Protecting & Enhancing Biodiversity Wales & West Utilities

2022

WALES&WEST UTILITIES

Contents

Introduction

Wales & West Utilities is committed to being an environmentally ambitious company, delivering best practice, leading innovative environmental initiatives, and demonstrating the benefit of protecting and enhancing the environment to other companies and society. The areas that we serve across Wales and south west of England contain a diverse range of habitats and ecosystems, both inland and on coastlines, including nearly 2,000 Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

We recognise that our role is to contribute positively to the environment, enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing of our customers and the communities we serve. We aim to do this by working with a range of stakeholders and partners to develop sustainable, innovative, and affordable energy.

Our alignment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 15 (Life on Land) and 14 (Life Below Water) will also help us deliver on our ambition to protect the natural environment.

The following report reviews our actions and confirms our plans to conserve natural capital, focusing on biodiversity, the resilience of ecosystems and supporting ecosystem services, whilst delivering a safe and reliable gas network for our customers and communities.

In accordance with the Environment Act (Wales) 2016 this report has been submitted to National Resources Wales (NRW) and made publicly available by WWU in 2022 and, subsequently, will be updated every third year thereafter. This biodiversity plan forms part of our ambitious overarching Environmental Action Plan (EAP) which can be found on our **website**[1].

[1] https://www.wwutilities.co.uk/

About Us

At Wales & West Utilities we look after the pipes that keep the gas flowing across Wales and southwest England. We respond to gas emergencies, keeping communities safe; we connect new homes and businesses; and we upgrade the gas network, to keep the gas flowing safely and reliably today, and to prepare it to transport green gas like hydrogen and biomethane so we can all play our part in a green future.

We own and maintain more than 35,000 kilometres of gas pipes – enough to stretch from the UK to New Zealand and back again. Using those pipes – most of which lie hidden beneath your feet - we supply gas to around 2.5 million households and businesses, serving a population of 7.5 million people. We cover an area that stretches from Wrexham to Redruth, from the mountains of North Wales to the cliff tops of Cornwall.

The area we serve is a mixture of cities, towns, villages, and open countryside.

We are there for our customers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – it is a vital service and one that we are extremely proud to deliver.

Whilst much of our gas network is underground and out of sight, our services play a central role in the daily lives of all our customers. Whether it's a safe and reliable gas supply for heating your home, making the family dinner, or for a nice hot bath, we understand how important it is for our services to be there when our customers need them.

We have recently updated our business Ambition, Priorities and Values. This has resulted in an enhanced focus on sustainability, something our colleagues, customers and stakeholders told us was critically important.

Our Ambition, Priorities and Values inform everything we do as a business – from our strategic planning to the performance management of our colleagues. As we navigate a period of disruption and volatility in the energy sector, and respond to cost of living and geopolitical challenges, they help keep our focus on our customers and the future.

We care about protecting and improving the environment and this extends beyond our Net Zero ambitions. In addition to driving down our carbon emissions, we will work hard to achieve reduced consumption and waste generation, embedding circular economy principles across the business.

We will strive to increase biodiversity and improve air, land and water quality across our network benefiting both the environment and the communities we work in.

Our alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will help to ensure we are reducing our impact and encouraging others to do the same.

Biodiversity Obligations

Biodiversity is valuable in its own right, but it is also essential to the success of the ecosystem services on which we depend. We recognise our responsibility to protect and enhance biodiversity in our operations.

The importance of protecting biodiversity and natural resources has been reinforced by policy and legislative drivers, spearheaded by the Environment Act 2021, where the government has highlighted the importance of biodiversity through mandating biodiversity net gain (BNG). In Wales, key policy includes The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 and Planning Policy Wales (2021), and Future Wales; the national plan 2040 (2019); in England, these include the aforementioned Environment Act (2021) and the DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan. Internationally, COP15 agreed four overarching global goals in December 2022 to address losses in biodiversity and restore natural ecosystems.

