

Biodiversity and public bodies – the biodiversity duty explained

What is the biodiversity duty?

[The Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#) places a statutory duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity. Section 1 of the Act states:

“It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”

[The Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) (commonly known as the WANE Act) came into force on 1 January 2012 and introduced a requirement for all public bodies to make a report publicly available on their compliance with biodiversity duty. Biodiversity duty reports are required every three years.

The duty is aimed at connecting people and their environment. It is not just about protecting specific sites or species but thinking about how we manage biodiversity in the wider environment e.g. in our grounds, through purchase of supplies, or by encouraging staff to engage with biodiversity.

What does “biodiversity” mean?

It means the variety of life around us and includes every species of plant and animal, the genetic material that makes them what they are, and the communities that they form.

Why is it important?

Biodiversity is essential to sustaining the living networks, or ‘ecosystems’, that provide us all with health, wealth, food, fuel and the vital services our lives depend on. Even organisations that don’t manage land rely on healthy biodiversity for the goods and services they use.

Human activity is causing biodiversity to be lost at a greatly accelerated rate and these losses can be irreversible, impoverish us all and damage the life systems we all rely on. The public sector has an opportunity and an obligation to lead by example.

What do I need to do?

Each organisation is different, but each can contribute to biodiversity conservation in some way and this guidance will help to show you how.

For larger organisations with internal expertise, a biodiversity plan and range of conservation actions may be appropriate. For smaller organisations, giving time for staff volunteering may be more suitable. To help you meet the biodiversity duty

information on this website will give you ideas and guidance in identifying actions that you can take.

As well as taking action, the biodiversity duty also requires you to report on what you've done. This doesn't need to be a big burden and can be included within existing reports or websites.