

Agenda – Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel
and video Conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 3 October 2024

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Marc Wyn Jones

Committee Clerk

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Hybrid

Private pre-meeting (09.15–09.30)

Public meeting (09.30–12.20)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions, and declarations of interest

(09.30)

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

(09.30–10.30)

(Pages 1 – 45)

Steve Wilson, Managing Director for Wastewater Services – Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

Rhys Owen, Head of Conservation, Woodland and Agriculture – Eryri National Park Authority, Tirweddau Cymru/Landscapes Wales

Gwyn Teague, Team Manager Natural Environment – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Rebecca Sharp, Countryside and Wildlife Team Leader – Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Attached Documents:

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



by 2030

Paper – Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

Paper – Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales

Paper – Welsh Local Government Association

Break (10.30–10.40)

3 Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030 – evidence session with Natural Resources Wales

(10.40–11.40)

(Pages 46 – 55)

Ceri Davies, Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting – Natural Resources Wales

Ruth Jenkins, Head of Natural Resource Management Policy – Natural Resources Wales

Huwel Manley, Head of Operations – Natural Resources Wales

Attached Documents:

Paper – Natural Resources Wales

Break (11.40–11.50)

4 Scrutiny of Natural Resources on topical issues

(11.50–12.20)

(Pages 56 – 69)

Sian Williams, Head of Operations – Natural Resources Wales

Nadia De Longhi, Head of Regulation & Permitting – Natural Resources Wales

Attached Documents:

Research brief – Scrutiny of Natural Resources on topical issues

Paper – Natural Resources Wales

5 Papers to note (12.20)

5.1 The UK/European Forest Institute: Host Country Agreement

(Pages 70 – 73)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs in relation to the UK/European Forest Institute: Host Country Agreement

Response from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair in relation to the UK/European Forest Institute: Host Country Agreement

5.2 Scrutiny of Natural Resources Wales

(Pages 74 – 82)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee to the Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales in relation to the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve

Response from the Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales to the Chair of the Petitions Committee in relation to the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve

Letter from CILIP Cymru Wales to the Welsh Government in relation to Natural Resources Wales Library and Information Services

Letter from the Clerk of the Petitions Committee to the Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales in relation to the closure the Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres

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

(Pages 83 – 85)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee and from the Chair of the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee to the Llywydd, and Chair of the Business Committee in relation

to the joint debate on Committee reports regarding the Sustainable Farming Scheme and Farming Connect

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

(Pages 86 – 87)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and 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

5.5 P-06-1395 Halt significant new development on the Gwent Levels SSSIs

(Page 88)

[Letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee to the Chair in relation to Petition P-06-1395 Halt significant new development on the Gwent Levels SSSIs](#)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Chair to the Chair of the Petitions Committee in relation to Petition P-06-1395 Halt significant new development on the Gwent Levels SSSIs

5.6 Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

(Page 89)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee in relation to the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

5.7 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25

(Pages 90 – 112)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales to recommendation 16 from the Committee's report: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25

Response from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales to recommendations 9 and 13 from the Committee's report: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024–25

Response from the Welsh Government to the Cross Party Group on the Active Travel Act's Review of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

Response from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to recommendation 21 from the Committee's report: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024–25

5.8 Restoration of opencast mining sites

(Pages 113 – 130)

Attached Documents:

Response from the leader of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to the Committee's report: Restoration of opencast mining sites

Response from the Welsh Government to the Committee's report: Restoration of opencast mining sites

5.9 Legislative Consent: Water (Special Measures) Bill

(Pages 131 – 132)

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

5.10 General scrutiny of the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

(Pages 133 – 143)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair following the 26 June 2024 Ministerial Scrutiny session

5.11 Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024

(Page 144)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning to the Chair in relation to the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024

- 6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) and (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting**
(12.20)

Private meeting (12.20–13.00)

- 7 Consideration of evidence received under items 2 and 3**
- 8 Consideration of evidence received under item 4**
- 9 Consideration of draft letter to the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport and North Wales in relation to transport**
(Pages 145 – 149)

Attached Documents:

Draft letter to the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport and North Wales in relation to transport

- 10 Consideration of the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill**
(Pages 150 – 161)

Attached Documents:

Legal note on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Passenger Railway

Services (Public Ownership) Bill

Policy Note – Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill

11 Consideration of the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Great British Energy Bill

(Pages 162 – 168)

Attached Documents:

Legal note on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Great British Energy Bill

Document is Restricted

HRLN 39 - Evidence from: Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

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

Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair, Climate Change, Environment & Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament
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By email: seneddclimate@senedd.wales

29th August 2024

Annwyl Llyr,

Thank you for the invitation to give evidence to the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee on halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030. In advance of our oral evidence, we provide the following written submission and would be happy to address any further points Members may wish to raise at the evidence-gathering session on 3rd October 2024.

We face a biodiversity crisis in Wales, where our shared environment is under threat from habitat loss, fragmentation and over-exploitation. We support the Nature Emergency declared by the Senedd in 2021 and are committed to playing our part in the Welsh Government's Nature Recovery Action Plan to increase the health and resilience of the ecosystems on which we all depend.

As the largest water company in Wales, we are dependent on a healthy environment in order to sustain the services we provide to our customers and have a key role to play in safeguarding it. We therefore remain fully committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity right across our operating area and to contributing meaningfully to the long-term health and resilience of Welsh eco-systems – whether through protecting habitats, continued collaborative efforts, clear action plans, and practical conservation measures.

Our commitment to protecting and enhancing biodiversity is evidenced by our clear vision to 2050 which puts the environment at the heart of everything we do. Our [Biodiversity Strategy](#) sets out our ambitions, objectives, and action plans to maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecological resilience across our operational assets and landholdings, within the fulfilment of our core duties. Our approach is to support the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to address the biodiversity crisis we face in a way that is aligned with delivery of our functions. Our strategic objectives focus on the following areas:

1. Restore habitats and look after the protected sites in our ownership
2. Work in partnership with our regulators and stakeholders and promote research opportunities
3. Improve the management of invasive non-native species (INNS)
4. Develop and engage our colleagues as ambassadors and work better to understand our customers' expectations
5. Maintain and enhance biodiversity at our operational assets and landholdings

We are required under the Environment (Wales) Act to prepare and publish a report every three years to demonstrate that we have achieved our biodiversity duty. We have an enhanced duty whereby Section 6 requires public authorities (including water companies) to 'seek to' maintain and enhance biodiversity rather than just 'have regard' to its conservation. To meet that objective, we need to be proactive in understanding the potential impacts of our operations so that we can prepare and mitigate accordingly.

