

Agenda – Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel
and video Conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 18 September 2024

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Marc Wyn Jones

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddClimate@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Private pre-meeting (09.15–09.30)

Public meeting (09.30–12.00)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions, and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030 – evidence session with academics

(09.30–10.40)

(Pages 1 – 38)

Dr Richard Unsworth, Associate Professor, Biosciences – Swansea University

Professor Steve Ormerod, Professor in Ecology – Cardiff University

Dr Victoria Jenkins, Associate Professor, Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law – Swansea University

Attached Documents:

Research brief – Biodiversity inquiry: halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

Paper – Dr Richard Unsworth

Paper – Professor Steve Ormerod

Paper – Dr Victoria Jenkins



Break (10.40–10.50)

3 Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030 – evidence session with environmental organisations

(10.50–12.00)

(Pages 39 – 55)

Annie Smith, Head of Policy and Advocacy – RSPB Cymru

Alex Phillips, Policy & Advocacy Manager – WWF Cymru

Chloe Wenman, Policy and Advocacy Manager – Marine Conservation Society

Attached Documents:

Paper – RSPB Cymru

Paper – WWF Cymru

Paper – Marine Conservation Society

4 Papers to note (12.00)

4.1 Committee visit

(Pages 56 – 58)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chairs of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee and the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee to the Llywydd and Chair Business Committee in relation to a Cross committee exchange visit to Oireachtas

4.2 National Seagrass Action Plan proposal for Wales

(Page 59)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Joel James MS to the Chair in relation to the National Seagrass Action Plan proposal for Wales

4.3 The Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health) Regulations 2024

(Pages 60 – 61)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health) Regulations 2024

4.4 Retained EU Law (REUL)

(Pages 62 – 64)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the National Emission Ceilings Regulations 2018 (NECR)

4.5 Establishment and remits of committees

(Pages 65 – 66)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Business Committee to the Chair in relation to Committee Remits following the recent reconfiguration of the Welsh Government Cabinet

4.6 Inquiry on waste

(Pages 67 – 69)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change to the Chair in relation to progress towards development of interim recycling targets

Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024

4.7 Progress towards Wales' climate change commitments

(Pages 70 – 74)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change to the Chair in relation to progress towards Wales' climate change commitments

4.8 British–Irish Council Summit

(Page 75)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution & Cabinet Office to the Chair in relation to the Welsh Government's attendance at the British-Irish Council Summit

4.9 Legislative Consent: The UK Water (Special Measures) Bill

(Pages 76 – 77)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the UK Water (Special Measures) Bill

4.10 Welsh Government's proposals for a Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS)

(Pages 78 – 93)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the Committee's report: Report on proposals for a Sustainable Farming Scheme

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) and (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(12.00)

Private meeting (12.00–12.30)

6 Consideration of evidence received under items 2 and 3

7 Consideration of draft letter to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs in relation to the Committee's inquiry on waste

(Pages 94 – 101)

Attached Documents:

Draft letter to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs in relation to the Committee's inquiry on waste

8 Consideration of the Committee's forward work programme – Autumn 2024

(Pages 102 – 106)

Attached Documents:

Forward work programme

9 Consideration of draft report on Interim Environmental Governance Measures in Wales

(Page 107)

Attached Documents:

Draft report on Interim Environmental Governance Measures in Wales

Document is Restricted

HRLN 43 - Evidence from: Dr Richard Unsworth FRSB, FHEA

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Atal a gwrthdroi colli natur erbyn 2030 | Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

Project Seagrass,
Unit 1, Garth Drive,
Brackla Industrial Estate,
Bridgend,
CF31 2AQ
03/09/24

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Dear Committee,

According to the marine & fisheries section of the Welsh Government our marine area is larger than our land area, and coastal and marine businesses contribute over £6.8bn to the economy of Wales. In addition, these areas support 92,600 jobs and over 60% of the population live and work on the coast. Our beautiful coastline is home to several major ports, harbours, and coastal communities. Ecosystems and their associated biodiversity are the life blood underpinning that coastal productivity and economy. From fisheries and bird watching, to shark diving and offshore renewables, Wales marine environment has it all and needs protection.

In 2024 our marine environment remains at the forefront of degradation, it is the end point of continued catchment degradation and poor water quality, the site of continued disturbance, the location of vast historic reclamation, and the sink for many pollutants. It is also bearing an increasingly heavy brunt of increasing climate change with the 2023 ocean heating event directly hitting Wales.

Within the biodiversity deep dive marine issues were poorly and underrepresented represented within only five of the forty-three recommendations. Wales marine environment needs more support and as has long been the case, remains the marginalised bit of Wales biodiversity. It is now almost 2 years since the initial biodiversity deep dive text was first released and we have seen limited action to follow through with key recommendations. Although I understand that discussions around Marine Protected Areas have commenced it is not clear what action has been taken in this area. A clear recommendation in the current programme for government and a recommendation of the deep was to create dedicated schemes for the conservation and restoration of seagrass meadows and salt marshes. Whilst we have worked closely with WG to ensure a dedicated seagrass scheme is supported, this appears to be unfunded and will only potentially now occur as an NGO action resulting from a competitive grant scheme rather than as an actual long-term vision for these habitats from WG. We are also aware that no action has been taken on a salt marsh scheme. The reason for the inclusion of the seagrass and salt marsh schemes in the Programme for Government was specifically at the request of the youth parliament as a means of investing in nature for future generations. Failure to meet these promises more than any others in the deep dive creates a terrible precedent for failing to meet the requests of our nation's youth.

With private and philanthropic funding, organisations in Wales are making positive steps in trying to improve the marine environment, but the backdrop of increasingly poor water quality and continued degradation of our marine natural assets paints a terrible picture of what lies ahead. Some recent analysis by our team of NRW data on water quality in the Milford Haven Waterway paints a terrible picture of recent degradation. Things are getting worse and not better.

We are nowhere near actually protecting 30% of our marine environment in an appropriate and effective manner by 2030 and the commitments made in the Kunming-Montreal framework appear a distant reality. Urgent is required to come good on the commitments made in the deep dive and to fast track measures within catchments to improve water quality for the benefits of the coastal environment.

Kind regards



Dr Richard Unsworth FRSB, FHEA

Associate Professor at Swansea University

Chief Scientific Officer at Project Seagrass

HRLN 37 - Evidence from: Prof Steve Ormerod

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Atal a gwrthdroi colli natur erbyn 2030 | Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

1. Your views on the effectiveness of current policies / funds / statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Self-evidently, approaches *to date* have generally been ineffective in halting and reversing biodiversity loss in Wales – and more generally across the UK, Europe and a wider world characterised by accelerating resource exploitation more than resource conservation. In this respect, Wales is contributing to a wider global loss of biodiversity as recorded starkly by indicators such as the UK State of Nature Reports (<https://stateofnature.org.uk/>) or the ZSL/WWF Living Planet Index (<https://www.livingplanetindex.org/>).

Specific data for Wales (<https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP26053-SoN-Wales-summary-report-v10.pdf>) reveal, for example, that:

- Of almost 4,000 species in Wales assessed against IUCN Red List criteria, 18% are threatened
- While some widespread eurytopic (=generalist) species are increasing in number and range, more specialised organisms typical of high quality ecosystems are declining in population rapidly on average by over third, and in some iconic cases (eg inland breeding waders, moths, Atlantic Salmon) population reductions since at least the 1990s are far more rapid
- 11 % of Wales' land surface is notified specifically for nature conservation interest, but only a third of designated features (35%) in these locations are in favourable condition

- Only a very small fraction of Wales ~24,000 km of streams and rivers have some form of nature designation, and several of those rural rivers (eg Wye, Usk, Cleddau, Tywi, Dee) that are designated are characterised by significant pollution pressures – dominantly from agriculture but also in some cases underperforming wastewater treatment infrastructure
(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969724045170>)
- Offshore, 50% of Wales' marine environment is in marine protected areas, but fewer than half of the features are in favourable condition
- As well as habitat modification, invasive non-native species and pollution, increasing evidence reveals how climate change is a growing pressure
- Various pieces of evidence illustrate how past actions have provided some benefits to nature conservation (eg Wildlife & Countryside Act, CROW Act, EU Habitats Directive, EU Birds Directive) and sometimes even reversal of adverse trends (eg EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive; EU Large Combustion Plants Directive) while new initiatives can bring local gains (eg Natur am Byth, National Peatlands Action Plan, various EU Life Projects see <https://senedd.wales/media/vdrd1zc5/23-23-biodiversity.pdf>)
- In aggregate, however, prevailing conditions reflect ongoing decline and require a step change approach as articulated in the Biodiversity Deep and other responses to the UN Global Biodiversity Framework

2. Your views on the progress towards implementing the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

It is important to stress that there are now two sets of recommendations. First were those from the initial Biodiversity Deep Dive from October 2022 (<https://www.gov.wales/biodiversity-deep-dive-recommendations>):

- Make the protected sites series better, bigger, and more connected
- Create a framework to recognise Nature Recovery Exemplar Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)
- Unlock the potential of designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) to deliver more for nature
- Continue to reform land and marine management and planning

- Build capacity for awareness and skills
- Unlock public and private finance
- Develop and adapt monitoring and evidence
- Embed Nature Recovery in policy and strategy in public bodies

Second have been the recommendations from the Biodiversity Deep Dive sub-groups which follow and to some extent develop the above initial BDD recommendations. For example the OECM/NREA sub-group have suggested that:

- The OECM criteria form the fundamental basis of a Welsh framework for recognising OECMs.
- Existing protected areas (eg SSSIs) would be excluded from counting as OECMs
- A flexible framework should identify and recognise OECMs to complement existing biodiversity effort based on i) a top down approach and ii) a bottom up 'community' approach
- OECMs should be part of a wider transformative approach to support 30 by 30 and nature recovery in Wales.
- A series of NREAs should be established across Wales to pilot. (These differ from OECMs in that they could embrace existing protected sites in various permutations)

Although various steps have been taken or advocated in delivering these recommendations, the scale and pace remain slow; the incentives through legislation or government funding are limited and constrained by resource availability; and the development of private financing initiatives is characterised several risks that are not yet fully mitigated.

Significant questions remain over how Wales can progress its commitments to the CBD Global Biodiversity Framework at sufficient pace between now and 2030 – just 64 months away. Much emphasis is place on a #TeamWales approach - yet resourcing, prioritisation and incentivisation remain as challenges.

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

There are long-standing arrangements for biodiversity monitoring in Wales, though these are squeezed in various ways. Moreover, the BDD sub-group report on Monitoring identified challenges with respect to:

blending traditional (field recording) and innovative (eg Earth observation, eDNA) approaches to monitoring in a cost-effective way

collating, sharing and maintaining robust evidence platforms – to which should also be added the importance of effective data analysis and use

capturing the effects of management of protected areas and OECMs to demonstrate outcomes

effective governance

resourcing and realignment of current programmes to support delivery without jeopardising existing monitoring needs in a diminishing resource context

4. Your views on new approaches needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

In general, we have the vision, concepts and opportunities to deliver on our commitments under UN and domestic agreements - but resourcing, incentives and prioritisation remain barriers to progress at sufficient pace or scale

5. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

HRLN 44 - Evidence from: Dr Victoria Jenkins, , Associate Professor, School of Law, Swansea University.

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Atal a gwrthdroi colli natur erbyn 2030 | Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

1. Your views on the effectiveness of current policies / funds / statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Nature in Wales is in crisis. There is ample evidence in this respect, including the State of Nature reports for the UK and Wales and the Global Biodiversity Intactness Index. The nature crisis is a global problem, but the UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. The situation in Wales has evolved despite a raft of policies, legislation and funding regimes to support nature recovery. Clearly, therefore, there is a need to reconsider the way that all three operate in support of nature.