The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 defines the sustainable management of natural resources as:

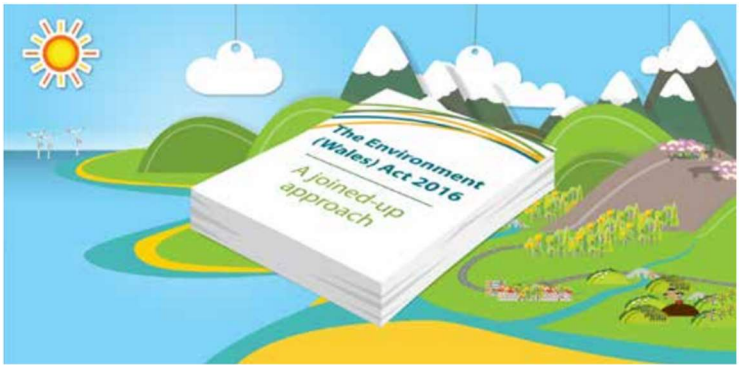
"…using natural resources in a way and at a rate that maintains and enhances the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide. In doing so, meeting the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, and contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act."

For Wales 2016 saw the publication of the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR), as required by the Environmental (Wales) Act 2016, as an evidence base to provide information on the current state

of Welsh natural resources. In doing so, it makes available the information needed to set priorities for action at the national level, in the form of the National Natural Resource Policy (NNRP).

The 11th Edition of Planning Policy Wales was released in 2021 and states that “developments should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally, and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity”. Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 was released in 2019, this outlines a plan which ensures sustainable delivery of the ambitions of Wales with biodiversity and protection of the nature environment at the forefront of strategic planning and placemaking.

The Environmental (Wales) Act 2016 and Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (The NERC Act) also place a responsibility on WWU as a statutory undertaker, to conserve and embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into policies, plans and projects undertaken whilst managing a gas distribution network.



The Environment Act (2021) requires all developments to achieve a minimum 10% BNG compared to a pre-development baseline, and a plan indicating how this will be achieved must be submitted with applications for planning permission. BNG must be calculated using the latest version of Natural England’s Biodiversity Metric. It must be delivered on-site where achievable; if not, it must be delivered through off-site enhancement and maintained for a minimum of 30 years post-development. This is to become compulsory in November 2023.

Biodiversity 2020 (The England Biodiversity Strategy) and the Natural Environment White Paper support the aims of the Environment Act, calling for action to do more to halt the loss of biodiversity, including working at a landscape scale with an emphasis on multi-functional benefits, better protection of important habitats and connections between protected areas. Targets were set, including the maintenance of UK-priority habitats and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in good biological condition.

To support the implementation of the above biodiversity obligations, best practice guidance has been published to aid businesses in delivering net benefits for biodiversity. For England, the ‘BNG Good Practice Principles’ was published by CIEEM, CIRIA and IEMA as an industry standard. They describe principles that should be followed in the delivery of BNG by a developer. The principles include (1) applying the mitigation hierarchy, (2) avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset elsewhere, (3) be

inclusive and equitable, (4) address risk, (5) make a measurable net gain contribution, (6) achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity, (7) be additional, (8) create a net gain legacy, (9) optimise sustainability, and (10) be transparent.

Supporting implementation in Wales, the 'Welsh Government's Approach to Net Benefits for Biodiversity and the Decca Framework in the Terrestrial Planning System' CIEEM Briefing Paper provides guidance for ecologists and developers in demonstrating net benefits for biodiversity whilst submitting planning proposals.

Biodiversity within our network

Natural Resources Wales website defines natural resources as:

- Animals, plants and other organisms;
- Air, water and soil;
- Minerals;
- Geological features and processes;
- Physiographical features; and
- Climatic features and processes.

These individual components combine and work together in many ways and at many scales, impacting upon biodiversity and providing us with materials and ecosystem services from which we benefit. The National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) groups separate habitat types into the UK Broad Habitats or ecosystems.