Our most recent report is entitled '[Doing the Right Thing for Nature 2022](#)' which sets out progress against the plans contained in the original 2020 '[Making Time for Nature](#)' plan. Some of our key activities to date include:

- **Investing to safeguard the environment:** We are investing significantly in our infrastructure and tailoring schemes to reduce phosphorous, which is the main driver of ecological failure, in our Special Area of Conservation rivers. Some examples include:
 - investing more than £9 million into helping bring four Welsh rivers into good condition — the Teifi, Cleddau, Tywi and Usk with an estimated 500 kilometres of river improved.
 - Investing an additional £60m specifically to reduce phosphorus in the five failing Special Area of Conservation (SAC) rivers in our operating area. Delivering this comprehensive programme of upgrades to our treatment works will remove 90% of our fair share of phosphorous by 2030.
 - investing over £4.5 million to conserve quaking bogs. Areas targeted will include Crymlyn Bog on the outskirts of Swansea as well as St David's in Pembrokeshire and on the Llŷn Peninsula. Not only will this project restore the peat land but also help preserve very rare species — including Britain's largest spider, the great fen raft spider at Crymlyn and the marsh fritillary butterfly in Pembrokeshire and Gwynedd.
- **Nature-based solutions:** these solutions offer one way of delivering wider benefits of investment, and providing 'best value' taking into account factors such as community wellbeing, greenhouse gas emissions, and biodiversity. We welcome the importance placed on nature-based solutions in the Welsh Government's SPS and in Ofwat's PR24 Final Methodology. We want to scale up the use of nature-based solutions over the next AMP periods. The environmental investment programme that is planned will have a far bigger beneficial impact for Wales if delivered primarily through nature-based solutions rather than through traditional 'grey' or 'concrete' solutions. We were early adopters of nature-based solutions in the water industry, notably in the case of the RainScape approach which was designed to slow down and mitigate the flows of storm water into the sewers in the Llanelli area, that were then overflowing into the Loughour Estuary.
- **Environment Fund:** We launched an Environment Fund that offers financial assistance to community and third-sector projects focused on enhancing biodiversity. The fund has had considerable success, having invested over £3m to date on a wide variety of projects to benefit species or habitats that are protected for nature conservation.

- **Innovative Projects:** We are committed to delivering innovative schemes like using "Agri Sound" which monitors the presence of pollinators (bees, butterflies, etc.) and captures data to enhance pollinator activity, as well as our wetland developments that naturally treat water while creating habitats for wildlife.

Almost all our biodiversity work over the last 10 years has been in partnership with a public body such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW), or an environmental trust like RSPB. We will build on these partnerships to progress improvements to both aquatic and terrestrial environments in the fulfilment of our functions as evidenced by the LIFE Dee River project. This is a £6.8m project funded through multiple stakeholders, including Welsh Water, to transform the River Dee and its catchment by restoring the river and its surroundings back to their natural state. The Dee is the largest river in North Wales and is a highly regulated river as well as being designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The project which started in 2019 and is due to complete in December 2024 will look to remove the constraints to fish migration and improve wider ecological connectivity, restore or improve physical features along river banks, improve agricultural and forestry land management practices to reduce the input of nutrients and sediment entering the SAC, as well as establish and build long-term positive relationships with key stakeholders during and beyond the life of the project. The project will also initiate conservation management for the critically-endangered freshwater pearl mussel. Key progress made as part of this project includes:

- 15,000 trees planted alongside the river
- 730 metres of natural bank stabilisation
- 4,250 tonnes of gravel introduced into the river
- 36 kilometres of fencing erected to create riverside corridors
- 1,000 tonnes of boulders reintroduced into the river
- 7 barriers removed or adapted to help fish migration

As a responsible business operating on behalf of the people of Wales, we continue to reduce our environmental footprint, whether in relation to nutrients in rivers, carbon emissions, or the impact on biodiversity of our capital programmes. We are seeking wherever possible to take a joined-up approach and work with partners and stakeholders to drive solutions where we use all available resources together most effectively for environmental and biodiversity benefit.

The effectiveness of current policies / funds / statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

The effectiveness of current policies, funds, and statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030 can sometimes be impacted by differing approaches being adopted amongst regulators. For instance, differences between peatland management and forestry practices illustrate

how the lack of alignment can hamper conservation efforts. A consistent and detailed set of action plans are crucial to guide all stakeholders in a unified direction, ensuring that each party understands and follows a common strategy to achieve shared environmental goals.

A further example highlighting the need for a consistent approach to policy relates to the divergence between UK Government and Welsh Government policy in tackling river water quality. In Wales, in line with Welsh Government policy, the focus is on tackling storm overflows causing environmental harm first, as opposed to reducing spill frequency, as in England. This allows us to go further and faster, with the resources we have, to improve river and coastal water quality in Wales. Tackling spill frequency alone is unlikely to achieve this as it could mean focusing on storm overflows that operate frequently but aren't necessarily causing harm to the environment. This is because not all discharges equate to pollution incidents or cause harm, as discharges should contain mostly rainwater, meaning any sewage contained is highly diluted.

We support the approach taken by Welsh Government and NRW to develop a comprehensive plan to address all the constituent elements of this key environmental issue, and we will contribute appropriately to the agreed approach.

Progress towards Implementing the Biodiversity Deep Dive Recommendations

As a key stakeholder committed to environmental protection, we wish to highlight some areas where we believe further clarity and collaborative working could ensure successful outcomes following the Biodiversity Deep Dive Recommendations.

We would welcome more additional advice following the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations. It is essential in this shared challenge for stakeholders like Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water to have a comprehensive understanding of the goals, expectations and clear plan in order to align our efforts more effectively and work cohesively towards common goals. A workshop for stakeholders to enable the sharing of best practice, encourage collaborative opportunities, and discussions on how to practically implement the outcomes of the Biodiversity Deep Dive would help embed a 'Team Wales' approach.

We remain committed to contributing to Wales's biodiversity goals through the PR24 forum. However, with greater collaboration, we believe significantly more progress can be made towards protecting and enhancing the natural environment in Wales and lead to better environmental outcomes.