The nature crisis presents a significant challenge to law and governance given the complexities of nature and the task of managing nature recovery. In Wales, we have legal frameworks of governance for the wellbeing of future generations and the sustainable management of natural resources that recognise the complexities of governing in the interest of both people and the environment. Nature recovery will depend on the effective operation of these systems that address all aspects of the natural environment. However, whilst these systems of governance are, arguably, necessarily complicated this can also cause confusion in the way that they operate together and impact on policy development and action. It is also sometimes not always clear how these systems relate specifically to halting biodiversity loss and improving ecosystems resilience.

In addition to the system of governance for the wellbeing of future generations and the sustainable management of natural resources, there is a specific mechanism to address the climate crisis in Wales and the case has now been made to introduce a new system of governance for nature recovery. This should bring similar benefits in providing evidence of the problem and focusing attention

on the actions needed to address this crisis. This will build on the existing legal systems with respect to the maintenance and enhancement of plants, wildlife, habitats and ecosystems in both the terrestrial and marine environment.

There has been some success in conserving species and habitats under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Habitats Regulations. However, there are also problems with the implementation of these laws and the way they operate together with other legal frameworks for land use planning, environmental impact assessment and agricultural payments systems. In addition, in comparison to the more rapid development of knowledge and understanding of nature recovery, these legal frameworks can appear outdated. However, they are also now well understood among all actors in this space and, arguably, provide a stable foundation for further developments in support of nature recovery.

2. Your views on the progress towards implementing the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The nature crisis demands an urgency in response. There is a need to see action on the ground as soon as possible in response to the BDD recommendations that have been made. However, in developing responses to the nature crisis it is important to provide a process with wide stakeholder involvement. This kind of collaboration is essential in bringing a range of expertise and different viewpoints to the table in considering how to address this complex task. This will help ensure that any future mechanisms are fit for purpose but is necessarily both challenging and quite time-consuming.

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Monitoring is essential in creating the evidence base for the operation of any system of the management of nature recovery. We need to consider carefully what we are monitoring and the methods for doing so. These are considerations for the scientific community.

However, there is also a need to investigate the way law and governance is used to promote effective monitoring.

4. Your views on new approaches needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

In meeting the 30 by 30 target, the focus has been on developing (Other Effective Area Based Measures) OECMs. The framework of governance and monitoring in OECMs will not always be supported by law. Law is not necessarily the best mechanism for developing approaches at pace to provide a broader spatial approach to nature recovery. However, in the absence of a legal mechanism it is essential to consider how to provide incentives to act and to ensure integrity, accountability and longevity of the approach.

Much attention is also currently being paid to private finance initiatives in creating funding to support nature recovery. Again, this is, generally, based on voluntary standards and governance regimes rather than formal legal approaches. It will be particularly important in a financial context to consider issues of integrity and accountability in the absence of a regulatory framework.

Finally, in terms of implementation, there is a focus on a Team Wales approach to nature recovery. It is important to consider how this will operate in practice to reflect the wellbeing principles in Wales of involvement and collaboration. In any given circumstance, there needs to be a clear understanding of what each organisation has to offer; the aims and benefits of involvement and collaboration; and how action can be supported by funding rules. It may be useful to consider the use of guidance or a framework of rules to support this approach, generally, and/or in relation to specific circumstances.

Overall, whilst there is an urgency in responding the nature crisis there is a need to exercise caution in considering new developments and to ensure that these are based on a full investigation of the current problems and a shared understanding of the way forward in providing for nature recovery.

HRLN 13 - Evidence from: RSPB Cymru, Annie Smith, Head of Nature Policy & Casework, RSPB Cymru

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Atal a gwrthdroi colli natur erbyn 2030 | Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

1. Your views on the effectiveness of current policies / funds / statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Wales' positive policies and strong government commitment to nature recovery are not always backed with adequate resources and capacity, so that progress is not being made at a pace commensurate with the nature emergency. We have long [argued](#) for statutory biodiversity targets to drive action, resources and mainstreaming across government and across sectors and have warmly welcomed the commitment to the Environmental Principles and Biodiversity Bill, which we comment on under question 5.

The framework for the sustainable management of natural resources in the Environment (Wales) Act (EWA) is not currently focused on biodiversity restoration/recovery, and we suggest the SMNR objective should be updated to reflect this need (along with the related objective in the Agriculture (Wales) Act), in line with the promised new statutory biodiversity targets. The integrated approach intended through the EWA has not, so far, been achieved to full effect – for example in our experience, NRW's approach to forestry, flood risk management and nature can still be siloed. The 'section 7 list' of priority species and habitats has still not been published.

Protected sites are another example where policy ambition far outstrips implementation; RSPB Cymru has raised a concern with the IEPAW on this matter. They are recognised as a key tool for nature's recovery in domestic and global policy but condition assessments for both [terrestrial](#) and marine [marine](#) sites make for grim reading. The statutory duties could be improved upon, but the main issue is that all aspects of delivery (designation, protection, monitoring, management, regulation and enforcement) are under-resourced. WEL's report

[Pathways to 2030](#) estimates that an additional £70 million per year is needed for protected site monitoring, designation and management.

The transition from Glastir to the Habitats Wales Scheme has meant a reduction in funding available for SSSI management. NRW's budget for Land Management (section 16) Agreements has also been cut with the result that many multi-annual agreements have not been renewed. The announcement that the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) will pay for SSSI management is extremely welcome but will of course depend on sufficient funding of the SFS. It is important to note that this will not provide the solution for all sites, as not all are farmed. Protected tern colonies that depend on wardening to survive are an example.

We welcome the reinstatement of the large grants (up to £1m) element of the Nature Networks Fund (NNF) and note it is likely, again, to be heavily over-subscribed. It would be helpful if the NNF was able to utilise underspend from other departments to maximise potential delivery. Other grants, such as the new NLHF Landscape Connections, can fund multi-year high value projects but are highly competitive UK wide programmes. The loss of access to EU LIFE funding, which supports a number of multi-million pound restoration projects in Wales that are now coming to an end, leaves a critical gap and a funding cliff for species such as Curlew. Better integration across the UK Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds could provide an opportunity for green infrastructure and jobs for nature and climate.

A short-term, project-based approach is not suitable for funding ongoing and systemic management and protection needs, such as Island Biosecurity. In recent years this has been delivered by RSPB Cymru and partners via funded projects, but this is not sustainable. As an essential part of the statutorily required protection of often internationally important seabird breeding sites it needs to be embedded in Welsh Government/NRW delivery, aligned to the forthcoming Wales Seabird Conservation Strategy.

2. Your views on the progress towards implementing the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

RSPB Cymru is a member of the BDD Core Group. We welcomed the Welsh Government's commitment to delivering the recommendations agreed in October 2022 and the current Cabinet Secretary's endorsement and progress update in his written statement of 25 July.

The purpose of the BDD was to explore how Wales can meet the global '30 by 30' target to protect and effectively manage 30% of land and sea by 2030, through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures ('OECMs').

To give an idea of the step change for biodiversity this demands: Around 11% of Wales' land and freshwater area is covered by a nature conservation designation, but as noted above, protection, monitoring and management of these sites is already inadequate. While Marine Protected Areas do currently cover a greater area than 30% of Welsh seas, NRW's assessment that less than half of the site features are in favourable condition again indicates the challenge in securing appropriate management.

[Recommendation](#) 1 of the BDD is to transform the protected site series so that it is better, bigger and more effectively connected. Many of the details under this headline reflect pre-existing commitments or statutory responsibilities that have faced significant delays in their implementation, including designation and completion of the network on land and at sea, management and monitoring. While the stricter protection afforded to SSSIs through the recent review of PPW is welcome, progress in other areas has been limited. NRW has begun to scope its review of the SSSI series to inform an accelerated notification programme, and we are urging them to ensure the review itself is a swift exercise that can lead quickly to implementation. We understand that publication is imminent of the long-delayed Phase 2 assessment of the Special Protection Areas required for the UK to meet its legal duties, and this must be taken into account in NRW's review. It is critical that Welsh Government swiftly progresses work to complete the SPA network and that NRW is resourced to enable both designation and positive management.

Thinking is still developing about what 'OECMs' might look like in Wales, but it is likely that some of the best opportunities will come from large scale catchment management and restoration of carbon rich habitats like peatland, which could also provide opportunities in environmental markets like carbon credits. To contribute to the target, they will have to be under effective management (and de facto protection) for the long term.

Substantial work has been done by expert working groups to build understanding and make recommendations, focusing on OECMs, Monitoring and Designated Landscapes; the next step is to identify priority actions to take forward. We are also advocating the need to set out more of a roadmap to achieving this target, looking at what milestones need to be delivered, by when. For example, by 2030 we want to see management plans in place and being delivered for all sites, and

all should have a baseline condition assessment so that regular monitoring is able to track the impact of this management on site condition.

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

There is no doubt that a substantial increase in monitoring will be needed to track Wales' delivery against statutory biodiversity targets.

As mentioned above, monitoring of designated sites is currently critically under-resourced. This is indicated by NRW's 2020 Baseline Assessment, where insufficient staff resource is repeatedly noted as a reason for 'unknown' feature condition.

The 30by30 target requires an uplift in this monitoring capacity, as recognised by the Monitoring Expert Group under the BDD. As well as protected area condition, measuring against 30by30 will require monitoring of the area of land and sea that can be counted towards the target, as well as the effectiveness of management of protected areas and OECMs, their connectedness and their governance.

The Deep Dive Monitoring Expert Group underlined the importance of collaboration between organisations that collect data, and this is something we are discussing with NRW. We would stress though that greater collaboration will not, on its own, bridge the resourcing gap. In addition to data gathering, its management and interpretation is key (e.g. using data to undertake formal protected site condition assessments).

The State of Nature partnership presents metrics on the state of nature including species abundance, distribution and extinction risk. These metrics are prepared using data collected by thousands of people, most of whom are volunteers, largely through structured and supported regular monitoring programmes such as the [BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey](#). Biodiversity data used in the State of Nature reports (in which NRW is a partner) are also presented in the SoNaRR.

The State of Nature 2023 Wales report presented, for the first time, a multi-taxa species abundance indicator for Wales, which showed an average 20% decline across Wales since 1994. We hope this indicator may be further developed by incorporating additional datasets. Metrics like this show average trends and help us understand the overall picture for nature, and therefore have a key role to play in relation to Wales' forthcoming statutory targets framework. They can also be

looked at for different groups of species and habitat types (e.g. birds associated with farmland) to build a more detailed picture and inform decisions as to how we should respond.

4. Your views on new approaches needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

With around 90% of Wales being farmed, the SFS has a transformational role to play in nature recovery. The scheme must take full account of targets on species recovery, ecosystem restoration and protected areas. IWA recently published a [blog](#) by RSPB Cymru on the inter-dependence of these two policy areas, arguing that: -

To boost common species (increasing overall species abundance) and provide the foundation for nature's recovery the SFS must support farmers across Wales to manage a minimum of 10% of their enclosed land as the right [mix](#) of habitats which traditional family farms would have once provided.

To stop the extinction and support recovery of threatened species such as Curlew, the SFS must incentivise long-term, collaborative working across farms. The Welsh Government should be supporting pilot projects now, so we can learn how to do this well.

