, workable solutions, based on best practice, that secure long-term benefits for the people of Wales and our natural environment.

Acknowledgements

This document was developed by CIEEM's **Wales Policy Group**
in collaboration with CIEEM's Policy Team.



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& Environmental Management
Company Number: RC000861
Registered Charity (England and Wales): 1189915
Registered Charity Number (Scotland): SC054698