Current Arrangements for Monitoring Biodiversity

Effective and consistent biodiversity monitoring to ensure the protection and enhancement of our natural ecosystems is vital. Looking ahead, as part of our Business Plan for 2025-2030, we have plans to further monitor biodiversity. We intend to use a biodiversity metric that will enable us to monitor certain sites effectively. However, we believe that a broader, overarching assessment framework is needed—one that encompasses all relevant stakeholders and allows for meaningful comparisons across different sites and regions. This would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of

biodiversity trends and support more coordinated conservation efforts of Wales's natural environment.

We also see potential in leveraging new technology and ideas to help collect data more effectively and enhance our biodiversity monitoring capabilities. Integrating this could improve the accuracy and reliability of our assessments, leading to better-informed decisions and more effective conservation strategies.

New Approaches Needed to Halt and Reverse the Loss of Nature by 2030

We are committed to playing our part to halting and reversing the loss of nature. However, there are several key areas that must be considered:

Firstly, a cohesive 'Team Wales' approach is crucial for maximizing the impact of conservation efforts. To facilitate this, there is a need for a dedicated role or function specifically designed to bring together various stakeholders, including businesses, government bodies, and community groups. This role should focus on fostering collaboration, identifying synergies, and coordinating joint efforts to achieve shared environmental goals.

Awareness and education are fundamental components of any effective strategy. It is important that educational initiatives begin at home and involve all sectors. At Welsh Water, we are proud of our education offer that has biodiversity and climate change at its heart. Our programme has reached 780,000 pupils since the programme began in 1998.

Support for accelerating the use of nature-based solutions (NBS) is vital as a new approach needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature. Integrating NBS into infrastructure projects as standard can enhance our environmental resilience and ensure that these approaches become a regular part of our development practices.

While 2030 is a crucial milestone in the fight against environmental degradation, many conservation objectives will require more time to achieve, sustainable, impactful efforts. Awareness of different funding cycles among companies and organisations can facilitate better coordination and resource allocation. Aligning funding mechanisms and schedules will help bring stakeholders together and support more effective implementation of biodiversity initiatives.

Summary

We would welcome a visit by the Committee to one of our latest Nature-Based Solution (NBS) in New Inn, near Pontypool, that treats discharges from a SO before releasing it to the Afon Lwyd. The £13m investment will achieve a 'No Impact' outcome and the solution consists of storm discharges first passing through a new mechanical screen after which flows gravitate first through a series of aerated reed beds and then through constructed wetlands to provide natural treatment before releasing to the river. This will deliver a wetland habitat for aquatic life, enhanced biodiversity, new woodland areas and improved public amenity through footpaths and natural play spaces.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water supports a collaborative, well-resourced, and clearly structured approach to halting and reversing nature loss. We urge the adoption of a 'Team Wales' approach, enhanced educational efforts, realistic action plans, integration of nature-based solutions, practical targets, and better alignment of funding cycles to achieve these important objectives.

Thank you for giving this matter your consideration. We hope that this has been helpful, and we look forward to the opportunity to discuss this further in the oral evidence session in October.

Yours sincerely



Steve Wilson
Managing Director, Wastewater Services
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

HRLN 07 - Evidence from: Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales

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).

The purposes of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs, now known as National Landscapes) are set out in legislation.

National Landscapes and National Parks:

Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of their areas.

In addition:

National Parks are required to promote opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of their special qualities.

National Landscapes are encouraged to meet the demand for recreation, provided it is consistent with the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

The existing duties on public bodies from s62 of the Environment Act 1995 and s85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to 'have regard to' the purposes of DLs, together with provisions for all public bodies to have a legal requirement to apply the five ways of working in taking forward their wellbeing objectives, provides further impetus for them to work collaboratively at a strategic national scale. This will help drive the systemic change required to address key challenges at a national strategic level and provide context for individual Designated Landscapes management plans.

The duty of regard has been recently strengthened in England with a requirement to be more proactive, We suggest that there is value in monitoring the impact of

this change with a view to assessing the need for legislative change in the next Senedd term.

The Designated Landscapes (DL) management planning process provides a key tool to ensure that public bodies are meeting their duty to 'have regard', and also provides an integrating framework to deliver across the range of recommendations set out in the Biodiversity deep dive action plan.

The Bridges to the Future section of NRW SoNaRR report proposes a transformational approach for how Wales can bridge the gap between where it is now and where it needs to be to achieve a sustainable future. Designated Landscapes are well placed to take this approach forward.

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).

In response to Recommendation 3 of the Biodiversity Deep Dive: Unlock the potential of designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) to deliver more for nature and 30 by 30, a Designated Landscapes Working Group has been formed.

The principal purpose of the group is to take forward and implement the action plan developed by the Designated Landscapes, NRW and Welsh Government. The Designated Landscapes Working Group reports to the Core Biodiversity Deep Dive Group.

The Deep Dive also outlined the need to take immediate action to support the National Parks and National Landscapes to develop prioritised action plans for nature restoration embedding these in strategic planning.

This group also has the remit to recommend any additional strands of work required to accelerate delivery.

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

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

The extensive nature of landscape designation provides a mechanism to secure healthy, resilient and productive ecosystems that are managed sustainably and contribute to connectivity between habitats.

A strategic, analytical, and systematic approach to nature recovery across the Designated Landscapes is as key to effective management as the efficacy of activity at the local level.

Capacity for delivery varies across Wales, and this has a significant bearing on the ability of Designated Landscapes teams to engage and co-develop strategic maps, thus a series of maps that can be either used prescriptively, or can be added to with local knowledge and resources are needed.

Delivery of Nature Recovery actions is proposed as being focused toward areas of greatest need and areas of greatest potential in the short to medium term. The mapping work to date has established an important baseline from which to build on, but ongoing investment in the strategic co-ordination of this work for all Designated Landscapes is needed in the immediate to medium term.

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).

The Biodiversity Deep Dive DL group has recommended setting up a National Relevant Authorities Forum supported by an update of the current s62/s85 guidance in order to coordinate a more strategic response to exercising the duty to have regard.

The group has emphasised the importance of supporting farmers and land managers to deliver for nature and climate. The new Sustainable Farming Scheme for Wales provides an opportunity for a farming scheme to integrate the purposes of DLs with incentives for positive farming practices, reflecting the importance and value of investing in their special qualities.

The Biodiversity Deep Dive DL group (the group) has proposed workstreams for further action:

Defining a role for Designated Landscapes in the Sustainable Farming Scheme
Recognising the fundamental importance of supporting farmers and land managers deliver for nature and the climate, Designated Landscapes intend to define their role in SFS and work to optimise their input. This will involve a collaborative bid to the Integrated Natural Resources Scheme.