Delivering the 30 by 30 target will depend on the SFS rewarding farmers for managing their SSSI land in accordance with management plans and supporting collaborations for landscape scale restoration and management (which could be identified as potential OECMs).

We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to developing principles for sustainable finance and note the NGO sector has experience to draw on. For example, the RSPB is working with Finance Earth to develop a 'gold standard' carbon finance model, initially focused on the peatland code, which relies on blending public grants and private finance. Independently verified, voluntary carbon markets provide opportunities to restore nature as well as contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and securing benefits to land owners and communities. The MARINE Fund Cymru is also an exciting development.

We also advocate further development of the approach in Wales to 'biodiversity net benefit' through development, through introduction of a statutory

requirement; we are concerned that the current policy-based approach in PPW is difficult for planning authorities to implement and enforce. The strengthening of protection for SSSIs through PPW is welcome, and we note there is further potential to support nature recovery through planning, e.g. through Policy 9 of Future Wales, although the promised Gwent Levels [pilot](#) is still at an early stage.

Wales is home to internationally important seabird populations but many species are in crisis, with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza having taken a heavy toll, compounding existing threats. We are supporting Welsh Government to develop a Seabird Conservation Strategy to ensure adequate protection, monitoring and management of our seabird colonies. A more strategic, spatial approach to marine planning to ensure that the cumulative impacts of marine development proposals can be understood and managed; secure long-term funding for island biosecurity; completion of the Marine Protected Area network, and the roll-out of Remote Electronic Monitoring on fishing vessels would help to ensure the protection and recovery of our globally important marine wildlife.

The RSPB is calling for a ban on lead ammunition in the UK, a known risk to birds and human health for more than half a century. Following a public consultation exercise and advice from HSE and the Environment Agency, we expect the UK Government to determine this issue, in consultation with the Welsh and Scottish Governments, in the near future. Each year, thousands of tonnes of lead bullets and shotgun pellets are dispersed into the environment, causing an unacceptable toll on wildlife. We are urging the Welsh Government to press for a ban, as already instituted in Denmark and several German Länder. Alternatives to lead ammunition are now widely available in the UK.

5. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

RSPB Cymru has long advocated that, in order to ensure that Wales' commitment to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) has real traction to drive change, a legal framework of nature recovery targets is needed. We have welcomed the Welsh Government's commitment - stemming back to the Senedd declaration of the nature emergency - to the Environmental Principles and Biodiversity Bill. The Bill must be clear on the urgency of ambitious action to reverse biodiversity loss. A robust, independent approach to environmental governance is essential to help

keep Wales on track to meet biodiversity targets, but also to uphold compliance with environmental law and improve its effectiveness.

We are concerned that the Welsh Government's policy response to the White Paper consultation signals that it may back away from the proposed headline target (to reverse the decline in biodiversity with an improvement in the status of species and ecosystems by 2030 and their clear recovery by 2050) and instead include a 'nature positive purpose, or mission statement' on the face of the Bill. This looks like a cooling of ambition, and would be a missed opportunity.

Although the Bill will still require Ministers to establish and report on legally binding biodiversity targets via secondary legislation, we fear dropping the headline target, with its key 2030 and 2050 dates, which align with the GBF, risks undermining the pace of delivery. The Welsh Government has always made clear that targets are not to be set for their own sake, but to drive action.

Because of the timing of the Bill, the first steps to implement it will be taken in the next Senedd term. This will include setting the first Supporting Targets in secondary legislation to get Wales' efforts at delivering nature recovery on track. The Bill is the only chance the current Senedd has to set timeframes that make clear the urgency of stepping up action to deliver change – by the beginning of the next decade we want the prospects for biodiversity to be demonstrably better than they are now. We are committed to continuing to work with the Welsh Government to ensure the Bill is robust and ambitious.

RSPB Cymru also wishes to register its deep concern regarding the change process recently launched by NRW. As we have set out in our evidence, nature conservation delivery is already critically under-resourced. WEL's Pathways to 2030 report, identifying investment needed in key actions for nature recovery, repeatedly points to the need for an increase in people to deliver on statutory functions and programmes. The further loss of capacity in relation to specialist ecological advice, and the monitoring and management of protected areas risks undermining the legacy of flagship programmes like Natur am Byth, our delivery of '30 by 30' and ultimately Wales' ability to reverse biodiversity loss and restore the benefits it provides to all people.

HRLN 23 - Evidence from: WWF Cymru

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Atal a gwrthdroi colli natur erbyn 2030 | Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030



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1. Your views on the effectiveness of current policies / funds / statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030.

The Welsh Government has been keen to develop policies and legislation which put nature at the centre of decision making. Yet despite these advances, the policies developed have tended to be less effective in practice. This is a matter of deep concern given that halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030 is a critical deadline for addressing the nature crisis.

A notable example has been the policy architecture provided by the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (EWA). From a climate perspective it was successful in producing a series of carbon budgets which set timebound targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions across most sectors (a notable exception being agriculture in the latest plan which should be corrected in the next). Yet from a nature perspective (covered by Part 2 of the Act) the ambitions were ‘fuzzier’ and more closely aligned to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015’s approach of setting open ended, and often ill-defined, objectives which delivery bodies have been struggling with ever since.

In this regard the EWA created a series of reports that include the Natural Resources Policy (NRP) produced by Welsh Government, and Area Statements managed by NRW. These have shown themselves to be highly frustrating, and largely ineffective documents. Indeed, the NRP has proven to have so little material impact that the decision of Welsh Government to not fulfil its legislative obligation to update it following the last Senedd election has passed with only limited criticism. There are multiple reasons for this, but principle among them is that the wording and content of the NRP is vague and noncommittal to the point where most actions or inactions can be retroactively justified by its contents.

The Welsh Government has an opportunity to reconsider and strengthen EWA through the proposed Environmental Governance & Biodiversity (Wales) Bill 2025 (EGoB). This could function to edit Part 2 of EWA to bring it into line with the contemporary requirements of the COP15 Global Biodiversity Framework. This should take the form of strengthening the face of Act to include ‘nature restoration’ as a step beyond ‘maintain and enhance’, and the institution of a series of timebound biodiversity targets that require cross-government action to deliver. This would have the effect of strengthening the Government’s nature framework to a more formal and deliverable ‘black letter’ approach to policy making instead of the aforementioned ‘fuzziness’.

A key area of focus in this regard must be freshwater pollution, which is directly relevant [to Target 7 of the GBF and requires Wales to “reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects.”](#) We expect to see a strong set of targets as a result of EGoB that will drive action to address pollution across government – with a special focus on actions within the Sustainable Farming Scheme given that agriculture is often the primary source of river pollution across Wales.

2. Your views on the progress towards implementing the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations.

WWF was not invited to participate in the Biodiversity Deep Dive group but accepts the conclusions as a follow on to the declaration of a nature and climate emergency. It is notable that the emergency declaration arguably produced a greater basis for action under the Drakeford government than the EWA and resulting reporting, despite its legislative intent. This is worthy of Committee reflection when considering future policy and legislation formation as political will and prioritisation is likely to be the biggest driver of success or failure, and thereby underlines the need for clear and prescriptive legislative requirements that a government is unable to avoid through verbiage.

In response to the Deep Dive WWF funded and produced the [Pathways to 2030](#) report with Wales Environment Link colleagues. This report sets out numerous overlaps with the Deep Dive's recommendations but is more focused on what needs to be done by 2030 across the whole government and wider partners.

From a protected sites perspective, we are pleased to see that progress has been made because of the Deep Dive - via the Nature Networks Programme. Getting sites into a good condition is a core element of ecosystem resilience and must remain a central focus of government action through current and future support programmes.

Yet in Round 3 of the programme, Welsh Government cut funding by £3.37m (27%). This means that no larger bracket grants were awarded for delivery in this past year. The introduction of project development funding was a welcome part of Round 3; however, the expectation that these should be less than two years curtails ambition, with many meaningful projects lasting longer. In addition, capping participation to one application per organisation stunts ambition. In 2022, NLHF (who administer the fund) received 36 Expressions of Interest – totalling more than £30m – for the larger two-stage process alone. This is triple the total available budget under both the large and medium Nature Networks opportunities, and shows the level of demand, need and opportunity to deliver on an adequate scale.

In the marine environment, we are still waiting for new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), to address the shortfalls identified in the Welsh Marine Protected Area network, and thereby complete an ecologically coherent network. In an increasingly crowded sea, MCZs could offer refuge to rare species and help to protect essential blue carbon stores. We urge the designation process to progress at pace, and that new MCZs are accompanied by robust management.

A further recommendation (and committed to in the Programme for Government), was to “Establish a targeted scheme to support restoration of seagrass along our coastline”. As agreed at a Ministerial roundtable held in February, Seagrass Network Cymru (consisting of government, management agencies, NGOs, practitioners and business) developed a National Seagrass Action Plan (NSAP) and submitted it to the Cabinet Secretary in July. We urge Government to endorse and publish the NSAP and provide necessary resource to initiate its implementation to restore Welsh Seagrass.

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

The first point to make is that monitoring is a critical component of understanding and improving biodiversity across Welsh land and sea. Programmes like ERAMP and work undertaken by NRW are vital to securing monitoring action, so it remains a concern that NRW has never been adequately funded by Government to fulfil all its functions, and is currently going through a further cost cutting exercise which is highly likely to result in significant redundancies and resource reallocations away from key biodiversity services (often because NRW are focused on funding areas of work for which they are able to recover costs. Biodiversity services often do not fit well into this model).

It is also important to note that species-specific monitoring is often dependent on volunteer citizen science, in collaboration with eNGOs. Citizen science is not free and requires significant inputs of time and resources. A [2021 report by the Funding Centre](#), commissioned by Wales Environment Link, showed that eNGOs are mainly supported by public donations and attracts the least government funding across England and Wales. Following Brexit, the pandemic and drop in available funding eNGOs continue to struggle. If the monitoring of new biodiversity targets continues to depend on citizen science programmes, the Welsh Government needs to be aware of the costs of such programmes, the funding vulnerability of the eNGO sector, and be willing to pay for this monitoring.

While Welsh data in some areas is comparatively strong (such as soil condition), we continue to have significant data gaps in areas such as marine and freshwater ecosystems. Given the high public concern over issues such as river health it is concerning that a lack of data may cause us to miss issues or not sufficiently understand their source and impact.

As a result, we need more collaboration on monitoring between land managers, farmers, local government and NRW, with more support for Local Nature Partnerships that can enable closer working relationships. Area Statements could be utilised for this, so they become more active and an ongoing method of building relationships around nature.

For the marine context, NRW's State of Natural Resources Report 2020 explains that "in general, we have an incomplete understanding of some pressures due to the challenges in monitoring the marine environment and subsequently establishing a causal link between pressures and observed impacts. We need to better understand the temporal and spatial distribution and impact of activities and related pressures." Given the growing focus on our seas as a source of energy, food, recreation, and carbon storage, we need more resources to improve our monitoring and understanding.

4. Your views on new approaches needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

In March 2023, Wales Environment Link launched the 'Pathways to 2030: 10 Key Areas for Investment in Nature's Recovery in Wales' report. It outlined ten areas in need of focus to meet (or at least get significantly closer to) our 2030 targets. It estimated costs for enabling restoration considering public engagement and access; farmland; coasts; seas; peatland; grassland; protected sites; rivers and wetlands; woodland; and species. It sets out actions that are divided between stopping activities damaging to nature; reducing adverse effects on nature; and starting positive actions for nature's recovery.