Our network area is home to 3 National Parks of Wales, and 17 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within Wales and the West Country. Within the network lie a significant number of both legally protected sites and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats that are vital components to regional, national, and international ecosystems:

Protected sites+30:

- 12 Ramsar sites
- 193 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- 114 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and 257 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)
- 1,920 SSSIs

BAP Broad Habitats:

- Urban
- Woodland
- Natural and Semi-natural Grassland
- Mountains, Moors and Heaths
- Freshwater
- Costal Margins
- Enclosed Farmland
- Marine

Ancient woodlands occur within the network boundary with over 55,000 parcels of woodland listed within the ancient woodland inventories for Wales and England.

In addition, in compliance with Section 41 of the NERC Act, English Ministers have published a list of species and habitats considered to be of principal importance (SPI or HPI) for conserving biodiversity in England under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. HPI habitats which occur within the network include:

HPI Habitats:

- Blanket bog
- Calaminarian grassland
- Coastal grazing marsh and floodplain grassland
- Coastal saltmarsh
- Inland rock outcrop and scree habitats
- Limestone pavement
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland fens and reedbeds
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadows
- Maritime cliff and slopes
- Mountain heaths and willow scrub
- Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land
- Purple moor grass and rush pastures
- Raised bog
- Traditional orchards
- Upland calcareous grassland
- Upland flushes fens and swamps
- Upland heathland
- Wood pasture and parkland

Lowland meadow and pasture – The Wildlife Trusts

Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act requires the Welsh Ministers to publish, review and revise lists of living organisms and types of habitats in Wales, which they consider are of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in relation to Wales. These lists are currently under review, but in the interim, we are using the list produced for Section 42 of the NERC Act.

What are the main threats to biodiversity

Naturally occurring and human-influenced factors are having a direct and indirect impact on biodiversity globally, nationally, and within Wales and the West Country. The severity of the impacts of these threats on biodiversity in Wales was highlighted in 2021, when the Welsh Parliament, and local LPAs declared a ‘nature emergency’.

The State of Nature UK (2019) report listed the key drivers causing threats to biodiversity in the UK. These included:

- Urbanisation
- Pollution
- Hydrological change
- Certain agricultural and woodland management techniques
- Invasive non-native species.

These threats are causing a net loss of nature in the UK and acutely in Wales. Impacts to biodiversity include species abundance decline, habitat loss and fragmentation, and overall, a reduction in ecosystem functioning, which as previously mentioned we are reliant on. Given the breadth of impacts that influence biodiversity, globally and within our network, we believe that taking a holistic approach to the protection and enhancement of the environment and natural capital is essential to maximising the benefits to biodiversity.

Our progress so far

Preserving biodiversity and natural capital already play a key role in our business practices.

To achieve this, we've been focusing on minimising our impact and ensuring we are meeting, and where possible, exceeding legal compliance.

Our independently accredited (ISO 14001) environmental management system (EMS) is a driver in our continued environmental improvement. It has contributed to the protection and enhancement of natural capital and biodiversity by developing policies and procedures which:

- Set high standards for sustainable development and asset management.
- Minimise our environmental impact and protect against pollution.
- Improve land quality and return unused land assets back to beneficial use.
- Engage with employees to increase their understanding of their impact and our environmental ambition.

We've included some examples of the important work we have been doing below.

NATURE Tool development

We recognise the importance of natural capital and ecosystem service assessments. As part of our commitment to understand, monitor, and promote biodiversity and ecosystem services at our long-term assets we actively supported the development of the NATURE Tool by WSP and the Ecosystem Knowledge Network.

The NATURE Tool will allow us to assess the impact of land-use and management changes on natural capital performance. This will encourage both better decision-making and clearly

demonstrate the results of positive sustainable action. The NATURE Tool allows assessing up to 17 ecosystem services plus physical and mental health benefits through a scoring system indicating both, the direction and magnitude of project impacts. The NATURE Tool can also be tailored to a local or corporate version, allowing the 'objective setter' to define policy priorities and natural capital objectives a project should achieve. This means that when using the NATURE Tool, we can create our own version where natural capital priorities and objectives are pre-defined by WWU and the requirements of stakeholders.