Realigning National Park and AONB Management Plans with the nature and

climate emergency

In response to emerging Management Plan guidance, the group intends to look at how the Management Planning process can better reflect the nature and climate emergencies, how State of the Landscape reports can better inform objective setting, and how best to define and promote effective management, robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms

Nature Mapping

The group intends to continue working closely with NRW to explore how best to roll out nature mapping work across all Designated Landscapes. Work will include further consideration of datasets, SSSI condition mapping, targeting and prioritisation.

Building Collaboration

Building on the Team Wales approach, the group will explore how to promote Designated Landscapes as 'Landscapes for Everyone', to include strategic and tactical proactive communications around nature and climate to support positive behavioural change. Work will include training and learning in climate and nature literacy and a programme of work to raise awareness with PSBs and other strategic bodies

Resourcing action

Work will include exploring Green Finance opportunities and gearing up to embed this in resource streams. Providing evidence and argument to NRW and Welsh Government to ensure Designated Landscapes bodies are funded adequately, sustainably and flexibly to deliver nature recovery

Improving processes

Work will continue with NRW to consider issues around consenting and permitting, and Welsh Government around updating national planning policy guidance and permitted development.

Working fairly

The group will consider how the 'Just Nature Transition' concept might be more formally incorporated into the wider Just Transition to net zero decarbonisation framework. Additionally, the group will explore how the forthcoming Anti-racist Wales Action Plan for the environment, climate change and rural affairs and other wider assessments, actions or reporting requirements are better integrated and simplified.

Considering legislation

The group will consider the need for legislation in the next Senedd to reform the statutory purposes, duties and governance arrangements for Designated Landscape bodies to equip them better to drive nature's recovery

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).

To meet climate and nature emergency targets we are dependent on behavioural change as well as legislation.

Innovation is necessary, but will only be achieved by involving a diverse range of people from all backgrounds in our work.

Developing a connection to nature is an important key to driving pro-environmental behaviour. Well-designed access opportunities have the potential to increase nature connectedness, improve mental wellbeing, and drive pro-environmental behaviour.

Designated Landscapes can play a key role in inspiring and driving forward a sense of nature connection and stewardship through raising awareness of landscapes and nature, the promotion of responsible access and purposeful adventure, and bringing communities together over their shared values. For instance, new educational resources linked to the new Curriculum for Wales are being developed as part of a collaborative project between all eight Designated Landscapes. The accessible resources will be centred around nature connection: promoting learning, understanding, appreciation and stewardship of designated landscapes and the wider environment.

Increased promotion of the Countryside Code, building on the new Countryside Code Strategy and Action Plan for Wales, and Welsh Government's Access Reform Programme have important roles to play in creating a culture of respect, cooperation, and connection with Wales's natural environment and landscapes, fostering a sense of stewardship and pro-conservation behaviours - driving nature connection at scale.

HRLN 17 - Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

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).

1 While current policies and statutory duties form a solid foundation for nature recovery, several challenges and gaps remain in addressing the scale of the biodiversity crisis. Policies could be strengthened and more integrated, for example several policy areas are taking forward Programme for Government (PfG) commitments, but this is done in silos which can make it difficult at a local level to integrate activities.

2 Approaches to tackling Climate Change and Biodiversity need to be better integrated into everything we do, and we need to ensure that nature recovery is built into proposals at an early stage. We are working with Ambition North Wales to develop guidance on business case development which will integrate decarbonisation and biodiversity opportunities at the early stage of projects. We hope this can alleviate some of the issues in this area.

3 Although the current framework seems adequate, the evidence for the effectiveness of nature interventions can only arise from long-term monitoring, for example the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) published by Natural Resources Wales. There is also a real challenge in terms of quantifying this effectiveness, causing issues in terms of reporting but also in evidencing the financial justification for interventions.

4 Implementation is constrained by resources for delivery and continued loss of expertise within local government. Whilst we support the case for ambitious approaches to be taken to tackle the nature emergency, the introduction of new duties on councils must be matched by a medium to long-term funding programme.

5 We accept that reporting and targets are key to measuring the success of interventions and policies. However, we would not support new targets or reporting being 'forced' on councils due to the difficulty in accurately quantifying these activities. There is currently a real challenge for local government to prioritise this area of work in the face of other pressures. Councils fully endorse the principle of halting biodiversity loss, which is highlighted by most councils declaring a nature emergency. However, the current financial climate makes it challenging to deliver all the activities councils would like to undertake when these are competing for resources against key services or infrastructure projects (whilst recognising that informed decisions on the approaches taken in delivering those services and infrastructure projects can themselves contribute to our biodiversity goals). Targets could potentially penalise councils for not doing enough when the reality is they are faced with multiple, simultaneous, and sometimes conflicting challenges.

6 Local authorities play key roles in transitioning to zero carbon, scrutinising development, managing significant woodland estates, facilitating Invasive NonNative Species (INNS) programmes, and advancing nature recovery programmes through a range of policies and activities. These activities however do not lend themselves to short term funding programmes but require active long-term commitments. As such, we feel that the level of funding is insufficient to enable the scale of delivery needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature and long-term commitments are needed to ensure management and maintenance of interventions beyond creation and initial installation. More could be done, working with WG, to ensure integration of nature recovery best practice across all strategic areas along with climate change, both nationally and locally.

7 A more specific comment is around the need for tighter control within planning policy as this can be weak and easily circumvented by an industry which may not embrace the national direction if it will have an impact on profits.

Further, the forthcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme in 2026 could have an effective role to play in wider nature recovery. However, programmes such as tree planting require more robust evidence as to where effective opportunities exist and support for management of current woodlands.

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).

8 We are still waiting for detail from Welsh Government on the implications of the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations and are therefore not able to provide in-depth feedback.

However, it is important to note that funding opportunities and collaboration through Local Nature Partnerships has been positive, enabling strong progress in a range of areas. Furthermore, there may be an opportunity to strengthen planning policy in PPW 12 to ensure a holistic approach relating to Nature Recovery (step wise approach to deliver net benefit for biodiversity). Green infrastructure and Trees have been a positive outcome.

As with some other WG reviews, for example the post-implementation review of the sustainable drainage legislation, progress with the delivery of some of the recommendations has been slow. There is therefore a need to generate national ownership of these reviews/recommendations (with the opportunity for input from local government and other partners where appropriate) without adding more burden on councils and for WG to resource delivery of these reviews/recommendations adequately.

