



Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency Report for Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Schedule 6 Duty – biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems

1. What we are doing

DVLA remains committed to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity. This is highlighted as a key environmental performance indicator within our [corporate environmental policy](#). To make sure we fulfil our responsibilities a range of actions have been established to complement and achieve our overall objectives.

We have published biodiversity action plans (BAP) for the estate since 2013. These have provided a framework designed to produce tangible enhancements to biodiversity existing within the boundaries of the DVLA estate across three sites in the City and County of Swansea. The latest iteration of [our BAP](#) covers the period 2017 to 2020 and sets the following objectives:

- maintain and enhance biodiversity
- staff engagement
- community engagement
- eradicate invasive and non-native species and the use of herbicides and pesticides

The publication of our BAP coincided with the creation and recruitment of a specialist biodiversity role within the Sustainability team, part of Estates Management Group (EMG).

Over the last two years our biodiversity officer has created a timetable for establishing a benchmark by conducting a preliminary ecological assessment (PEA) and a number of protected species surveys. These surveys are for internal reference and contribute to our overall strategy to enhance biodiversity on the estate.

DVLA has contracted out grounds maintenance through a private finance initiative (PFI) estates and facilities management agreement which places constraints on the way we manage our green areas. However, significant areas have been allowed to rewild establishing a more diverse habitat. This includes:

- providing log piles for small mammals and insects to use as refugia
- increasing semi natural grassland, tall ruderal cover and low scrub communities in part due to natural succession
- scattered trees have been allowed to establish and mature

Encouraging insects and pollinators is important in ensuring resilience of the biodiversity on our estate. We have a bee hive established on one of our sites. The honey is not harvested allowing the bees to remain self-sufficient and requiring little management.

To further encourage greater insect diversity across other parts of the estate, DVLA has arranged with its PFI partners to relax the mowing regime in some areas for limited periods. This allows the grass sward to develop for longer periods throughout the growing season so encouraging an increase in the diversity of grasses and flowers, and retaining a more diverse seed bank.

We are also working with our partners to reduce light pollution by trialling a refit of deep red spectrum LED lighting which will cause less disturbance to bat species foraging across the site. Any potential impact to the core business of DVLA will be monitored.

2. What we are planning

We will also create a habitat management plan, to be published in April, which will provide a clear picture of the ecological value and biodiversity of our estate. The plan will also give direction for the management and maintenance of our green spaces so we enhance their natural value. Additionally, we will implement monitoring and surveillance schedules, identify management activities needed to achieve objectives and make sure decision makers are mindful of the status of all important features. In doing so the plan will also identify and justify all resource requirements, both human and financial.

During spring 2020 a fourth BAP will be published to achieve four key objectives:

- prepare an inventory of biological information for selected species or habitats present within DVLA's boundary
- assess the conservation status of species existing on the estate
- establish targets for conservation and restoration
- establish a timeline for implementing the BAP

The new DVLA BAP will set our overall aims, with goals which will be measured. It will be communicated to our 5,500 staff as well as published externally for a wider audience. The BAP will be a living document monitored and assessed as part of an ongoing process. Our aim is to provide annual updates as part of DVLA reporting which includes the [annual report and accounts](#) and the [sustainability report](#) to show progress against our targets.

For example, some of our objectives could include:

- enhancing habitat to maintain a medium size population of common lizard present on the estate
- removing vegetation to open up an attenuation pond and encourage and maintain amphibians which are present on site
- increasing the practice of limiting the mowing regime to naturalise our amenity grassland.

We are committed to enhancing biodiversity on our estate. We are also open to new ideas and proposals to develop methods to increase ecological diversity and improve resilience of the ecosystems present to be able to adapt to climate change.

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