We plan to utilise this tool on our assessments in the future to ensure we understand all the benefits of our biodiversity enhancements, discussed below.

Cultivating a lasting bio-legacy

We are working closely with local ecologists to undertake a variety of biodiversity net gain (BNG) enhancements at our Bristol Depot, which is part of the Bristol Wildlife Network Sites, providing wildlife corridors in a network of designated sites in Bristol. Following an initial assessment to understand the current baseline, we established that the site had great potential to make substantial enhancements to biodiversity, ecosystem services, and amenity value. A range of BNG intervention options were considered and discussed in detail with local planning authorities. Work is currently ongoing and will be delivered on a timeline that is sympathetic to the natural environmental cycles of the site.

This work includes improvements of the existing habitat to increase the cover of woodland by managing the existing dense scrub areas, planting up native trees to convert to a woodland habitat of good condition, and enhancements for wildlife such as a 100m^2 wildlife pond and a bug hotel. There is a standing dead wood tree that will be retained during all post-interventions for its biodiversity value as a resource for invertebrates and other species. On-site, we are also fortunate to have a mature Sycamore tree, a naturalised species in the UK, which again will be retained as it attracts aphids and therefore a variety of their predators, such as ladybirds, hoverflies, and birds. The site is or has the potential to home protected species such as bats, reptiles, great crested newts, and specially protected birds, among others and we hope that the work we are carrying out here will be successful in attracting such species.

Following on from this, we are also working with ecologists to produce feasibility studies at a further 13 sites across our network, 9 of which are in Wales. These studies will draw attention to the existing biodiversity within the site and local area. It will also provide us with a range of options to further enhance those sites. These will be maximised through targeted and functional ecological enhancements aimed at increasing overall biodiversity.

Land Remediation project – South Wales

Following on from our award-winning land remediation work at Ammanford, WWU are in the planning stage to deliver our statutory contaminated land obligations at a site in South Wales. The remediation project will be delivered throughout 2023/24 and will be one of WWU's largest land remediation projects to date.

The former gasworks site was decommissioned in the 1970/80s and has become semi-mature woodland set in a more established woodland and adjacent to a river.

There will be focus on biodiversity and sustainability at every stage of the remediation project. At tender stage, WWU set an ambition for the project to have, as a minimum, a net neutral impact on biodiversity (with the possibility for the project to be net positive).

WWU required bidders to commit to meeting a series of sustainable requirements, like recording carbon emissions for the duration of the project, encouraging the use of sustainable remediation techniques, and reducing waste produced from the project (both soil waste and general project waste). The remediation technique proposed by the winning bidder is set to have the least impact on the environment whilst meeting the objectives of the project brief. The proposed methodology is predicted to achieve a 95% waste reduction compared to traditional methods of remediation.

The on-site remediation will follow the waste hierarchy and aims to minimise waste by:

- Preventing unnecessary areas requiring remediation by using detailed scientific assessments to reduce the volumes of soil excavated.
- Re-using excavated soil by undertaking physical sorting and ensuring segregation and categorisation of the material through chemical testing of the soil.
- Treatment of soil on-site (rather than removal off-site) – material treated on site will be achieved using ex-situ stabilisation/ solidification (S/S) techniques (a demonstrated effective remedial solution).

As part of environmental protection works, ahead of the main project in 2023, preliminary ecological surveys have been undertaken. Studies include:

- A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal that provided an overview of what species and habitats are likely to be on site (this informed the additional detailed ecology surveys).
- Survey for White-clawed Crayfish, the only Crayfish native to the British Isles – no evidence was found to indicate their presence.
- Otter surveys - no signs were found during the survey however the river remains a high potential and further pre-start surveys will be conducted just before works begin on site.
- Reptile surveys – mats have been deployed and three checks undertaken. No reptiles have been found to date, but the status will be monitored until the end of the survey window in May 2023
- Long term Dormouse Surveys – Tubes are currently deployed on site and based on a survey conducted this year a location identified initial nest building - Surveys will continue until May 2023.