9 Considering Recommendation 5, capacity building, behaviour change, awareness raising, and skills development, there is clearly another big gap here which is endemic across many sectors in Wales. We would like to see more progress and integration with WG's Skills Action Plan which supports its net zero plan.

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

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

10 There is real difficulty in monitoring biodiversity as it may take several years for results to be seen. Furthermore, biodiversity is often monitored in a fragmented manner by different stakeholders making it difficult to understand large scale implications of activities or indeed drive larger scale initiatives. There are potential opportunities to better use existing avenues to monitor biodiversity, for example through the SAB or planning process but careful considerations around skills and capacity would need to be given.

11 It is worth noting that we are already seeing a lack of capacity to monitor biodiversity indicators such as UK National Biodiversity Indicators. Although proxy indicators can be useful, such as the area of land designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), the implementation of biodiversity policies in the Local Development Plan (LDP), and the numbers of volunteers

engaged in nature conservation activities, they have limitations and do not support the long-term monitoring of individual species and habitats. It would require additional resources for local authorities to be able to deliver effectively.

12. We note the proposed biodiversity targets in the White Paper on Environmental principles, governance and biodiversity targets and agree this could help formalise monitoring of biodiversity alongside section 6 reports. However, these targets would need to be developed in partnership with local government to ensure they are deliverable and duly consider resource implications.

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).

12 Agricultural land constitutes 88% of Wales' land area and a new approach to the impact of agriculture upon climate change, biodiversity, habitat management and water quality is **needed through Welsh Government's 'Sustainable Farming Scheme'**, which has been postponed until 2026. Whilst we are acutely aware of potential financial impacts from the SFS on landowners, land owned by the public and third sector is insufficient to reverse the loss of nature and can only offer limited benefits due to its spatial fragmentation.

We believe further work is needed in light of the Welsh *Government's 'Securing a Sustainable Future'* White Paper: Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity targets for a Greener Wales' before we can be confident, we have the right framework to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

13 In the same vein as previous responses, there needs to be a long-term commitment with funding (10 years+), biodiversity needs to have a financial value (ecosystem services), and nature-based solutions need to be intrinsically considered.

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).

14 Audit Wales is undertaking a national study on the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. We are

waiting for this to be published (expected autumn 2024) and have submitted similar evidence to inform their report.

WLGA CONSULTATION RESPONSE on ‘*Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030*’, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee, Welsh Parliament

22nd August 2024

INTRODUCTION

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities and three fire and rescue authorities are associate members.
2. The WLGA is a politically led cross-party organisation, with the leaders from all local authorities determining policy through the Executive Board and the wider WLGA Council. The WLGA also appoints senior members as Spokespersons and Deputy Spokespersons to provide a national lead on policy matters on behalf of local government.
3. The WLGA works closely with and is often advised by professional advisors and professional associations from local government, however, the WLGA is the representative body for local government and provides the collective, political voice of local government in Wales.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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HRLN 31 - Evidence from: Natural Resources Wales

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

Written Evidence: 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.

Nature must be integral to all decision making. Halting and reversing nature loss is already set out in the Welsh legal framework including the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WbFG Act), the Environment (Wales) Act (EWA) and the Planning (Wales) Act. Wales' Natural Resources Policy and Nature Recovery Action Plan, Future Wales, Planning Policy Wales and the Welsh National Marine Plan also have aims, objectives and policies that support biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems. However, the [State of Natural Resources Report \(SoNaRR\) 2020](#) and the [State of Nature Report 2023](#), both clearly show biodiversity loss is continuing. To move Wales into nature recovery, we must be bold and proactive in the implementation of existing legislation and policy.

The Environment (Wales) Act, in putting the UN Ecosystems Approach into law, provides a framework to help co-ordinate both policy and delivery. The Act introduced a 5 yearly sustainability assessment for Wales, a policy response which applies across the Welsh Cabinet and implementation plans; namely SoNaRR, the NRP & Area Statements. There is much unused potential in the powers and duties under the Act. SoNaRR has the potential to engage civil society in the run up to a Welsh general election, as well as to feed information into the Town & Country Planning system. The Natural Resources Policy can set out a refreshed environment policy which will apply across the Welsh Cabinet. Area Statements can co-ordinate the public sector to help deliver the NRP, using section 11 and 12 powers as well as feeding into the Planning system.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) are primary pieces of legislation for protecting both habitats and species. These can be effective in helping to protect priority habitats and species, particularly when supported by the spatial planning system and respective enforcement. The Planning Act provides a useful foundation to incorporate ecosystem resilience into the planning system, however the effectiveness of the current net biodiversity benefit approach is still in its infancy and its impact is unclear.

More recent statutory mechanisms and tools are proving helpful in embedding nature more widely into decision-making in Wales, although resources to support implementation are challenging. Under Section 6 of the EWA public authorities – including NRW - are required to consider nature through their functions. As a result of the WbFG Act, foundational discussions are underway between Public Service Body partners about mainstreaming biodiversity, with nature and climate now featuring highly in most recent PSB Wellbeing Plans. However, public bodies alone are not able to address the causes of loss of nature. Other mechanisms, such as Area Statements, can have an important role in supporting

wider partnership working in place, for example in developing resilient ecological networks throughout Wales.

The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is being transposed into Welsh policy and legislation to deliver Wales' commitments and actions as part of the UK's new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (UK NBSAP). In Wales we take collaborative approaches such as through the Ministerial Biodiversity Deep Dive Recommendations, putting protected sites at the centre of resilient ecosystems and adjusting our ways of working. Accordingly, and reflecting the existing and future policy and legislative direction, nature restoration is at the heart of the NRW [corporate plan](#) to ensure nature and society thrive together based on a shared commitment of sustainable use that also provides for essential needs, such as food, water and energy.

In our unique role as Wales' statutory nature conservation body (SNCB) we know access to relevant evidence and expertise is critical to support robust decision making, including financial decisions, to deliver throughout our many functions and that often, data and information becomes outdated, incomplete or is rendered poor quality. Being financially flexible allows us to target evidence bases required for live projects and programmes and we seek collaborative opportunities with others within and outside Wales to enable innovative and joined-up evidence and funding to inform better decision making.

From a regulatory perspective, the wide spectrum of tools available, applied according to the Regulators Code and our Regulatory Principles, is reported in our annual regulatory report ([Natural Resources Wales / Annual Regulation Report 2022](#)). Where enforcement action results in fines, we advocate those funds are reinvested in nature recovery activities.