It's essential to remember that halting further damage is equally as important as starting to make positive interventions. Budgetary decisions aren't just about where money is spent, but where money is saved, and we can save both money and nature by not funding businesses, sectors or jobs that are overall damaging to nature or the climate, as well as reinvesting in sustainable jobs that restore biodiversity and counter climate change. We must address the drivers of decline as robustly as we try to manage the consequences. WWF joins wider Link members in inviting the Committee to consider the Pathways report as a fuller answer to this question.

To address the overwhelming budgetary need, Welsh Government needs to embrace innovative funding opportunities to leverage private sector capital that might otherwise be used to purchase land and change its use in ways which might exclude local communities. WWF, and other eNGOs have been working with Government over several years in an attempt to better define the principles of, and opportunities for private capital. An obvious future scheme for its use is the forthcoming Sustainable

Farming Scheme which is likely to have less than half the operating budget that has been calculated to be necessary to adequately manage and restore nature by the recently updated [Scale of Need report](#).

We would also highlight the work of Wildlife Trusts who recently secured a £38 million donation from Aviva to restore Britain's lost temperate rainforests. Aviva recognized the opportunity to restore this rare rainforest. Working with an organization like the Wildlife Trusts has ensured Aviva can achieve significant carbon sequestration through restoring endangered forest to offset their future emissions. This work suggests that Welsh Government needs to significantly upskill itself over Green Finance as there are undoubtedly opportunities to engage with businesses who want to invest in nature's recovery as it makes good business sense to do so.

5. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

Global Responsibility

Wales has a requirement to be Globally Responsible under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. As such the actions we take in Wales should not result in biodiversity overseas being negatively impacted. Common forms of negative action include deforestation, often associated with the production of key imported commodities such as palm oil and soya as identified in a recent joint [report by WWF, RSPB and Size of Wales](#). As Wales develops future biodiversity targets under EGoB (to comply with the COP15 Global Biodiversity Framework) it is vital that actions to address Target 16 to "ensure that people are encouraged and enabled to make sustainable consumption choices" and to "reduce the global footprint of consumption in an equitable manner" are fully considered and integrated.

Sustainable Farming Scheme

The Sustainable Farming Scheme is likely to become the most significant intervention point for combined nature and climate action for Welsh Government for years to come. Yet despite being co-produced by a range of farming and land-management stakeholders the proposals have faced significant criticism – in part motivated by miss-information spread through climate denial linked groups. As the Welsh Government continues to work with stakeholders to develop the final iteration of the scheme there remains a risk that the nature and climate actions contained therein continue to be under threat and may be removed – thereby jeopardising the long-term viability of Welsh agriculture [with climate change related extreme weather events already costing farmers tens of million each year](#).

In response the Committee should continue to engage with the scheme's development and pressure Government to be transparent, not only about the expected implication of proposals on nature and the rural economy, but also for an assessment on the implications of doing nothing or maintaining the status-quo of nature's decline and long-term losses in direct agricultural employment.

HRLN 24 - Evidence from: Marine Conservation Society

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Atal a gwrthdroi colli natur erbyn 2030 | Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

1. Your views on the effectiveness of current policies / funds / statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Increasing the scale and pace of action to tackle biodiversity loss and meet global goals, by 2030, will require both increasing and diversifying the funding available. Wales Environment Link's Pathways to 2030 report indicated that at least £13 million is required in order to secure the recovery of Wales' coast and seas. There is a key role for private investment, with the MARINE Fund Cymru, being taken forward through the Wales Coast and Seas Partnership, is a good example of how new models of funding can work for nature recovery, restoration and enhancement. The interim arrangements around environmental governance in Wales are a key point of concern for us. Possibly due to capacity, the Interim Assessor has been unable to have a marine focus and is constrained to looking at the functioning of environmental law, without any formal investigatory powers. The Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets Bill must be prioritised in the legislative programme in order to address this gap.

2. Your views on the progress towards implementing the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The Marine Conservation Zone designation process has faced significant delays. In an increasingly crowded sea, MCZs could offer refuge to rare species and help to protect essential blue carbon stores. The process must progress at pace, alongside work to better manage and reduce pressures on existing MPAs.

OECEMs in the marine environment are a novel concept, and potential delivery needs further consideration. The recently created expert group on the matter is

discussing how OECMs may compliment and enhance the existing MPA network, and particular consideration should go to the largely undesignated Welsh offshore area.

We welcome the recently announced independent review of marine planning. We hope to support this work with recommendations from a report we are commissioning ourselves, looking at different ways in which marine planning can evolve in order to help Welsh Government meet its environmental responsibilities and commitments. The Crown Estate's Whole of the Seabed programme will also provide important evidence - although we believe that final decisions on use of marine space must be taken by Welsh Government.

Issues which we hope will be addressed are:

- The need to assess carrying capacity of the marine environment (not only where activity should occur, but also how much)
- The need to account for displacement of activities
- The need to prioritise space for marine recovery and enhancement - within and outside MPAs
- The need to set out a hierarchy of decision-making, allowing the Welsh Government to prioritise different policy drivers and potential uses of the sea
- The need to liaise closely with Westminster, given new legislation proposed by the new UK Government which will impact development in Welsh waters.

In relation to behaviour change, awareness raising and skills development, ocean literacy ('an understanding of your influence on the ocean, and its influence on you') is one of the Wales Coast and Seas Partnership's three key themes to address marine resilience. We are pleased to see the the Wales Ocean Literacy Strategy progressing - the first of its kind in the UK. We are also pleased to be delivering our Hiraeth Yn Y Môr (HYYM) project underneath this strategy - working with the coastal communities of Prestatyn, Rhyl, Kinmel Bay and Towyn to grow ocean literacy, improve the sustainable management of the local marine heritage, and promote the health and wellbeing benefits of connecting with our ocean. Through community evidence collection, we are seeing some positive stories. For example, 71% of participants feel they learned something new as a result of participating in HYYM's community engagement activities (n=68), with 72% considering themselves either 'very knowledgeable' or 'somewhat knowledgeable' about their local coast and sea after attending an event (n=71). We have also found those who engage with our HYYM activities say they're likely to engage in other pro-environmental behaviours in the next 12 months including further

volunteering (85%, N=84), making changes to their lifestyle to help the environment (67%, N=66) and persuading people they know to do more to help the coast and sea (57%, N=56).

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

NRW's State of Natural Resources Report 2020 states that 'In general, we have an incomplete understanding of some pressures due to the challenges in monitoring the marine environment and subsequently establishing a causal link between pressures and observed impacts. We need to better understand the temporal and spatial distribution and impact of activities and related pressures.' Filling this gap is crucial to delivering on the Biodiversity Deep Dive for the marine environment.

We look forward to NRW publishing full, updated, condition assessments for all SACs and SPAs in Wales, in November (the work will cover roughly 50% of the Welsh inshore area). Along with their work on mapping strategic opportunities to enhance marine resilience, we hope that this will give us a much clearer idea of actions which should be taken, where, and by whom, to improve the resilience of marine ecosystems.

In March, NRW delivered the latest batch of assessments as part of the Assessing Welsh Fishing Activities (AWFA) project. This work, which looks at the impacts from different types of fishing gears on the protected habitats and species, provides important evidence for marine management. However, it is important that the assessments are used, and the way in which this will happen has been uncertain. In February, Wales Environment Link Marine Group wrote to the then Minister on the issue, who advised that "the AWFA assessments will inform the approach taken to the development of measures arising from Fisheries Management Plans". In addition to this, and although outside the remit of this committee, the use of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) with cameras should be developed in conjunction with the development of the Fisheries Management Plans and should be widely incentivised, and where required subsidised, to support uptake across the sector. This should be required of all vessels operating in Welsh waters, and discussion is needed with the other UK nations to ensure they support its adoption to vessels fishing in Welsh waters, but anchoring elsewhere in the UK.

As virtually all of Wales' MPAs are inshore, however, there is a gap in knowledge and monitoring of offshore ecosystems. This is important, as even well-managed

MPAs are not enough to achieve Good Environmental Status, as set out in the Marine Strategy Regulations. At a UK level, the JNCC's Marine Biodiversity Monitoring Programme spans UK territorial and offshore waters, focusing on biodiversity in the wider environment as well as within MPAs. However it has never been adequately funded, and it is unclear if it ever will be or how the four nations would come together to do so.

4. Your views on new approaches needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

There is a widespread lack of understanding and connection to the sea and its value, at both community and decision-making levels.

We need to improve the connection between people and sea, to motivate them to protect it. Although embedded in our HYEM project, the concept of ocean literacy is still a new one. It encompasses not only knowledge, but also attitudes, access, behaviour and other attributes. Placing communities at the heart of nature recovery and restoration work, rather than as a poorly considered add-on, will help embed the Well-being of Future Generations Act's Ways of Working and better integrate communities in place-based recovery efforts. When looking at the Welsh sample of respondents to the Defra-led Survey on Ocean Literacy in the UK, although 80% of respondents said that protecting the marine environment is important to them, almost half of respondents said that their lifestyle had no impact on the marine environment. Other conservation work will not be fully effective so long as this disconnect persists.

At decision-making level, there needs to be a greater appreciation across government departments of the contributions and multiple benefits that the marine environment provides to society. We advocate the concept of a sustainable blue economy to help to do this. Not only would this prevent the loss of nature, but the creation of a sustainable blue economy would also stimulate economic growth, job creation and economic opportunities in local coastal communities. Case studies around the world show where this win-win has been successful, such as in the US where each \$1 million USD spent on coastal restoration projects created 15 - 30 new jobs, a job multiplier that outperforms the oil and gas sector.

As described above, MPAs and 30x30 will not be sufficient to achieve Good Environmental Status, as set out in the UK Marine Strategy. We must also focus

action on the 'other 70%'. Whilst more than half of Wales' inshore area is within designated sites, the Welsh offshore area lacks similar protection. Meanwhile, the scale of ambition for offshore wind development (8GW of offshore wind is already planned for Welsh seas and a further 40GW is being considered by developers over the next few years) means that the footprint of development in the Welsh offshore area will be significant. This could put sensitive marine habitats at risk. New approaches to nature conservation are needed within a marine planning context, and given the ecological carrying capacity of the marine environment (i.e. it can only sustain so much activity), there should be a focus on pressure management. For example, the fishing sector needs to have an equitable and just transition to move towards sustainable and climate smart fishing practices. Fisheries policies are needed to promote innovation, and improvements to infrastructure should be supported through marine funding. Engagement with industry is essential to ensure opportunities for a Just Transition are being fully explored and utilised. Similarly, Welsh Government should continue to work with the Crown Estate through its Whole of the Seabed programme to ensure that species and habitats, as well as blue carbon stores, are protected and enhanced.

5. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Wales is unique in the UK in committing, in legislation, to improving the Welsh environment, economy, society and culture. The ambition of the Wellbeing and Future Generations act also includes the aim for Wales to be globally responsible. The Welsh marine area makes up more than 50% of the Welsh territorial area, but to date its role in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises has been under-utilised. Wales has the opportunity to set a leading example to the rest of the UK, and beyond, in delivering sustainable management of the sea - unlocking economic growth, whilst also achieving increased resilience against pressures. But to realise these opportunities, we must leverage both policy and finance mechanisms effectively. The Wales Coast and Seas Partnership has created an effective platform for pan-Wales engagement, but we must see rapid and ambitious political leadership if we are to secure the wide-reaching benefits which healthy seas can provide.