Work will be ongoing throughout 2023/24. Our long-term ambition for this site is to remediate to a high standard and return this to a public open space.

Community Engagement

A team of our colleagues turned out in force to plant trees in a public field to improve biodiversity in the local area and enhance public spaces to benefit the local community.

The initiative was part of our pledge to plant five trees for every one we have to remove as part of our work to keep the gas flowing safely. The planting was done in partnership with the local council and enhanced the council's own tree planting programme.

During the day more than 20 trees were planted by members of the company's Net Zero & Sustainability team and it is hoped that, as well as supporting biodiversity and improving air quality, people will be able to enjoy seeing them grow during the coming years.

Sarah Williams, Wales & West Utilities Director of Regulation, Asset Strategy & HSE, helped plant the trees and said:

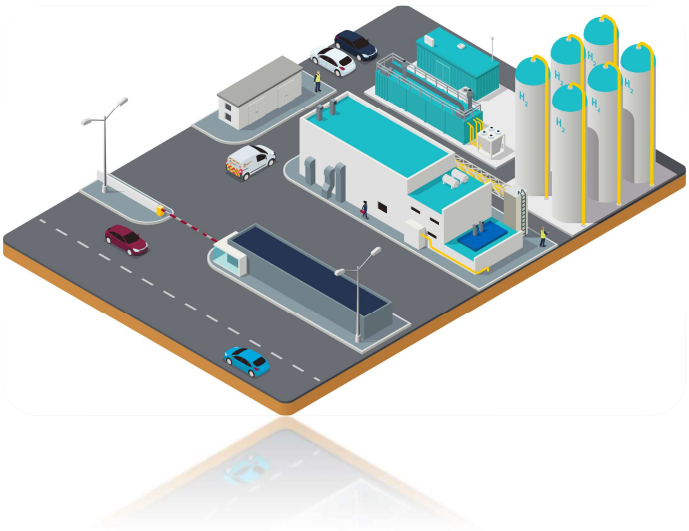
"Through investing £400m in the gas network between 2021 and 2026 we are committed to helping communities right across Wales and southwest England go green. We're also focussed on delivering a number of long-lasting initiatives that benefit the communities we serve – including improving air quality and biodiversity. Taking part in this tree planting exercise was not only great fun, allowing us to meet with colleagues in the great outdoors, but it also will benefit the community by enhancing biodiversity, reducing carbon and improving wellbeing.
We are planning similar sessions in future, devoting colleague time to deliver tree planting.

Future of energy

We are working hard to deliver our part in providing sustainable energy and supporting the UK's Net Zero carbon emissions targets. We recognise the need for a decarbonised, affordable and reliable energy system, and believe our network has an important role to play in this transition. Our decarbonisation vision will see us limiting the effect climate change has on us and our natural environment.

- We put customers at the centre of our work on energy system transition. We are working to ensure that solutions in areas such as heat decarbonisation work for all consumers and have put particular emphasis on the needs of people in vulnerable situations, such as through our Switching Vulnerable Customers to Hydrogen project.
- We have worked hard to connect biomethane plants to our network. Our network is now connected to 20 biomethane sites, delivering up to 1.87 TWh of green gas into our network. Together these sites provide enough capacity to heat the equivalent of over 156,000 average homes.
- We have successfully trialled a Smart Pressure Control solution that will allow us to connect further biomethane sites and increase the volumes of green gas coming into the network.
- We recognise the importance of local and regional decision making on the future of the energy system. We developed an industry-first whole system energy simulator, Pathfinder, that forecasts future energy supply and demand. We've worked with groups such as local authorities to help them adopt this modelling to support decision-making on delivering decarbonisation affordably.
- Over 45 new flexible generation gas fire power stations have been connected to our network across Wales and southwest England. These plants can generate electricity very quickly; supporting renewable energy when the wind doesn't blow, or the sun doesn't shine.

