Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru | Wales Environment Link



Hazel dormouse

Nature Champions

A welcome guide for Senedd Members

We invite all Senedd Members to volunteer to become a Nature Champion



Curlew

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Nature Champion. Your support is vital in raising awareness and promoting action to restore and protect Wales' environment.

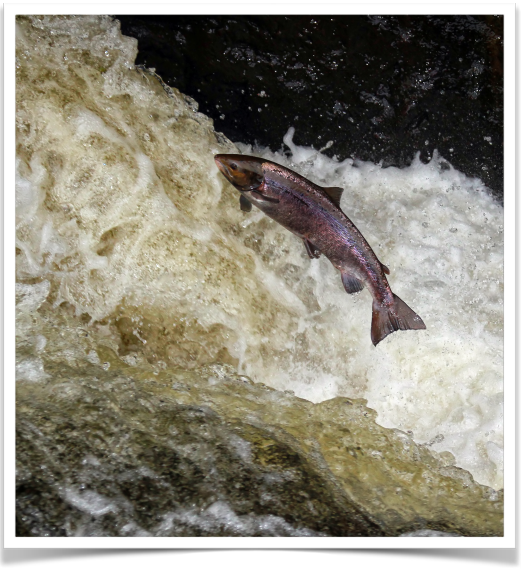
The Nature Champions initiative is one small way of ensuring that the nature and climate crises are considered at the heart of Senedd decision making. This guide introduces the project and how it works. If you have any questions or you'd like to find out more, then we'd be delighted to hear from you. Thank you for being a voice for nature.

This guide provides background on WEL and the project; please email Wales Environment Link's project coordinator to become a Nature Champion – on liz@waleslink.org.



What is Wales Environment Link?

Wales Environment Link (WEL) is a network of environmental non-governmental organisations working across Wales. We support our members in engaging with Welsh Government and the Senedd and help them to work together to develop effective environmental policy and practice. We do this by coordinating a variety of environmental policy and advocacy fora focusing on topics such as nature, the marine and freshwater environments, agriculture, forestry, environmental governance, access and sustainability.



Atlantic Salmon

We have over 30 members who work across a wide range of environmental policy areas, practical nature conservation, supporting local volunteers and some work directly with farmers. The members involved actively in the project may vary through the term, but you can see all our members on our website here.

Species Champions in the Fifth Assembly term



What is the Nature Champion project?

WEL launched the Species Champion project in June 2016 for the Fifth Senedd term, partnering Senedd Members with species that are both at risk and would usually be found in their constituency. Each Senedd Member was sponsored by a WEL member organisation with expertise on their species. By learning more about their species with support from their WEL member sponsor, they have given a voice to endangered wildlife that cannot speak for itself and have advocated for actions that will help take that species from 'threatened' to 'thriving'!

We'll start with habitats and then zoom in on the species

For the Seventh Senedd Term, we've decided to broaden out the project and call it Nature Champions, so we can involve more MSs and WEL members than before, and to enable us to examine issues in a more holistic way. Over time, we will still appoint champions for individual species too, but we'll start with recruiting Nature Champions first. This means you can first learn more about the wildlife havens in your new constituencies and about the most important issues to tackle locally, before agreeing on a species that matches the environmental topics of most interest or importance to you.

Garden Tiger Moth



For example, a Nature Champion visit could involve all six Senedd Members in a constituency being invited to either a special place for nature or to meet people enjoying or restoring our environment. For example, this could be:

- A nature reserve with a wide variety of thriving habitats and species
- A project that improves rivers by reducing pollution
- A farm with nature-friendly practices, doing admirable work to restore at-risk species
- To go out with a walking group, such as with Ramblers Cymru, to walk with us on accessible routes to see nature in your area
- Joining in with a litter pick, keeping our coasts beautiful and our rivers clean

We aim to do a visit in each of the 16 constituencies over the Senedd term, so every MS has a chance to be out in nature on their doorstep.

What can you expect from WEL if you sign up as a Nature Champion?

Each Nature Champion will get more regular briefings – directly from Wales Environment Link, as the coordinator, which will include information from across our network – for information on the latest data, projects and policy work on environmental issues. We may also

Seagrass



Wood Warbler



Beaver

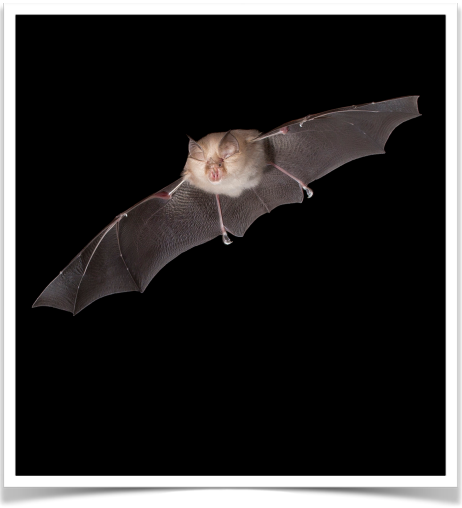


make suggestions when it comes to relevant debates and questions in the Senedd on the environment.

We ask every MS interested in being a Nature Champion to also signal to us if they'd like to be allocated a species.

We hope to appoint 16 Species Champions in the first year. We will prioritise species that are the most at risk, have projects that we can easily visit, and where we see the most potential for progress in this term for their revival as a thriving and abundant species.

Lesser Horseshoe Bat



White Tailed Eagle



Why is the project needed?

Each species will need to be found in or very near your constituency and be a priority in terms of its vulnerability. I'm afraid we cannot take requests for species if we don't have anyone expert enough in the network to support it or if the species is not at risk.

The State of Nature Wales report, last updated in 2023, shows that 1 in 6 species in Wales are at risk of extinction and Welsh wildlife has decreased by 20% since 1994. The nature crisis is an international problem – the UK itself is ranked globally in the bottom 10% for intact biodiversity – but the solutions must come from every government. All countries of the UK are signed up to the Global Biodiversity Framework targets to protect and restore 30% of our land, rivers and seas by 2030.

The Welsh Government in this term will be establishing nature targets as part of the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Act 2026. However, the action to meet those targets comes from all

of us – not just Welsh Government, but the town councils, local authorities, Natural Resources Wales, and a collaborative effort from anyone who owns any kind of land in Wales. Even your own back garden is a vital piece of the jigsaw puzzle when it comes to healthy biodiversity.

Species have an integral role to play in ecosystems. What can sometimes appear to be a green space may not be delivering for nature or key species, and critical ecosystems are on a pathway to collapse. Healthy ecosystems and species underpin our livelihoods, from healthy soil growing our food; bees, butterflies and insects pollinating food; purifying our rivers; creating clean air; locking in carbon; and providing a thriving economy for Wales. This is a critical time for nature in Wales, this Senedd must stand up for species and ecosystems.

As a Senedd Member, you are uniquely placed to bring attention to these issues in the Siambr. Nature needs your voice. Will you speak up for it?



‘Show the Love’ badges given to Species Champions