

P-06-1231 Introduce greener 'bee-friendly' bus stops across Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | 7 February 2022

Reference: SR21/1434

Petition Number: P-06-1231

Petition title: Introduce greener 'bee-friendly' bus stops across Wales

Text of petition:

We are asking the Welsh Government to introduce greener 'bee-friendly' bus stops across Wales and to commit to making 10% of bus stops bee-friendly over the next five years.

1. Background

There is widespread concern in the UK and beyond about the status of pollinators, especially bees.

Bees and other pollinators are essential for maintaining biodiversity, supporting ecosystems and ultimately providing food security due to the pollination service they provide. The charity Buglife says "84% of EU crops (valued at £12.6 billion) and 80% of wildflowers rely on insect pollination", and "one out of every three mouthfuls of our food depends on pollinators".



There are more than 250 species of bee in the UK. Not all are in decline. However, Buglife's Wales Threatened Bee Report looked at the 26 bee species at greatest risk in the UK and which had been present in Wales. It found range contractions for the majority, 7 species already extinct and a further 5 are at high risk of extinction. Buglife says "bee losses are evident across the whole of Wales with some counties having lost as many as 10 species".

Wales is not alone. Estimates suggest 38% of bee and hoverfly species across Europe are in decline and only 12% increasing.

The decline in bee populations is attributed to a range of pressures. Buglife says pollinators face a 'perfect storm' of problems, including:

- the impact of climate change on weather patterns;
- intensive farming which fragments and isolates flower-rich habitat;
- loss of flower habitat due to urbanisation;
- 'sanitising' of the countryside;
- inappropriate tree planting; and
- loss of brownfield sites.

The Living With Environmental Change Partnership identifies a range of potential measures to address species loss including adapting publicly owned spaces to provide habitat.

In 2019 the City of Utrecht Council (the Netherlands), in collaboration with advertising agency Clear Channel, installed green roofs on 316 bus stops to create bee friendly spaces.

The concept has spread to the UK and globally. In April 2020 Cardiff announced plans to plant 10 bus stops, maintained by Clear Channel as part of its maintenance contract. Leicester has also implemented 'bee bus stops', again in contract with Clear Channel. Wider benefits such as management of rainfall and air quality are also suggested.

Senedd Action

In June 2021 the Senedd declared a nature emergency, and called for statutory targets to halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity.

Welsh Government action

The updated Programme for Government states the Welsh Government will embed its response to the nature emergency “in everything we do”.

While local authorities are responsible for the installation and maintenance of most bus stops, the Welsh Government is responsible for bus policy and provides funding to local authorities. Although most nature conservation legislation and policy are derived from international obligations, responsibility for nature conservation in Wales is devolved.

The Welsh Government updated its Nature Recovery Action Plan in 2020. It makes a range of commitments, including to embed biodiversity in decision-making; to safeguard species and habitats; increase the resilience of the natural environment by restoring and creating habitat; and tackling pressures on species and habitats.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 aims to promote the sustainable management of natural resources, and requires public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity and the types of habitat of principle importance for biodiversity in Wales.

A product of this Act, the Welsh Government’s Natural Resource Policy (NRP), includes a commitment to develop green infrastructure “at the heart of our communities” to provide spaces for nature. The transport section of the NRP (page 28) specifically aims to “integrate nature based solutions into the planning and development of new transport related infrastructure”.

The Welsh Government published its Action Plan for Pollinators in 2013. It identified actions to achieve 4 outcomes, including that “Wales provides diverse and connected flower rich habitats to support our pollinators”. The plan was reviewed and updated in 2018 by the Pollinator Task Force.

The March 2021 Wales Transport Strategy commits to “maintain and enhance biodiversity, and increase ecosystem resilience through transport operations and infrastructure projects”. It says:

In line with our Natural Resources Policy, we will maintain biodiversity and increase ecosystems resilience through the way we, and our partners, manage the soft estate associated with transport networks and in the design and delivery of transport interventions including upgrading infrastructure and new infrastructure schemes. We will also ensure that day-to-day transport operations maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

The Deputy Minister for Climate Change wrote to the Petitions Committee Chair about this petition on 13 January. The letter points to a range of actions being taken by the Welsh Government to promote biodiversity via transport and planning policy, as well as funding. Measures include the Green Corridors Programme initiated in 2018. The letter says “Some local authorities are starting to install bus shelters with ‘living roofs’ using the Welsh Government’s local transport fund”. It concludes:

In terms of the specific proposals and targets in the petition, as outlined above, whilst we don’t have a specific target in place in terms of bus shelters, we are working closely with our partners and communities in much broader terms to encourage greening of areas across Wales through a number of initiatives and this work will continue to be a significant priority for the Welsh Government.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.