- We are collaborating with gas networks, regulators, and the wider industry to develop evidence, trials, and pilot projects around the conversion of existing gas networks to transport hydrogen in place of natural gas.
- We are developing plans for hydrogen clusters for industry, transport, heat, and power generation across the areas we serve. These will make use of our existing gas network infrastructure to support an efficient, low-disruption approach to decarbonise the energy system. We have commenced a major project, Hyline Cymru, as part of the South Wales Industrial Cluster, which aims to connect potential low-carbon hydrogen producers and users and will form the basis of our hydrogen rollout plans.
  We have also been supporting alternative fuelled transport options. Compressed natural gas (CNG) buses and HGVs are already in use in Swindon, Bristol, and Plymouth: improving air quality as well as reducing carbon emissions. In addition to public transport, we have also connected a CNG fuelling site in Avonmouth which delivers gas to freight and HGVs. We are actively looking at opportunities for hydrogen in transport, including in hard to decarbonise sectors such as shipping and aviation.



Operations

Delivery of our operational activities and capital delivery projects are carefully managed to minimise our impact on the environment. Management interventions employed have included:

- Habitat piles; where appropriate, all trees that we fell for essential pipeline protection are left stacked and brash left on to create habitats.
- Installation of frond mats in rivers to naturally increase the depth of cover over pipelines, protecting their integrity into the future. These also increase the provision of habitats within which fish can shelter.
- Maximising the amount of recycled aggregate in our excavations to limit the need to use virgin aggregate.
- Undertaking comprehensive ecology assessments and mitigation works, which can include extensive reptile translocation and habitat re-instatement.
- Tackling invasive non-native species on our sites by proactively spraying the weeds within the growing season.

Dormouse survey box installed by licensed ecologists ahead of an upcoming land remediation project in South Wales.

Other environmental initiatives

- We have been working hard to reduce our business carbon footprint by improving efficiency and replacing older metal pipes which are more likely to be at risk of leaking. As a result, we have reduced our business carbon footprint by 24% since 2013.
- We have reduced paper consumption by 47% since 2019 and overall office waste by 5%.
    - New initiatives introduced included paper targets, recycling of confectionary wrappers, and reduction of single use plastic.
- Reduced carbon emissions associated with non-operational travel by over 50%
- Reused and recycled over 80% of excavated spoil reducing the depletion of finite virgin materials.
- Commissioned the planting of 1,500 trees in the autumn of 2022 as part of our five for one tree policy.

For more detailed information on our in-year performance, please see our Annual Environmental Report which is available on our **website**[2]

[2] https://www.wwutilities.co.uk/about-us/publications/

Our ambition for the future

It's our ambition to help communities and the environment thrive by delivering reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy that will help power a green recovery and get the UK to Net Zero.

