



# Building with Nature



## Delivering High Quality Green Infrastructure in Wales

A briefing for developers, planner and placemakers

This briefing paper provides stakeholders involved in the planning, procurement and delivery of new development and green infrastructure in Wales with an introduction to Building with Nature, the UK's first industry standards and accreditation system for high-quality green infrastructure.



It highlights how the Building with Nature Standards Framework can be used to help deliver green infrastructure in a way that contributes effectively to sustainable development objectives in Wales.

The paper gives an overview of Building with Nature and its benefits within the context of its reference in Welsh Government's green infrastructure-related planning policy.

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### Green infrastructure policy in Wales

In October 2023 the Welsh Government [announced](#) changes to Planning Policy Wales as part of its duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in Wales and address the Nature Emergency through the Planning System.

The main changes are in the areas of green infrastructure provision, securing net benefit for biodiversity, strengthening protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and promoting new tree planting. They came in response to the Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at COP15 and the Welsh Government's own [Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations](#).

*Planning Policy Wales sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. Its primary objective is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic and environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.*

Included within the policy guidance on *Integrating Green Infrastructure and Development* is new text with a stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure. This includes an expectation that all planning applications will include a Green Infrastructure Statement. This Statement needs to describe how GI will be incorporated into the proposals and be informed by the priorities identified in GI assessments.

The updated policy references the Building with Nature Standards as an example of good practice and an effective tool for developers for ensuring appropriate GI considerations and, whenever possible advocates assessment and accreditation under the Building with Nature Standards.

#### Green Infrastructure: what is it and why is it important?

Planning Policy Wales defines green infrastructure as:

*the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places. Component elements of green infrastructure can function at different scales.*

*At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways and mountain ranges. At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries, and gardens. At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, hedgerows, roadside verges, and green roofs/walls can all contribute to green infrastructure networks.*

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 provides a context for the delivery of multi-functional green infrastructure and the development of GI is seen as an important way for local authorities in Wales to deliver the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (the Section 6 duty).

Well connected, multifunctional green infrastructure properly designed, delivered and managed offers a myriad of benefits for nature and ecosystem services benefitting people and communities, economically and socially. From reducing flood and climate change risk to improving air quality and equitable access to outdoor space; every pound invested in good GI pays back multiple times as a result of savings that its benefits it provide.

You can see case study examples of what good green infrastructure looks like on our website, [here](#).

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### What is Building with Nature ?

Put simply, Building with Nature is for developers, local authorities and all those engaged in placemaking and place-keeping who want to create better places for people and nature to thrive. It is an evidence-based framework of 12 quality standards that collectively define what good green infrastructure looks like.

The Framework can be applied at a project or policy level, fostering the collaboration and shared vision across disciplines necessary for the effective implementation of multi-functional GI solutions.

The Building with Nature approach couples the Standards Framework with voluntary assessment by Approved Assessors and third-party accreditation during the design, implementation and post-construction phases.

“ *Building with Nature’s purpose is to help create resilient, healthy places where wildlife thrives, where people want to live, and which respond positively in a changing climate.* ”

This provides independent quality assured recognition, in the form of a Building with Nature Award recognising high-quality green infrastructure policy and development, and the benefits it brings to communities and the natural world.

The Building with Nature (BwN) Standards Framework is freely available to **download** from:

- ◆ [www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/standards-form](http://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/standards-form)

Discover more about BwN as an organisation at:

- ◆ [www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/about](http://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/about)

#### A mark of high quality green infrastructure



Launched in 2018, Building with Nature Awards have been granted to a range of development projects, policy documents and organisations across the UK.

Look out for projects or policy displaying the Building with Nature certification mark (above). The badge is a sign of high quality green infrastructure that contributes positively to:

- ✓ Optimising multifunctionality and Connectivity
- ✓ Responding to the climate emergency
- ✓ Maximising environmental net gains
- ✓ Championing a context driven approach
- ✓ Creating distinctive places
- ✓ Securing Effective Place-keeping
- ✓ Bringing nature closer to people
- ✓ Supporting equitable and inclusive places
- ✓ Delivering climate resilient water management
- ✓ Bringing water closer to people
- ✓ Delivering wildlife enhancement
- ✓ Underpinning nature’s recovery

To view a **listing of projects and policy documents** with a Building with Nature Award, visit:

- ◆ [www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/projects](http://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/projects)

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### How does Building with Nature benefit local planners, developers and placemakers in Wales?

Local authorities in Wales have or will be in the process of introducing or updating green infrastructure strategies and spatial frameworks as part of their local development plans, underpinned by their own assessment of existing GI provision in their area. These GI Assessments and the policy and strategy outcomes they inform will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

For **local authorities**, adopting a BwN approach can help ensure policy and plans for new development in your area aligns with best practice GI principles, including the Step-wise Approach to maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity. In addition, requiring or recommending that new development proposals use the Building with Nature Standards Framework and achieve the assurance of independent accreditation is an effective way of securing that GI policy and delivery at a local project/site level.

The new conditions in Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales call for a Green Infrastructure Statement with all new planning applications. If you are a **developer** or **asset owner**, then both the process and the outputs from using Building with Nature, and achieving an accredited Award, can form the basis of the GI Statement. In turn, this will help to ensure that proposals brought forward for a planning application are informed by the priorities identified in green infrastructure assessments and locally based planning guidance. This will lend confidence to local authorities that GI-related planning policy is reflected in your proposals.

For **Placemakers**, the principles and approaches defined within the Building with Nature Standards Framework are consistent with those of the Placemaking Wales Charter and the Placemaking Wales Guide.

Through its adoption and use on your projects, Building with Nature can provide you with a practical way of supporting placemaking in your area of work and for your clients, and as evidence of your commitment to the Placemaking Wales Charter in action.

*A Building with Nature Assessment and Award can be sought at both **outline** and **full planning approval stages** and includes a post-construction check to verify delivery and establishment of the planned green infrastructure. Awards come with a Summary of Award document, the content of which can be used in helping prepare a Green Infrastructure Statement for planning applications.*

Whether you are a planner, developer or placemaker, the main benefit of using Building with Nature will be on the quality and value of the places you design, build, and manage and the recognition you will receive as providers of effective, multi-functional and resilient green infrastructure.

#### Getting started



If you are interested in applying the Building with Nature Standards and seeking a BwN Award for your project or policy document, contact one of our Approved Assessors in your region.

You can find a list of **Approved Assessors** here:

- ◆ [www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/findanassessor](http://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/findanassessor)

Alternatively, if you are interested in training to become a BwN Assessor or training to enhance your GI knowledge. Contact us at:

- ◆ [info@buildingwithnature.org.uk](mailto:info@buildingwithnature.org.uk)