Agenda Item 4.1

**Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y
Cymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau
Rhyngwladol**

—
**Culture, Communications, Welsh
Language, Sport, and International
Relations Committee**

—
**Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd,
yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith**

—
**Climate Change, Environment,
and Infrastructure Committee**

—
**Pwyllgor yr Economi,
Masnach a Materion Gwledig**

—
**Economy, Trade, and
Rural Affairs Committee**

Rt Hon Elin Jones MS
Llywydd and Chair
Business Committee

12 July 2024

Cross committee exchange visit to Oireachtas

Dear Llywydd

We are writing to the Business Committee to seek permission for a cross-committee exchange visit to the Oireachtas between 18 and 20 September 2024.

On 7 March 2024, the Dirprwy Lywydd and Members representing the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations (CCWLSIR) Committee and the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) Committee met with Ceann Comhairle (Speaker) of the Dáil Éireann, Seán Ó Fearghaíl and the Irish Government's Consul General of Ireland, Denise McQuade. During that meeting, the Ceann Comhairle suggested a series of exchange visits between the Oireachtas and the Senedd. Our proposed visit in September is the first in these series of exchanges.

A cross-committee visit to the Oireachtas would provide an opportunity to agree ways of working in line with commitments agreed by CCWLSIR Committee during its Wales-Ireland relations inquiry while

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providing a forum for Members to discuss common areas of shared interest and cooperation. Areas discussed during the meeting with Ceann Comhairle included themes and policy areas from the Wales-Ireland relations inquiry, such as culture and heritage, language, and climate change (in particular, renewable energy cooperation in the Irish Sea). For this reason, it is proposed that Members from the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee (CCEI) also participate in this exchange. Ireland is an important trading partner of Wales, and rural affairs was also discussed as an important area of shared interest and commonalities between the two nations. As such, it is also proposed that Members from the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) Committee join the exchange.

Joint working between the Oireachtas and the Senedd is a key pillar of the international agreement between the Welsh and Irish governments, the Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan. Both the Welsh and Irish governments have regularly reiterated that they stand ready to support Senedd-Oireachtas interparliamentary work and are currently in the process of reviewing CCWLSIR Committee report's findings to inform decisions on Wales-Ireland cooperation beyond 2025. The First Minister has also invited the CCLWSIR Committee's input into the governments' plans for cooperation 2026-2030. The areas of cooperation outlined above are expected to be carried forward in the renewed Wales-Ireland Shared Statement beyond 2025, with the exception of rural affairs.

As part of the CCWLSIR Committee's legacy work on Wales-Ireland relations, the Chair has also established a regular meetings schedule with the Consul General of Ireland to share information and in preparation for Wales-Ireland cooperation beyond 2025. At their last meeting on 20 March 2024, the Consul General proposed that the CCWLSIR Committee meets again with the Irish Government's Department for Foreign Affairs on the Committee's next visit to Dublin to share updates on key areas of Wales-Ireland relations, such as diaspora support.

We also intend to conduct visits with relevant stakeholders involved in work that supports the Wales-Ireland agenda.

We believe this exchange visit will present an opportunity to develop a reciprocal programme of exchanges and joint working between Senedd and Oireachtas committees with a focus on Wales-Ireland cooperation beyond 2025.

In order to minimise disruption as much as possible on Senedd business, we have identified 18 to 20 September 2024 as an appropriate date to conduct this exchange visit. In this week, two of our committees will be meeting on the Wednesday morning (CCEI and ETRA) and it will be a reserve week for another (CCWLSIR).

Our intention is to travel following committee business on the Wednesday to arrive in Dublin on Wednesday evening. This will allow Members to conduct a full day of meetings and discussions at the

Oireachtas and with the Irish Government on Thursday. We will undertake further visits on the Friday morning with relevant stakeholders before travelling back on Friday afternoon.

The Members that have been confirmed by committees as participating in the exchange are:

- Delyth Jewell MS and Alun Davies MS (CCWLSIR)
- Luke Fletcher MS and Samuel Kurtz MS (ETRA);
- Llyr Gruffudd MS and one other Member to be confirmed (CCEI).

The Dirprwy Lywydd will lead the delegation as part of his dedicated international programme for the Sixth Senedd, and will undertake a programme of parliamentary and procedural meetings as part of the visit. This model of cross-committee international engagement comes as part of the delivery of the Senedd's International Framework which puts Senedd business at the heart of international activity.

We would be grateful if the Business Committee could confirm our approach and give permission to allow the Members noted to leave Plenary early on Wednesday 18 September 2024.

Yours sincerely,

Delyth Jewell MS

Llyr Gruffudd MS

Paul Davies MS

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Joel James MS

Aelod o'r Senedd dros
Ganol De Cymru

Member of the Senedd for
South Wales Central

Senedd Cymru

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Agenda Item 4.2

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Mr Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment & Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament
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16th July 2024

Dear Llyr

I write to you with regards to the [National Seagrass Action Plan proposal for Wales](#). This plan has been put together by The Seagrass Network Cymru, which comprises all of the seagrass stakeholders in Wales, and has been designed to create a coordinated approach to seagrass restoration and recovery.

As you may be aware, I am the Senedd Seagrass Champion and I am therefore eager that the Welsh Government takes this plan seriously. I have had several discussions with various seagrass stakeholders and they are very excited and positive about this plan and what it could mean for seagrass.

With this in mind, I hope that the Climate Change, Environment & Infrastructure Committee will find time to discuss the report, and potentially advocate on its behalf to the Welsh Government.

Finally, on behalf of Project Seagrass and WWF Cymru, I would like to extend an invitation to you and your committee to visit the seagrass nursery in West Wales, and to see at first hand the brilliant work that is being done to maintain and restore our seagrass meadows.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter, and I look forward to your response as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely



Joel James MS
Member of the Senedd for South Wales Central
Shadow Minister for Social Partnership

Agenda Item 4.3

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig Cabinet

Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Llŷr Gruffydd MS

Chair,

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Senedd Cymru

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16 July 2024

Dear Llŷr,

The Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health) Regulations 2024.

I wish to inform the Committee of the intention to consent to the UK Government making and laying The Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health) Regulations 2024 (“the Regulations”) by 29 July 2024.

I received a letter from Lord Douglas-Miller, the Minister for Biosecurity, Animal Health and Welfare, requesting consent to the Regulations. The Regulations will be made by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 8C(1) and (2) of, and paragraph 21 of Schedule 7 to, the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

The purpose of the Regulations is to protect biosecurity and support trade between Northern Ireland (“NI”) and Great Britain (“GB”), following the agreement of the Windsor Framework. The amendments contained in the Regulations change the way in which plants, plant products and other objects move between GB and NI, restoring the smooth flow of trade within the internal market of the United Kingdom.

The Regulations expand the list of non-EU, Rest of the World (RoW), plants, plant products and products of animal origin (POAO) goods eligible for movement under the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme (NIRMS) and the facilitated movement scheme.

The Statutory Instrument (SI) is subject to the negative procedure and is due to be laid before UK Parliament on 29 July 2024.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Although the Welsh Government's general principle is that the law relating to devolved matters should be made and amended in Wales, on this occasion, it is considered appropriate for the substance of the amendments to apply to Wales. The SI relates to a devolved area, however, the SI operates GB-wide and has effect as to the acceptance of goods into Northern Ireland. Given the application to Northern Ireland it would not be within competence of Welsh Ministers to wholly make this SI as Wales-only. Additionally, there is no policy divergence between the Welsh and UK Government in this matter. This ensures a coherent and consistent statute book with the regulations being accessible in a single instrument. Making the regulations GB-wide also ensures there will be no risk of legislative divergence in the UK which would likely jeopardise the implementation of the Windsor Framework. Therefore, I am giving my consent to these Regulations.

I have written similarly to Mike Hedges MS, the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee (LJCC).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Huw Irranca Davies', written in a cursive style.

Huw Irranca Davies AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0190/24

Llyr Gruffydd MS

Chair - Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

seneddclimate@senedd.wales

19 July 2024

Dear Llyr,

Thank you for your 2 July letter regarding retained EU law (REUL) and the National Emission Ceilings Regulations 2018 (NECR). Please see responses to your seven questions below;

We note the ongoing work with Defra on proposed alternative arrangements. However, could you clarify why you feel it is appropriate not to seek to recreate the effect of the repealed provisions, as they applied in relation to Wales before 31 December 2023, for example by imposing equivalent duties on the Welsh Ministers?

The duty to comply with the UK emission reduction targets rests with the Secretary of State, however, proportionate emission reductions are required across all four UK countries to achieve them. Beyond these regulations there is also an international obligation on the UK to comply with emissions targets as a signatory to the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution. This still requires reporting at a UK level even if each of the four governments took a separate approach to the regulations, so the introduction of separate approaches across the UK would be inefficient and resource intensive.

My preferred approach is to continue to work collaboratively with the new UK Government and other Devolved Governments to enable proportionate and coherent policies to be represented within a UK-wide reporting process.

Could you clarify the status of the current NAPCP to achieve emission reduction commitments of the NECR, which is still showing as live on the UK Government's website?

The revoked provisions had required the Secretary of State to consult on and publish a National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP) under certain criteria. I understand that the existing NAPCP remains extant until it is withdrawn by the UK Government. Ultimately, it is for the new UK Government to confirm the status of the NAPCP going forward and, as a Devolved Government, I would expect Welsh Government to be consulted on this.

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Could you explain how, in your view, the revocation of Regulations 9 and 10 of NECR does not represent a regression of environmental regulation in Wales?

I was disappointed by the UK Government's decision to revoke the NAPCP provisions, despite the concerns raised by the Welsh Government at the time. My view remains consistent with those previously expressed by the previous Minister for Climate Change, to the then Secretary of State. Notwithstanding that the emissions targets for the UK are unaffected by the revocation, the revocation of the NAPCP provisions without sufficient alternative arrangements reduces transparency and public scrutiny of the UK's emissions reduction pathway for several important air pollutants, which are important to maintain.

What assurances can you provide that this will not result in a failure to meet the 2030 targets set by NECR? What interim steps are being taken to ensure the 2030 targets will be met?

Despite the revocation of the NAPCP provisions, duties for the Secretary of State to prepare and publish the national air pollutant emissions inventory and projections remain which show the UK's progress towards achieving the emissions targets.

The loss of the NAPCP provisions does not directly impact the delivery of plans and strategies. Our national air quality strategy, the Clean Air Plan for Wales, sets out the measures we are taking out to 2030 and regular reviews of progress are undertaken and published.

Work in Wales to meet the UK emissions targets remains ongoing. We are continuing to work with our partners in UK and Devolved Governments to ensure that Wales achieves a proportionate share of the UK's targets.

Could you explain the evolution of the Welsh Government's position?

The Welsh Government position remains unchanged. Despite concerns raised by Welsh Government with the Secretary of State at the time, the NAPCP provisions were revoked.

The previous Minister for Climate Change, wrote to the Secretary of State following the Inter-Ministerial Group meeting in June 2023 to express her concern about the potential revocation of the provisions without replacement and the potential lack of transparency and public scrutiny. This remains our position. However, we are confident that the revocation of these provisions does not have any immediate and substantial impact for environmental law in Wales. This is because the emissions targets applicable to the whole of the UK remain in place until 2029 and the Secretary of State remains under a legal duty to meet those targets. The Welsh Government remains committed to playing its part. The revocation of the provisions underpinning the mechanism which publicly demonstrated how the collective efforts would achieve the emissions targets is a concern for the Welsh Government.

The UK Government has, since August 2023, been pursuing an alternative non-legislative approach to the NAPCP. The NAPCP was subject to consultation before being finalised and subsequently published, and I firmly maintain the view that any alternative arrangements should be transparent and open to public scrutiny. I intend to work with the new UK Government and other Devolved Governments to inform the alternative arrangements and maintain environmental protections.