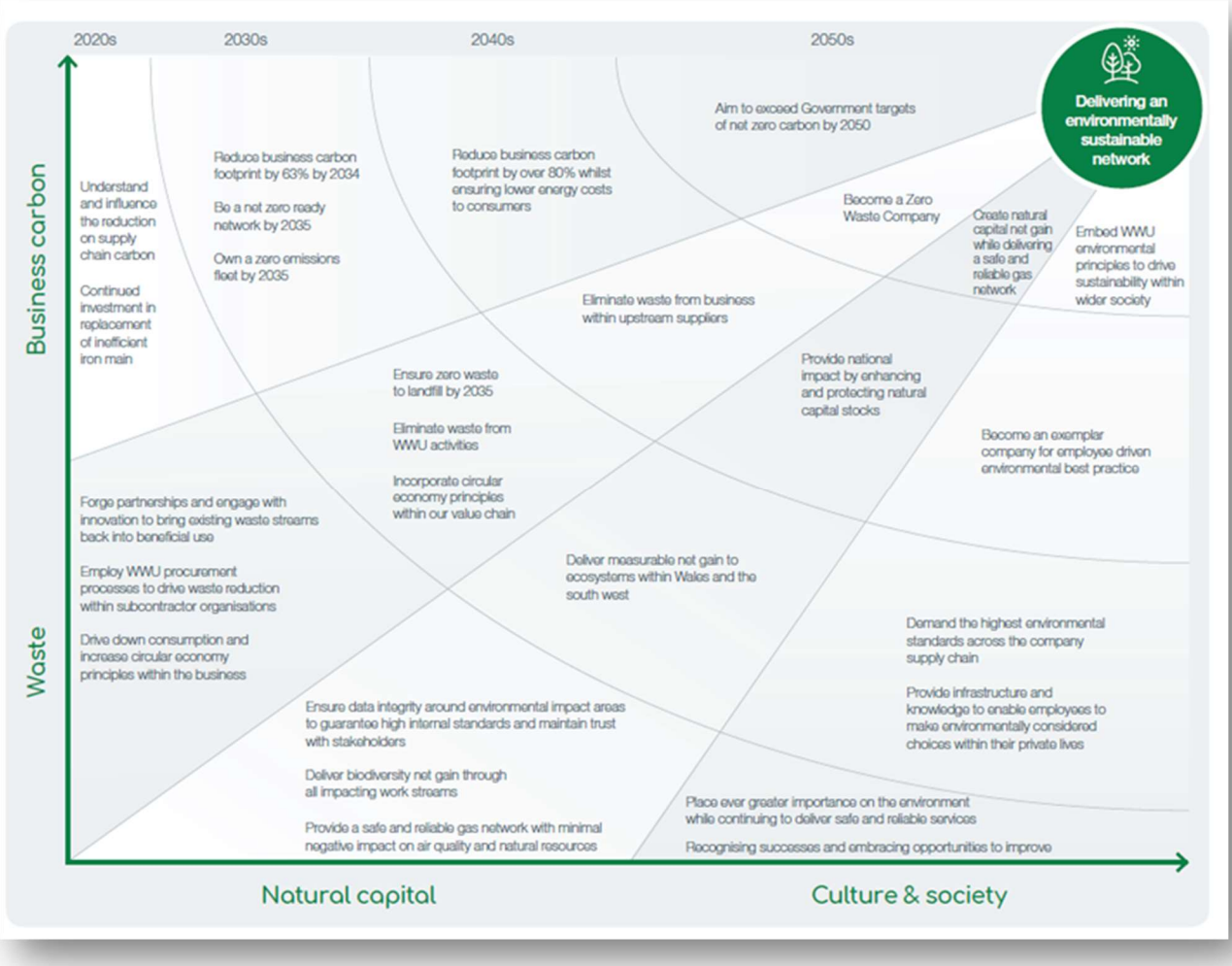
We want to keep building on our existing environmental performance to drive greater improvements to benefit nature, our stakeholders, and consumers. Our employees tell us that focusing on environmental improvement should be important to us. We are committed to delivering our long-term environmental ambition for natural capital with strategic support from governments and regulators.

We will review our ambition regularly to ensure we continually improve, take onboard stakeholder feedback, and maximise the influence we have on others to embrace the protection of natural capital and biodiversity as part of business as usual.

Our overall plan will see a clear approach to the management of natural capital and biodiversity within WWU, including:

- Identifying the risk and opportunities that our work has on natural capital and biodiversity within our land holdings and through our operational and development activities.
- Identifying strategies and procedures that respond to current and future legislative development in England and Wales with respect to the protection of natural capital.

Details of our plan to protect and enhance biodiversity are presented below.