The scale of the nature emergency and addressing the challenges around halting biodiversity loss and securing recovery will also necessitate transformational changes. This includes generating increased financial resources, securing governance that incorporates nature into institutional decision-making, using scientific advancements and robust repeatable data and evidence streams, and public education and engagement to support societal and behavioural changes needed to address the nature emergency. Collaboration between governments, public authorities, institutions, NGOs, businesses, and individuals to achieve this is essential.

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

The Biodiversity Deep Dive Recommendations and actions are a mixture of new actions to be taken immediately, expansion and acceleration of existing schemes, and longer-term actions that deliver throughout the Senedd term and beyond. These ambitious and

integrated actions are required to put nature on the path to recovery; delivering the actions requires a collective response, momentum, resources and long-term commitment by all.

NRW was heavily engaged in the development of the Recommendations and is a key organisation in their delivery. As they move into implementation we continue to input to the Biodiversity Deep Dive Core Group with Ceri Davies, Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting chairing the Monitoring and Evidence Expert Group. Our specialists are engaged in the Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and Nature Recovery Exemplar Areas (NREAs) Expert Group, Designated Landscapes Expert Group, and the Coast and Seas Partnership Cymru (CaSP). Through our engagement in these groups we have been driving activities at pace with initial findings, reports and next steps prepared. The shift into implementation has seen tangible progress being made on a number of immediate actions. We contribute progress updates to the bi-annual report (May 2023) and the recent Ministerial written statement (July 2024).

In terms of specific recommendation delivery NRW has for example, delivered a Nature Networks map, publishing terrestrial and marine Priority Ecological Networks (PENs). This evidence is supporting prioritisation of on the ground action for ecosystem resilience and we will continue to refine these maps to support further targeted action both by ourselves and partners. Alongside this we are working closely with Welsh Government on its Nature Networks Programme (NNP), which continues to expand to improve the condition and connectivity of protected sites both through direct action within NRW and through a wider NLHF administered grant programme. We are scoping the review of the sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) series to inform an accelerated notification programme and the National Peatland Action Programme (NPAP) delivery capacity is being increased to a target of 45,000 ha of peatland restored by 2050. NRW has produced refreshed guidance for designated landscape authorities on the production of their management plans which now strengthens advice for embedding nature recovery action at a landscape scale. Although further progress is dependent on continued efforts and collaboration to achieve the 30 by 30 target, which is reliant on the ability of partners to contribute, in the absence of and dedicated resources such as core funding.

However, the delivery of the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations is not, and should not, be presumed to be, solely for Welsh Government and NRW to deliver alone. A collaborative Team Wales approach working at pace is critical to achieving the scale and ambition needed to support meaningful delivery of 30 by 30 target. CaSP Cymru is driving forwards a number enabling / transformative areas of work to support positive outcomes for our seas in line with the Deep Dive recommendations, and around which there is now a significant body of collaborative work and delivery established. An Ocean Literacy Strategy for Wales is intended for publication later in 2024 with partners collaborating around a funding proposal to deliver the actions identified. Concurrently partners are working with WCVA to establish Marine Fund Cymru, bringing together private funding to deliver activities supporting nature recovery at sea. In these positive examples, both NRW and WG are involved in a wider partnership seeking to explore and drive forwards action collectively. We suggest that an action plan for the whole Deep Dive is needed that enables Team Wales to collectively deliver the recommendations to ensure clear ownership and expected timeframes for actions, thus ensuring greater accountability and transparency.

The expert Deep Dive groups that are working on the OECM framework, designated landscapes and monitoring have highlighted the challenges and reliance on ‘good will’ from group members rather than having any dedicated or additional resource to help drive delivery impact and implementation. The absence of capacity from partners is a limiting factor for further develop the Deep Dive recommendations. This has placed additional pressure on NRW in order to enable progress to be made through the work of these groups.

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

Biodiversity monitoring in Wales includes a range of important activities. SoNaRR uses what available data there are from multiple monitoring programmes and draws on assessments such as the State of Nature Report and the [Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#). SoNaRR 2020 said *we need more data to track biodiversity change, determining the effectiveness of biodiversity policy, delivering strategic outcomes, and providing alerts of changes to the environment. Technical advances like eDNA, opportunity mapping, and earth observation could assist in this delivery, but this must not displace invaluable on-the-ground expertise and observation.*

Realistically we do not have the capacity to address all identified evidence gaps. Although recognise this would be desirable we address evidence gaps through highly targeted risk based prioritised use of our resources to focus evidence generation where we need it most. Such a risk-based approach helps mitigate the risks around evidence gaps and helps maximise both impact and our understanding of key strategic pressures on our environment. For example we use risk assessment tools to identify when and where water monitoring should take place as part of our annual programme planning.

The specific evidence implications for supporting 30 by 30 are continuing to crystallise. NRW is actively involved with the Deep Dive process and the supporting expert groups to identify the emerging evidence needs and how they could be addressed in cost-effective ways. We are committed to the continuation of the monitoring and evidence sub-group of the Biodiversity Deep Dive to develop approaches to generating the required evidence and understand the cost implications for a range of options.

Lessons learnt from the Deep Dive highlight challenges including the absence of existing resources to monitor protected sites (55% unknown status) which cover ~11% of Wales. Expanding monitoring to cover at least 30% of land and sea presents a substantial challenge in the face of resource constraints, data management, standardisation, prioritisation of monitoring and capacity building. Overcoming these obstacles requires a concerted effort to invest in monitoring infrastructure, develop standardised methods, and build capacity at all levels.

Monitoring statutory protected sites (SSSIs, SACs, SPAs etc) follows the inter-agency Common Standards Monitoring model. This risk-based approach focusses on habitats and

species for which sites were designated. It was designed to provide cost-effective feedback for management and policy aimed at maintaining or improving the condition of designated features.

Our protected site condition [desk-based evaluation](#) in 2020 across the terrestrial and freshwater environments showed 15% of features as favourable, 29% unfavourable, and 55% unknown, highlighting significant gaps in knowledge. In a similar 2018 marine assessment, indicative condition assessments for the 128 features of marine SACs and SPAs showed 46% of marine features were in favourable condition, 45% in unfavourable condition, and 9% unknown.

Resourcing protected sites monitoring, data collation, analyses, and assessment to inform evidence-based decision making continues to be a significant long-term challenge because of historic and current funding limitations. In response, our terrestrial protected sites monitoring strategy reflects a highly targeted approach to monitoring to support place-based evidence needs but is an approach that increasingly struggles to maintain certainty about understanding the health of sites at the national scale. Similar approaches in the marine environment are supplemented by high value long-term datasets, tracking biodiversity change through time e.g. Skomer MCZ monitoring.