What discussions has the Welsh Government had with environmental stakeholders in Wales on the revocation on NECR?

We are aware that stakeholders have raised issues with the position of the previous UK Government on this issue and I share similar concerns. While Welsh Government continues with work in Wales to help meet the UK emissions targets, we will continue to work with UK partners via the Air Quality Common Frameworks to address the concerns outlined above.

What work is being done on a UK-wide basis to consult with stakeholders on the alternative arrangements led by Defra and described in your letter?

My officials have been working with Defra and the other Devolved Governments via the Air Quality Common Frameworks to inform Defra's proposed alternative arrangements. We intend to work with the new UK Government and other Devolved Governments in good faith to inform alternative arrangements with the aim of minimising potential gaps in reporting, and to shape arrangements which are transparent and open to public scrutiny.

I thank you for raising these detailed matters with me and I hope this response assists the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs

Llyr Gruffydd, Chair of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

Paul Davies, Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

John Griffiths, Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee

23 July 2024

Committee remits

Dear Llyr, Paul and John,

On 9 July, the Business Committee reviewed responses received from committees to its invitation to them to provide comments on current remits in light of changes to ministerial portfolios. This followed a request from the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee that consideration be given to a reconfiguration of committee remits, which included suggestions for responsibility for several policy areas to be transferred to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) Committee and the Local Government and Housing (LGH) Committee in line with existing links with Cabinet Secretaries.

To ensure it was able to consider a fuller range of options and views, Business Committee wrote to all policy committees, as well as the Finance, Petitions and Standards of Conduct Committees. The responses received indicate only a very limited appetite for changes to be made to current committee remits, including from the ETRA and LGH committees.

However, the ETRA Committee has indicated its willingness to assume responsibility for scrutiny of freeports and the circular economy. That Committee also proposed that it would be content to enter into arrangements with the CCEI Committee to ask questions around energy, digital connectivity, the airport and ports on CCEI's behalf

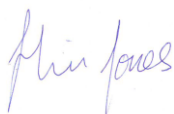
during budgetary and general ministerial scrutiny sessions with the relevant Cabinet Secretary.

Having considered the responses received, the Business Committee agreed with the proposal for scrutiny of freeports and the circular economy to be transferred from the CCEI Committee to the ETRA Committee. As these are subject areas beneath the broader policy areas contained within the remits that were agreed by the Senedd when it established the two committees in June 2021, Business Committee does not consider that a Plenary motion is required to give effect to this to this change of practice.

Given the additional suggestion made by the ETRA Committee, and conscious that committees have not had an opportunity to discuss these matters with each other, Business Committee also agreed at its meeting to propose that you may wish to meet as chairs of the respective committees to explore ways to enhance coordination in ministerial scrutiny across committees, particularly during budget scrutiny. Should these discussions result in a request for further formal changes to the remits of your respective committees, the Business Committee would be keen to consider your proposals.

Thank you for your consideration in addressing these important matters.

Kind regards,



The Rt Hon. Elin Jones MS

Y Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion
Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0193/24

Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament

24 July 2024

Dear Llŷr,

On 22nd May I gave evidence to the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee in connection with progress towards Wales' climate change commitments. During the session I committed to write to the Committee with an update on progress towards the development of interim recycling targets to maintain our trajectory towards zero waste by 2050.

Although the 70% recycling target has only just come into effect for the financial year 2024/25, we are committed to working in partnership with Local Authorities in developing the future recycling targets that will keep us on the trajectory to achieve zero waste by 2050. This work will take into account the Workplace Recycling and other planned reforms due to come into force over the next few years such as the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for packaging and Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers. It also includes work to update the Welsh Government's Blueprint Collections best practice standard, which will help inform the action Local Authorities take to deliver beyond 70% recycling.

Thank you for a very constructive session and I look forward to reading the Committee's report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs

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Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion
Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-HIDCC-5465-24

Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair
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9 August 2024

Dear Llŷr,

I am writing to inform the Committee of my intention to consent to the UK Government making and laying the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 (“the Regulations”).

The Regulations intersect with devolved policy and will apply to Wales. The Regulations will be made by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under the following provisions of the Environment Act 2021:

- sections 50 - 52, 142(1), (6) and (10), and 143(1),
- paragraphs 1-5, 7 and 12 of Schedule 4,
- paragraphs 1-9 and 11-17 of Schedule 5, and
- paragraphs 1, 4, and 7-12 of Schedule 7.

Sections 50(3), 51(3) and, 52(4) of the Environment Act 2021 provide that such Regulations can be made by the Secretary of State in relation to Wales with the consent of the Welsh Ministers. The Regulations apply in relation to England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales and a similar request for consent has been sent to Scottish Ministers and Northern Ireland Assembly Members.

The Regulations will revoke the previous Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007 and the Packaging Waste (Data Collections and Reporting) (Wales) Regulations 2023 and introduce an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for packaging and packaging waste. Implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility is a Programme for Government commitment of this administration and this

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scheme for packaging will require producers of packaging to pay the full net cost of managing packaging waste and the provision of public information about the disposal of packaging waste. This will result in the costs of managing packaging waste being met by the producers who use and supply packaging, applying the “polluter pays” principle. The producer fees will be raised by a scheme administrator jointly appointed by the four governments of the UK who will distribute these monies to local authorities. The scheme will also require producers to meet packaging recycling targets and to adopt a clear ‘Recycle/Do not recycle’ label so that it is easier for people to know how to recycle their packaging waste.

Collectively, the aim of these measures is to act as a clear incentive to producers to reduce unnecessary packaging, design packaging that is easy to recycle, encourage the use of reuseable and refillable packaging, and reduce packaging litter. The EPR scheme for packaging is therefore important in both tackling the climate and nature emergency and building a stronger, greener economy as we progress towards a net zero Wales.

Whilst it is normally the policy of the Welsh Government to legislate for Wales in matters of devolved competence, in certain circumstances there are benefits in doing so collaboratively with the UK Government where there is a clear rationale for doing so. In this instance it will enable a single UK-wide SI to make provision for the UK-wide scheme as has been consulted upon, thereby ensuring consistency of approach across the UK. It is therefore appropriate that the Regulations are made on a UK-wide basis.

It is anticipated that the Regulations will be laid before the UK Parliament using the affirmative procedure and are expected to come into force in January 2025. Final confirmation of the laying of the Regulations will be subject to the legislative programme of the new UK administration.

I have also written to Mike Hedges, Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs



Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0192/24

Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament

25 July 2024

Dear Llŷr

Thank you for your letter of 27 June following my attendance at the Committee's 22 May meeting. I am providing the clarification and further information you have requested.

1. We would welcome further evidence to support your assertion that climate change is now embedded across Government.

We have always worked across Government to tackle climate change and the Welsh Government's commitment to this agenda will ensure that continues. Each member of the Cabinet understands our collective and individual responsibilities in relation to climate change. Annex 3 of Net Zero Wales identifies the main and associated ministerial portfolios for each of the policies and proposals for meeting Carbon Budget 2, which demonstrates how climate change is a whole government effort. Another example of this in practice is the recently improved Integrated Impact Assessment process, which includes climate impact as a critical component for all policy development.

2. We would like you to report back to the Committee on the outcome of your discussions on future internal governance structures.

The Welsh Government is considering a range of measures to ensure our priorities are afforded the required Cabinet member time. This includes the priority of climate change. The Committee will continue to be updated on this matter.

3. We would welcome an explanation of the basis for your assertion that the Welsh Government is currently on track to deliver CB2. Please provide evidence to support this assertion.

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The impact of policy effort accumulates over time so in general terms it is reasonable to expect greater annual emissions reductions later in the budgetary period than at the start. Emission reductions in the first and second year of CB2 were slightly below the required average reduction of 37% required to meet our statutory CB2 target, showing reductions from the base year of 36.3%¹ and 36.4% for 2021 and 2022, respectively. The fact that 2021 and 2022 are already so close to the required average reduction strongly suggests that the performance in subsequent years will be sufficient to achieve the statutory target for CB2. Moreover, UK ETS data for 2023 shows a 14% drop in Welsh emissions across the relevant sectors. While this reduction may not be permanent and may be driven by wider economic factors, the fact that the UK ETS covers almost half of all Welsh emissions suggests a fall in total Welsh emissions for 2023 beyond the 36% achieved in the first two years of the budget.

In addition, Tata's decision to close Blast Furnace 5 in Port Talbot earlier this month and Blast Furnace 4 later this year could also have a considerable impact on Welsh emissions during CB2 and beyond. This reduction has not been planned in the way we would hope, all along we have said that we believed that consultation between the Company and unions could have secured a longer, fairer transition to greener steelmaking that minimised job losses, however, if it were to go ahead it would have a large impact on our emissions. This is on top of our ongoing delivery of Net Zero Wales.

4. We seek clarification on whether the Welsh Government is currently on track to meet its aim of achieving an average reduction in emissions of 44% against the baseline over CB2.

We are making every effort to out-perform the statutory target and start CB3 from the strongest possible position. At the same time, it is important to recognise that overall Welsh emissions are at the mercy of a small number of large emitters – my previous response and the impact of the decisions by Tata clearly illustrate this point. This means that sometimes good policy does not necessarily lead to lower emissions, and sometimes emissions fall for reasons other than government intervention. I fully recognise that this makes scrutiny extremely challenging, not only for the Senedd and other external stakeholders but also internally as we strive to identify the best path to net zero.

5. We would like you to report back to the Committee on changes in emissions across each sector between 2021 and 2022, as well as the reduction in emissions in 2022 against 2021 and the baseline. Please include an analysis of the reasons for those changes.

I include the analysis below and note again that the most recent greenhouse gas emissions data published in June 2024 included revisions to the whole time series, including 2021 values, which are incorporated in the analysis.

The increased emissions from the fuel supply sector were driven largely by an increase in refinery combustion emissions, and increases in the electricity supply sector were driven by an increase in emissions from power stations. These increases were offset by a decrease in emissions in the industry sector associated with iron and steel production, and reduced emissions in the buildings and product use sector, where the combination of 2022 being the hottest year on record and increased gas prices has likely led to a behavioural change in residential energy use.

¹ The greenhouse gas emissions data published in June 2024 included revisions to the whole time series, including 2021 values. As a result, the reduction for 2021 is now 36% instead of the 35% reported previously and quoted in your letter.

Table 1: Welsh emissions by sector for 2022 and percentage change between 2022 and other years (base year and 2021)^{2,3}

Emission sector	2022 emissions (MtCO_{2e})	% change from base year	% change from 2021
Agriculture	5.6	-7.7%	-3.8%
Buildings and product uses	4.1	-37.5%	-11.1%
Domestic transport	5.7	-11.3%	3.2%
Electricity supply	6.8	-39.1%	8.8%
Fuel supply	3.4	-48.3%	32.5%
Industry	9.5	-38.1%	-8.0%
International aviation and shipping	0.4	-37.4%	29.4%
Land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) [Note 1]	-0.9	137.0%	0.5%
Waste	1.0	-71.8%	-9.1%
Total	35.7	-36.4%	-0.1%

[Note 1] As LULUCF provides a net removal of emissions the percentage changes show the overall change in the size of the emission removal. Positive % change values represent an increase in the size of the removal.

6. We expect the Welsh Government to make demonstrable progress towards implementing the UK CCC’s recommendations during the remainder of this Senedd term. We seek assurance from you that you will work with your Cabinet colleagues to ensure they afford sufficient priority to implementing those recommendations.