Understanding and improving our direct impact on biodiversity

Our long-term ambition is to:

Achieve measurable biodiversity and ecosystem services net gain by 2035, implementing interim ambitions to help us meet this aim of **achieving no net loss on designated projects between 2021 and 2026** (our regulatory price control period) and **achieving biodiversity net gain on our projects from 2026.**

We trial appropriate processes and metrics to ensure we can deliver a reliable and accurate measure of our impact. Whilst understanding our impact we will also, embed BNG principles into our policies, strategies, and everyday business activities. We apply fundamental best practice principles to our approach to BNG, including applying the mitigation hierarchy[3];

We will also begin to look at our long-term assets to identify and implement biodiversity and ecosystem service enhancements that will have a quantifiable benefit by restoring degraded ecosystems and providing ecological refuges within urban and rural areas.

To ensure the integrity of the network, we are sometimes required to remove trees that represent a risk to the pipeline and therefore the communities in which we work. We recognise that in isolation this would have a negative impact on biodiversity within our network. As such, we are committed to addressing this impact by collaborating with stakeholders within Wales and the Southwest to support afforestation across the network in long-term managed schemes. We are committed to **planting 5 trees for every tree we cut down.**

In collaboration with Local Authorities and schools, we hope to engage with communities to plant trees within their urban environment. We think is an excellent opportunity to increase biodiversity and engage children (and by extension their families) in the scientific benefits of nature, such as improvements in air quality, carbon sequestering, health, and quality of life.

Building biodiversity into business as usual

Whilst measuring our biodiversity impact, we will also reinforce our approach to operational activities by incorporating best practice biodiversity principles into each stage of project delivery, for example:

- Opportunity stage – using existing high-level environmental constraint data to identify the presence of high-value biodiversity.
- Project design assessment – use our development BNG metric to understand the value of biodiversity affected by the project.
- Engagement – engage with stakeholders, including Local Authorities, wildlife groups, ecologists to determine the most effective application of the mitigation hierarchy.
- Project delivery – re-assess the BNG metric and project plan considering any project variances.
- Report – report on the success of any works undertaken and provide information to help inform future management plans.

We will continue with our mains replacement programme, **to reduce gas loss to atmosphere from leaking pipes by 10% by 2026.**

[3] Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development © CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA, 2016

We will drive down our consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources by embedding circular economy principles, which champions the restorative imperative, to exceed regulatory requirements and maximises benefits to biodiversity.

Managing invasive weed

We will continue to tackle invasive species within our network, specifically, Japanese Knotweed which is abundant in South Wales.

Improving air quality

Poor air quality can have a detrimental effect on biodiversity. We are committed to understanding and reducing our impact on air quality. We will be utilising specialist support to produce a robust evidence base to drive improved process and decision-making in the future, our continuing efforts to rebuild or renovate our outdated office buildings serve as an illustration of this. We have engaged with specialists to design a more energy-efficient building that will reduce our boiler usage and therefore reduce the emissions produced from fuel combustion. Planned improvements to the environmental performance of our vehicle fleet will also have a positive impact on local air quality.

Improving soil and water quality

By maintaining our ISO14001 EMS accreditation, we will continue to build upon our high environmental standards limiting our impacts and maximising our environmental benefits.

We will continue to deliver our award-winning land management programme that cleans up historical gasworks sites we inherited from our predecessor companies. This will reduce impacts on soil and groundwater from our former gasworks sites and provide opportunities to increase biodiversity and bring sites back to beneficial use for the communities within which they are located.

Tackling climate change through the decarbonisation of heat

We have set our ambition to deliver a **Net Zero-ready gas network by 2035** and to playing our part in delivering a decarbonised 'whole energy system'. To meet this ambition, we will continue to progress the work set out above on the ‘Future of energy’.

Engaging with communities and stakeholders

Every year we will publish a report on how we are doing against our ambition to lead the way in protecting and enhancing the environment. We will continue to listen to the opinions and needs of our customers and stakeholders and we will take full advantage of the opportunities and initiatives to protect and enhance biodiversity within the communities we are proud to serve.