Structured species monitoring programmes are primarily conducted by citizen science volunteers, often coordinated at a UK level (e.g. Wetland Bird Survey, UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme) with trend data at UK or Welsh levels depending on data quality. Similarly, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations requires governmental and statutory body reporting on a six-year cycle for species and habitats identified within the regulations.

Strategic projects such as the Nature Networks programme, National Peatland Action Programme, LifeQuake, Sands of Life and ProjectSIARC also include monitoring to support targeted restoration actions. Recent projects have positively impacted approximately 250 sites, including peatlands, rivers, marine areas, sand dunes, and grasslands.

Wider environmental monitoring programmes such as the Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP) and Water Environment Regulations (WFD) monitoring include biodiversity components. More specifically, the WFD compliance monitoring includes: macrophytes, aquatic macroinvertebrates, and fish for rivers and lakes; benthic invertebrates, seagrass, and fish (in transitional waters) for transitional and coastal waters; and freshwater fish stocks (particularly salmon and trout). The WFD compliance monitoring records other water quality indicators including chemical data (e.g. ammonia, phosphate) to help assess the state of those ecosystems.

Outside of these structured monitoring approaches, local monitoring by various organisations (e.g. NGOs, local authorities or academia) focuses on specific biodiversity interests, and ad-hoc species observations across Wales often collated through Local Environmental Records Centres and other mechanisms can provide supplementary evidence on biodiversity changes.

Recognising and addressing knowledge gaps to inform where the most effort is required to tackle the joint nature and climate emergencies is essential.

The effective sharing of monitoring data is a key aspect of collaboration. Related to this, we are also aware that significant survey and monitoring data is held privately by developers and considered commercially confidential; finding ways to share this data, e.g. via permit conditions, could provide additional valuable evidence. We recognise more investment is needed in relation to data sharing with continual development of services such as Datamap Wales and ongoing discussions with partners over how best to share evidence. Developing effective data sharing platform takes time and resources.

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

The [State of Natural Resources Report \(SoNaRR\) 2020](#) emphasises the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic well-being. It highlights the significant pressures on Wales' natural resources, including climate change, habitat loss, pollution, and invasive species. Addressing the complex challenges facing nature requires a holistic approach that considers the interconnectedness of different systems, such as food, energy, and transport. The report introduces the concept of "Bridges to the Future" as a framework for achieving a sustainable future.

The nature and climate emergencies make clear the current economic and financial system is not currently delivering for people or the planet. Built on maximising growth and short-term profits, our current economic model is imposing enormous costs on communities and nature. A greener sustainable economy requires a change in the relationship between the economy, land and water. It is about redesigning it to deliver good quality livelihoods by working in service of each other, meeting the needs of all, valuing and measuring what actually matters, redefining societal progress, and putting delivery of long-term wellbeing and prosperity of all generations before narrow metrics focused on GDP growth.

It is clear new approaches, such as green finance, are needed to generate the capacity and increased financing required and move away from business as usual- where some structured proactive, plus ad-hoc or reactive work takes place - to embedding continuous nature improvement with business and society. The Biodiversity Deep Dive focussed on one target of the GBF to act as a catalyst to draw in the other GBF 22 targets. It is our view that GBF targets 14-23, which focus on generating increased capacity and mainstreaming biodiversity action (e.g. embedding biodiversity into all decision-making processes, addressing negative incentives and creating positive ones, and working with new stakeholders) are key to deliver the desired ambition. Without this transformative change we believe it unlikely the goal to halt loss and restore nature will be achieved, not only by 2030 but well beyond.

Agriculture currently accounts for the largest land use area in Wales (80-90 %). Agriculture has a prominent role in nature recovery as the majority of our protected sites are linked to farming. We are supportive of the principle in the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) that farmers are funded to deliver environmental goods and services, not at the expense of food, but as an integral part of the products delivered through Welsh farming. Research, development and innovation is the cornerstone of sustainable futures and farmers need new sources of funding beyond the public purse to take advantage of precision farming and Earth observation technologies for example. We would welcome discussion on the scope and appetite to leverage funding to explore potential synergies between the SFS and well-regulated green investment from the private sector making progress towards a regenerative Welsh economy.

The emerging 30 by 30 monitoring requirements will influence Welsh nature recovery with an increased focus on network approaches, effective management assessments, and leveraging Earth observation technologies. How the monitoring community in Wales collectively address these challenges will require improved data sharing and collaboration.

To accelerate nature's recovery it is essential that the tools available complement and deliver for nature and not conflict or detract from each other. The biodiversity outcomes from the WG deep dive can and should be developed to complement and provide resources and impetus to existing long standing and strategic areas of work such as Local Nature Recovery Plans, Area Statements, Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure Assessments.

Nature Networks provides the opportunity to develop a strategic approach to restore and enhance the Welsh landscape by linking Resilient Ecological Networks throughout Wales supported by Area and landscape partnerships.

In Wales farmers own and manage much of the land, the place-based approach facilitated by Area Statements and RENs can identify outcomes in the landscape which empower and delegate decision making to local partnerships and individuals.

Current funding approaches to halt and reverse loss of nature by 2030 tend to be short term, capital heavy, and opportunistic with limited focus on long term management and evaluation. A more strategic, longer-term approach, with greater funding for revenue activity and for long term monitoring/ evaluation and management would be more sustainable and impactful in terms of outcomes for nature.

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

Alongside a greater focus on direct delivery for habitats, species and ecosystems through mechanisms like the Ministerial 30 by 30 Deep Dive for example, it is becoming increasingly clear how essential it is to also generate increased capacity and financing

needed to holistically achieve the commitments of the UK Strategy and corresponding recovery ambitions of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). In parallel, there is also rapidly growing demand for information and increasing interest by other sectors in relation to their nature-related impacts, dependencies and opportunities.

The UK's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (UK NBSAP) and associated Welsh commitments, we are extremely supportive of the Cabinet Secretary's commitment to produce statutory nature targets for Wales along with strengthened monitoring and reporting to more fully embed and drive action and accountability.

We would like to see Welsh nature targets and the new Bill reflect this alongside direct action to improve habitats, species and ecosystems, and more comprehensively address the issues and negative pressures and drivers that are responsible for biodiversity loss. We would also like to see greater recognition and emphasis placed on working more actively, creatively and collaboratively with the wide range of sectors and institutional and other interests that are not currently engaged in restoring nature.