The CCC’s recommendations provide a useful framework for ministerial discussions about progress. Last year each Minister considered the recommendations relevant to their portfolio and decided how to respond. I expect those that were accepted to be delivered in full and will continue to work with my Cabinet colleagues through revised internal governance structures, bilateral meetings and other channels.

7. We would like you to explain why the Welsh Government did not seek the UK CCC’s views on the latest proposals for the SFS (published in December 2023).

² For the purposes of reporting, greenhouse gas emissions are allocated into sectors known as Territorial Emissions Statistics (TES) sectors. These are different from the sectors in Net Zero Wales (CB2) and Prosperity for All: A Low-Carbon Wales (CB1).

³ Base years for Welsh greenhouse gas emissions are 1990 for carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, and 1995 for the fluorinated gases.

The UK CCC reports and recommendations were a material consideration when developing the policy, design and the Sustainable Farming Scheme's development as set out in the 2023 Consultation. When doing so, officials balanced the multiple requirements of the Scheme against the Sustainable Land Management objectives as set out in the Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023.

8. Before finalising the SFS, we expect you to consider how best you can utilise the UK CCC's expertise to ensure the SFS can make the necessary contribution to the delivery of carbon budgets and climate change targets.

Officials will continue to engage with the UK CCC as appropriate and are meeting with CCC officials this month.

9. We would welcome an explanation of the incentives/measures that you intend to put in place to support farm businesses that do not participate in the SFS in reducing emissions and maximising carbon sequestration.

The Sustainable Farming Scheme is intended to be accessible to all, providing an appropriate level of support to encourage and enable farms in Wales to reduce emissions and increase their carbon sequestration. The Scheme is set against the regulatory baseline which is established for all farms in Wales. Knowledge transfer, advice and support, for example through Farming Connect, is expected to continue to be made available to all farmers.

10. The route map will include key milestones and interim targets to facilitate and support scrutiny of progress towards delivery, as recommended in our 2023 report.

The Heat Strategy for Wales and our upcoming residential decarbonisation route map and action plan will set out the actions we will take to support decarbonisation of our homes – lowering emissions, improving health outcomes and protecting our energy bills against global price surges. Having considered the advice of the Climate Change Committee, the Decarbonisation Implementation Group, stakeholder feedback from the Heat Strategy consultation and wider evidence, we are developing a suite of policies and proposals which will sit alongside key asks of the UK Government in areas of reserved powers. We will be setting out the key milestones and the reduction in emissions we aim to achieve through the collective efforts of the Welsh and UK Governments, our delivery partners and wider society.

11. We request an explanation of the improvements made to the MRV system since the start of the current carbon budgetary period. We seek assurance that these improvements will ensure the MRV system is capable of tracking the implementation of policies in Net Zero Wales and their effectiveness in reducing emissions, as promised by the Welsh Government.

For the MRV system in CB2 we have adopted similar core principles to CB1: a three-tiered system of indicators and a traffic light system to indicate progress. Since the start of CB2 we have refined our approach towards tracking policies that do not have publicly available and quantified targets by assigning a traffic light score to the general direction of travel, along with a qualitative commentary on progress. This better reflects the nature of many policies in Net Zero Wales.

12. We request that you share the performance indicators for CB2 with the Committee and commit to publishing them to improve transparency.

I completely agree that transparency is important in holding the Government to account and remain committed to going beyond the statutory requirements by not only publishing an assessment every five years, but also publishing annual Tier 1 performance indicators, by sector and sub-sector. Of course, there are additional layers of detail we have developed for internal use, but as I set out when I spoke to the Committee, these additional indicators are limited in nature by what relevant and meaningful data is available and when. I genuinely do not believe that publishing these would result in improved scrutiny, decisions or improved outcomes, and the additional focus on these, given their limitations, may in fact distract both Senedd members and Government from the vital job of action on the climate emergency. Net Zero Wales is clear which policies we expect to contribute to meeting our targets and Cabinet responsibilities.

13. We would welcome your thoughts on how the Welsh Government could better support ongoing scrutiny of progress towards delivery of CB2 and Net Zero Wales during the remainder of the Sixth Senedd.

Net zero is a shared Cabinet responsibility and as such is federated across the Welsh Government, and Net Zero Wales clearly outlines which Cabinet Secretary is responsible for each policy in achieving CB2. While the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee has a particularly important role to play in scrutinising progress, the Senedd may find it productive to broaden its approach and apply a similar focus to all Cabinet Secretary portfolios.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs

Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid, y Cyfansoddiad
a Swyddfa'r Cabinet
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution & Cabinet Office

Agenda Item 4.8


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mike Hedges MS
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Senedd Cymru

5 August 2024

Dear Mike,

I am writing in accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement to notify you of the Welsh Government's attendance at the British-Irish Council (BIC) Summit held in Isle of Man on 20 and 21 June. The then Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS, represented the Welsh Government. I would like to draw your attention to the BIC [communique](#) summarising the outcomes of the Summit.

The Summit theme focused on 'Unlocking the Economic and Social Opportunities of Renewables Across These Islands'. The Welsh Government noted its commitment to delivering a fair and affordable transition to a low carbon future, including our aims for the publicly owned renewable energy developer, Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru, to secure value from the energy system and help to meet our renewable energy targets. In addition, Wales' Morlais project, one of the world's first fully consented tidal stream array, as well as offshore and onshore wind opportunities were highlighted.

I have copied this letter to the Chairs of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee and the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid, y Cyfansoddiad a Swyddfa'r Cabinet
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution & Cabinet Office

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Agenda Item 4.9

Huw Irranca-Davies AM/MS

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA/HIDCC/6069/24

Llŷr Gruffydd
Chair
Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament
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10 September 2024

Dear Llŷr,

I am writing to inform you that my officials have been working in partnership with the UK Government on developing the Water (Special Measures) Bill. As you may know, the Bill was introduced into Parliament on 4 September 2024, please see attached together with the Explanatory Notes. The policy statement which accompanies the Bill is available at [Water \(Special Measures\) Bill: policy statement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

The Bill was announced in the King's Speech on 17 July and reflects the UK Labour Government's manifesto commitment. The Bill demonstrates early action to improve water quality, which is a matter of great public concern. It addresses the perceived widespread failures by the water sector in addressing pollution caused by sewage discharges and aging infrastructure.

The Bill's provisions relate to the devolved matter of water industry and reserved matter of insolvency. I have agreed that some of the Bill's clauses will apply to Wales and sought equivalent powers for the Welsh Ministers to those of the Secretary of State. I believe this legislation will deliver positive changes and support the enforcement of regulatory requirements in the water sector, improving water company performance in Wales.

Following the laying of the Bill in Parliament, I am proposing to start the legislative consent process and support a legislative consent motion in the Senedd.

As the Bill has been developed at pace, my officials and I will continue to scrutinise the proposed measures and consider all the potential impacts for Wales throughout the Parliamentary process.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I am keen for early engagement with yourself on this matter, so should you wish to discuss this further, please do let me know. I will also be raising this matter on the floor of the Senedd shortly.

I am also copying this letter to the Llywydd.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized representation of the name 'Huw Irranca-Davies'.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd
a Materion Gwledig

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Welsh Government Response to CCEI Committee report: Proposals for a Sustainable Farming Scheme

03/09/2024

In July 2024, the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee submitted its report on the Welsh Government's proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). The report includes 19 recommendations. This is the Welsh Government's response to those recommendations.

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Introduction

In December 2023, the Welsh Government published *Sustainable Farming Scheme: Keeping farmers farming*. This consultation was the culmination of two previous consultations, two phases of co-design, and a Scheme Outline published in 2022.

In 2023 the Agriculture (Wales) Act became law establishing the four Sustainable Land Management (SLM) objectives which must underpin future agriculture policy and support.

The formal analysis of the over 12,000 consultation responses to *Sustainable Farming Scheme: Keeping farmers farming*, plus the Welsh Government's response to that analysis was published in July 2024. Within that response we reiterated that the Welsh Government has heard the feedback from the industry, and that we are working with stakeholders to consider the remaining challenges before any final decisions are made.

We have established an SFS Ministerial Roundtable, Chaired by, and designed to support the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs. The purpose and scope of the Roundtable is to review and consider the priorities for the Universal, Optional and Collaborative Layers of the SFS, along with Scheme Rules (including the minimum 10% requirements), eligibility criteria, and payment methodology. The Roundtable will review these aspects within the context of the SLM duty and will be informed by the analysis of the consultation responses.

The Roundtable is supported by two sub groups: the Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel has been set up to explore the evidence underpinning further or alternative actions to sequester carbon within the Universal Layer of the Scheme. Importantly, these are actions separate to those designed to manage important carbon stocks already secured within our soils. The SFS Officials Working Group has been delegated the responsibility to review aspects of the Scheme design and to report back to the Roundtable, identifying areas of agreement, areas requiring further work and points for escalation to resolve. Membership of the Ministerial Roundtable and Official's Groups is enclosed at Annex 1 of this response.

These stakeholder groups are working at pace throughout the summer, and Welsh Government is extremely grateful for their ongoing commitment of everyone involved.

Where possible, we endeavour to keep the industry aware of the ongoing progress, to demonstrate the value of this collaborative partnership approach. For example, in July we were able to update on important progress made with regard to including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the habitat maintenance payment with the Universal Baseline Payment, as referred to in recommendation 10 of this report.

No final decisions on Scheme design will be made by Welsh Ministers until this engagement is concluded. Therefore, whilst progress is being made on many of the points raised in the report, it is not possible to give definitive responses to certain recommendations.

We have accepted most recommendations in this report. Some recommendations are accepted in principle pending this ongoing engagement but will be considered as part of the stakeholders discussions. The outputs of the SFS Ministerial Roundtable and its

subgroups will be used to support Welsh Ministers in their final decisions on Scheme design, to ensure the SFS meets our national and international commitments, plus the SLM objectives of the Agriculture (Wales) Act.

Response to the 19 recommendations

Recommendation 1

1. The Cabinet Secretary should:
 - provide an indicative timetable for the remaining stages of the Scheme's development, including publication of the outputs of the various work streams being taken forward by the Ministerial Roundtable, and
 - commit to provide termly updates to the Senedd on progress towards the development of the final Scheme.

Response: Accept in principle

2. We expect to publish the final scheme details in summer 2025, with the Transition Period commencing 1 January 2026.
3. Engagement with the SFS Ministerial Roundtable and its subgroups (the Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel and the Officials Working Group) is ongoing. The Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel will likely conclude this Autumn and will result in the publication of a short report. The Work of the Ministerial Roundtable and the Officials Working Group will likely continue up to and beyond the beginning of the SFS Transition Period. We do not anticipate publishing any further outputs from these groups as the results of this engagement will lead directly to the publication of the final scheme.
4. We are happy to commit to regular reporting to the Senedd on the basis of when there are key updates within the design process that can be given. The expectation is for at least one update to be provided before the end of this year.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 2

5. The Cabinet Secretary should increase efforts over the coming months to address any misunderstandings about the Scheme rules, and to promote the benefits of integrating trees and temporary habitats into a productive system.

Response: Accept

6. Engagement with the Ministerial Roundtable and its subgroups is ongoing to consider the remaining challenges and finalise the details of the Scheme Rules and Actions. The related engagement with farmers and other stakeholders to set out the scheme details and raise awareness of what applicants will need to do qualify for payments will follow the conclusion of these discussions.
7. Working with Farming Connect and others, we will continue to promote the benefits and opportunities of tree cover and woodland on farms and work on knowledge transfer, focusing on farm activity which supports efficiencies and aligns

to the outcomes and actions being developed for the SFS. We will also continue to provide support for tree planting, on a voluntary basis, in advance of the introduction of the SFS.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 3

8. The Cabinet Secretary should report back to the Committee on potential alternatives to the tree cover requirement as they emerge.

