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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Our cities: Ecological deserts or biodiverse hotspots?**

**Preserving biodiversity is necessary for mitigating climate disruption and even preventing pandemics, UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently concluded. In a new report, Sweco shows how urban design can make our cities part of the solution.**

Since 1970 close to 70 per cent of wild animals, birds and fish have vanished, according to the WWF Living Planet Report 2020. According to the UN's own Global Biodiversity Outlook, not one of its 20 objectives set in 2010 to limit the damage inflicted on the natural world by 2020 have been fully met.

Despite the stark ecological outlook, a new report from Sweco shows cities as possible beacons of hope and illustrates how we might use solutions to shift the outcome and bend the biodiversity curve.

“By interconnecting land use planning, infrastructure, architecture and buildings to find the full potential for maximising ecosystem services in these urban structures, we would be able to increase both biodiversity and well-being”, Tarja Ojala, ecologist and one of the authors of the report, concludes.

The benefits of doing so can be powerful. For example, placing trees correctly around buildings could reduce the use of air conditioning by 30 per cent and reduce energy consumption by 20 to 50 per cent.

Urban planners should let the local biodiversity of trees, bushes, waterholes, parks and gardens become a natural part of the urban landscape so as to promote the well-being of both humans and nature. Vegetation provides animals with breeding grounds, restrains noise, offers shade, reduces the effect of heatwaves and prevents climate change.

The Sweco Urban Insight report “[Building in biodiversity: For climate, for health](#)” is part of a series of reports on the topic [Climate Action](#) in which our experts highlight specific data, facts and science that are needed to plan and build safe and resilient future urban environments.

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