Response: Accept

9. The Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel is currently exploring the evidence relating to additional or alternative carbon sequestration actions which could be included in the SFS as a Universal Action. The appropriateness of those actions to the Welsh context, and the scale of opportunity for those Actions to be rolled out across Wales are key considerations.
10. We anticipate publishing a short report on the findings of the Panel later this year, and I would be glad to update the Committee in due course.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 4

11. The Cabinet Secretary should ensure any alternative to the tree cover requirement can support the delivery of the desired outcomes of the Welsh Government's tree planting target.

Response: Accept

12. The Welsh Government tree planting targets are currently based on the recommendation of the UK CCC. The tree planting targets form part of the actions required to sequester enough carbon so that, combined with actions to reduce emissions across all sectors, Net Zero is reached by 2050. Officials will continue to look at ways of making tree planting work as an integrated part of a thriving agricultural sector.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 5

13. The Cabinet Secretary should seek the UK CCC's advice on any alternative to the tree-planting requirement proposed by the Ministerial Roundtable subgroup, to

ensure it is a credible option for increasing carbon sequestration, in line with the balanced pathway to net zero.

Response: Accept

14. We will engage with the UK CCC, along with other sectors, to discuss our pathway to net zero ahead of Carbon Budget 3 in 2026.
15. We are continuing to work on the policies and proposals laid out in Net Zero Wales as we finalise our work on Carbon Budget 2 and are continuing to explore future policies for agriculture and land use, such as SFS, as we look ahead to the targets set out in Carbon Budget 3. This will include ensuring our targets on tree-planting and any other carbon sequestration methods are ambitious, evidence based, deliverable and within a balanced pathway to net zero.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 6

16. The Cabinet Secretary should ensure any alternative to the habitat management requirement will support the delivery of the Welsh Government's biodiversity commitments, in particular the 2030 target.

Response: Accept

17. I am committed to ensuring that the habitat management requirements of SFS contribute to tackling the nature emergency including the 30x30 target and the forthcoming domestic targets to be introduced by the Environmental Governance, Principles and Biodiversity Targets Bill. This important context is part of the considerations of the Ministerial Roundtable and other SFS Groups when considering the scheme design.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 7

18. The Cabinet Secretary should consider how best to ensure the habitat management requirement, or any alternative to the requirement, support the creation of the diverse range of habitats needed to restore nature.

Response: Accept

19. Through ongoing engagement with the Ministerial Roundtable and other groups, we will ensure the habitat management requirement supports the creation of a diverse range of habitats needed for nature recovery.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 8

20. The Cabinet Secretary should ensure all options for temporary habitat creation deliver value for money and the intended biodiversity outcomes.

Response: Accept

21. Through the next stages of the scheme design we will consider the options against the SLM objectives, including maintaining and enhancing resilient ecosystems which are vital for biodiversity.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 9

22. The Cabinet Secretary should ensure any changes to the Universal Actions to address barriers to access, or to simplify Actions, do not compromise the Scheme's environmental ambition.

Response: Accept

23. I am committed to achieving environmental outcomes through the SFS, given that the nature and climate emergency is the main risk to food production over the long term. The Scheme must also best contribute to the Sustainable Land Management Objectives which includes consideration of the environmental ambitions.

24. Restoring and protecting our natural ecosystems are the best defence we have in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 10

25. The Cabinet Secretary should ensure the Scheme fairly rewards farmers for maintaining SSSI land under the Universal Actions. He should commit to include SSSI land in the habitat maintenance component of the Universal Baseline Payment.

Response: Accept

26. I am committed to ensuring SFS fairly rewards farmers for maintaining SSSI land within the Universal Layer. I recently announced that following further advice and consideration by the Ministerial Roundtable, we have determined that SSSI areas are

able to be included in the relevant (habitat or trees) maintenance category of the Universal Basic Payment.

27. Including SSSIs in the Universal Baseline Payment will recognise farmers' efforts in managing these areas, for all our benefits. It will help ensure these sites are integrated within wider farm management, balancing food production and actions that improve the prospects of nature and freshwater habitats. It will also contribute to meeting the Sustainable Land Management objectives included in the Agriculture (Wales) Act and the 30x30 target.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 11

28. The Cabinet Secretary should provide an outline timetable for the remaining stages in the development of Optional and Collaborative Actions.

Response: Accept

29. It is our intention to work with the Ministerial Roundtable and Officials Group to bring forward a range of Optional and Collaborative Actions which reflect the priorities outlined by respondents to the consultation, as well as actions addressing priority government objectives. The intention is to have priority Optional and Collaborative Actions available for the start of the SFS Transition Period. These will often build from existing schemes and support which are available during the Preparatory Phase.
30. For example, I have recently launched the Integrated Natural Resources Scheme (INRS). This is a collaborative scheme enabling farmers, land managers and others to work together at a landscape, catchment, or Pan Wales level. The INRS will implement nature-based solutions at the appropriate scale, targeting action and interventions to enhance and sustainably manage our natural resources.
31. INRS is a transitional scheme designed to help participants develop new ways of working on their journey to SFS Collaborative Actions.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 12

32. The Cabinet Secretary should set out the criteria he will use to determine which Optional and Collaborative Actions to prioritise for introduction at the start of the Scheme.

Response: Accept

33. The framework for the Optional and Collaborative Actions will be developed with the involvement of the SFS Ministerial Roundtable and its subgroups over coming months. When considering this, the discussions will be informed by the evolving scheme design, to identify where Operational and Collaborative Actions enable farmers to progress beyond the Universal Actions, the consultation analysis and Welsh Government priorities such as policy and legal commitments.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 13

34. The Cabinet Secretary should ensure sufficient priority is afforded to Optional and Collaborative Actions that will deliver environmental outcomes. This includes Actions aimed at enhancing SSSI condition, recognising SSSIs are key to the delivery of the 30 by 30 target.

Response: Accept

35. I recognise the importance of the Optional and Collaborative Actions in delivering environmental outcomes and we will develop these with stakeholders including through the Ministerial Roundtable. The Collaborative Actions in particular will be key to supporting the landscape scale, partnership approaches that are needed to increase the scale and pace to deliver biodiversity outcomes, including the 30x30 target.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 14

36. The Cabinet Secretary should:

- report back to the Committee on the findings of work undertaken to explore the potential for biomass crops to be included as an Optional Action, and
- clarify whether biomass crops have been ruled out as an Optional Action, and if so, explain the reasons for this decision.

Response: Accept

37. The Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel is exploring the evidence to support alternative or additional Actions to sequester carbon, and this includes the potential to include biomass crops.

38. While it is too early to comment on the findings of the Panel, I can confirm that biomass crops have not been ruled out as a possible Optional Action.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 15

39. The Cabinet Secretary should explain how he will ensure the Scheme budget is allocated appropriately across the Universal, Optional and Collaborative layers to maximise the delivery of environmental outcomes.

Response: Accept

40. The payment methodology, which will include the budget management, will be developed with stakeholders including through the Ministerial Roundtable. The intention is to ensure the Universal Baseline Payment provides a level of income which supports the resilience of farm businesses in Wales helping to maintain the fabric of Welsh agriculture and our rural communities. It will also supplement the income for those farms who wish to progress further with economic, environmental and social enhancements.

41. The balance and importance of these actions may change over time, which will need to be reflected in the budget management within the Scheme. It is not possible to determine this balance until the Scheme Design has been determined.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 16

42. The Cabinet Secretary should commit to ensuring that 'social value' is incorporated in the payment methodology at the start of the Scheme.

Response: Accept

43. I am committed to ensuring that social value is incorporated in the payment methodology for the Scheme.

44. My officials are currently exploring the evidence that will underpin proposals on how we incorporate social value into the payment methodology. We will share our thinking as it develops with the Ministerial Roundtable to help shape the final proposals.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 17

45. The Welsh Government should:

- set out its current thinking on a 'Payment for Results' approach, and

- commit to considering the incorporation of 'Payments for Results' as part of a future review of the Scheme.

Response: Accept

46. We will consider 'Payments by Results' mechanisms as possible innovative delivery mechanism for Optional and Collaborative Actions where this might be appropriate and offer value for money.

47. Some of the principles of a 'Payment by Results' approach are intended to be included in the Universal Actions. For example, Universal Action 7 Habitat Maintenance includes a description of 'Measurable Outcomes' the farmer would need to deliver. Based on stakeholder feedback, this approach is designed to be more flexible than previous agri-environment schemes which included rigid stocking numbers. This approach allows the farmers to make more locally appropriate decisions based on the season and ground conditions.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 18

48. The Cabinet Secretary should clarify the extent of NRW's role in supporting the delivery of the Scheme and provide details of any associated cost assessment. If a cost assessment has yet to be undertaken, the Cabinet Secretary should commit to a timeframe for completion of this work and report back to the Committee on the outcome.

Response: Accept

49. Natural Resources Wales continue to be involved in SFS design process and will be involved in its delivery, for example in providing advice and support in the management of designated sites. As the stakeholder engagement to finalise Scheme design is ongoing, I cannot comment at this stage on the final nature and extent of NRW involvement or the costs associated with it. This will form part of the business case which will be presented to Welsh Ministers next year.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 19

50. The Cabinet Secretary should commit to ensuring NRW is adequately resourced to undertake any additional activities and/or meet any increase in service demand arising from the Scheme.

Response: Accept

51. Natural Resource Wales is proposing a reshaping of the organisation so that it can operate effectively within its available budget, including any roles with SFS, which has been under pressure like many parts of the public service.
52. Resource availability, including within NRW is continuously considered as we continue to finalise the policy design and operational delivery of the SFS.

Financial Implications: None

Annex 1: Membership of the Ministerial Roundtable, Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel and Official's Groups.

Partner	Ministerial Roundtable	Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel	Officials Working Group
Afonydd Cymru			✓
Agriculture Horticulture Development Board	✓		✓
Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group	✓		✓
British Meat Processors Association	✓		
British Veterinary Association (Cymru)	✓		
Central Association of Agricultural Valuers			✓
Country and Land Business Association	✓	✓	✓
Confor	✓	✓	✓
DPJ Foundation	✓		
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water			✓
Farmers Union of Wales	✓	✓	✓

Farm Wildlife and Advisory Group Cymru			✓
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust			✓
Hybu Cig Cymru	✓	✓	✓
Independent farmer representative	✓	✓	
Independent veterinary representative			✓
National Farmers Union Cymru	✓	✓	✓
National Sheep Association			✓
National Trust			✓
Natural Resources Wales	✓	✓	✓
Nature Friendly Farming Network	✓	✓	✓
Royal Society Protection of Birds			✓
Soil Association	✓*	✓*	✓
Sustainable Food Trust			✓
Tirweddau Cymru			✓
Tenant Farmer Association	✓		✓
Wales Environment Link			✓

Welsh Lamb and Beef Promotion	✓		✓
Welsh Language Commissioner			✓
Welsh Local Government Association			✓
Wildlife Trusts Wales	✓*		✓
Woodland Trust	✓*		✓
World Wild Fund for Nature			✓
Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs	✓		✓
Wales Horticulture Alliance Group			✓

*Also representing Wales Environment Link (WEL).

Agenda Item 7

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Agenda Item 8

By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

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