The GBF, and associated UK strategy and targets containing Wales' nature commitments, presents a significant opportunity to enhance Wales' biodiversity efforts and develop new approaches. Pursuing a broader, proactive approach alongside more focused habitats and species interventions is crucial for halting nature loss. Ensuring that all the GBF targets as outlined in the UK's strategy for Wales are incorporated into Welsh policy and new legislation will help provide a comprehensive, clear and measurable framework for tracking progress and holding policymakers and key delivery agents to account.

The marine environment makes up almost half of Wales and protecting and restoring biodiversity here will form a significant part of delivering nature recovery. However, the nature of activity needed to protect and manage ecosystems at sea often differs from approaches taken on land. It is also affected by almost everything that happens on land, emphasising the need for holistic approaches and uses of appropriate 'terrestrial' levers (such as the SFS and Planning Policy Wales) to deliver positive marine outcomes.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) includes the need for plans and projects to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in development planning becoming more commonly known as Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB). However, developing planning policies such as NBB, nature-based solutions and renewable energy assessments are not yet supported by guidance for Local Planning Authorities which may be a missed opportunity to embed S6 into development planning functions. We see a gap in current guidance to support policy delivery as well as a need to establish a clear NBB policy.

Several key developments including the Global Biodiversity Framework, Ministerial Biodiversity Deep Dive, and State of Nature 2023 have been published since the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 was published. As a result, Section 6 guidance needs to better reflect the scale, pace and transformational changes required to respond to the nature emergency and more active monitoring and clearer accountability is needed in relation to S6 delivery. The nature emergency declaration emphasises the importance of

the duty and public authorities can be expected to demonstrate a stronger commitment to biodiversity in their decision-making process.

We would like to see greater attention focusing on how to change and develop systemic and institutional decision-making processes across all sectors to better support nature recovery. These are crucial for generating the increased capacity, delivery opportunities and joint financing needed to enable everyone to help restore nature in line with the nature commitments for Wales and move us beyond reliance on and the limitations associated with current government mechanisms and funding.

Agenda Item 4

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

Document is Restricted

Briefing to the Climate Change, Infrastructure and Environment Committee: Water compliance and incident response

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our regulatory approaches in relation to water with the committee. This briefing is intended to provide background information related to the discussion in advance of the committee meeting.

Our responsibilities for protecting the environment are the central pillar of our Corporate Plan.

While we acknowledge that there is still more to do, real progress has been made in improving the quality of our water, land and air across Wales over the last 30 years.

As the challenges of a growing population and the climate and nature emergencies intensify, so too does our commitment to protecting people and nature from the impacts of environmental incidents.

Our Regulatory Approach

We are further strengthening the way we regulate to drive better performance across the water sector. This includes employing more specialist officers on the ground, increasing compliance checks and using new data and intelligence tools to inform our work. We continue to seek additional powers to consider civil sanctions for a broader range of environmental offences.

When severe or deliberate damage is done to the environment, we do not shy away from taking the necessary and proportionate enforcement action. However, our priority will always be to prevent damage happening in the first place and to ensure operators return to compliance in a timely way. Enforcement action will always be considered when other methods to prevent harm have been exhausted or as a deterrent to further offending.

But like all public bodies, our resources are finite, and we have to make informed decisions about how and where to focus our efforts to protect lives, livelihoods and the environment. While we will continue to be astute and innovative in how we use the resources we have, we will need to prioritise those actions to ensure they have the best outcomes for people and for nature, and that they deliver the improvements to our environment that we all want to see.

Y Byd ar Bedwar

Concerns were raised in this programme around perceived bureaucracy and a failure to attend suspected pollution incidents, and it is important for us to respond to those concerns.

We continue to see an upward trend in water pollution incidents reported to us with just over 3300 in 2023 compared with just below 2500 incidents in 2019. This is disappointing at a time where so much is being invested in improving our rivers and water quality for nature and people.

We, also, continue to see a year-on-year increase in water industry related pollution incidents with just over 600 incidents reported in 2023 compared with around 430 incidents in 2019.

In general, we attend around 20% of incidents reported to us. We prioritise attendance based on the incidents that pose the highest risk to people and / or the environment. It is not always necessary to attend an incident as part of the investigation, as in many cases, the information received within the report is sufficient along with phone discussions and photos for us to decide on its cause and consequences.

Our Corporate Plan, [Nature and People Thriving Together](#), identifies three priority Wellbeing Objectives: 1. Nature is Recovering; 2. Communities are Resilient to Climate Change and 3. Pollution is Minimised.

In delivering our Wellbeing Objectives, we will adopt a more risk-based and targeted approach to incident response, and we will ensure we prioritise responding to the incidents that pose the most serious and significant risks to the environment and public health. Like other public sector organisations, NRW have been subject to significant funding pressures in recent years and as a result we have to operate within a tighter financial envelope. We, therefore, focus our resources on attending incidents where there is a greater environmental risk. It is not possible or even necessary to attend every incident reported to us.

In reviewing our response to incidents, we are improving efficiency by taking an intelligence led approach. We use the information gathered from reports to build a comprehensive picture of environmental threats, enabling us to focus our efforts on targeted prevention through effective engagement, regulation, and enforcement. As stated above, preventing an incident happening in the first place is always going to be more beneficial than responding to a pollution event.

As an accountable public body, we have established governance processes for incident response and enforcement to ensure we have the correct tools and guidance available for our staff and to ensure decisions are being made consistently and timely. We are bound by government guidance like the Regulators Code, Managing Welsh Public Money and civil service recruitment rules which ensure our processes and decisions are appropriate.

NRW regulatory approaches in managing DCWW and HD performance and driving improvements

In July 2024 we published our 2023 annual water company environmental performance reports for [Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water](#) (DCWW) and [Hafren Dyfrdwy](#) (HD).

HD performance has improved slightly in relation to pollution incidents performance since 2022, although there was a small increase in pollution incidents arising from water supply assets from 2 to 3. All three had a low environmental impact.

Despite increased pressure from ourselves as regulators, and from politicians and the public, DCWW have failed to make the kind of improvements we want and expect to see, in fact, their incidents, and particular their serious pollution went up. As a result, for 2023, DCWW performance remained at 2* status.

As we continue to progress through the Environmental Performance Assessment (EPA) reporting period (2021-25), we expect both DCWW and HD to make positive progress across all seven metrics. The EPA metrics will continue to tighten over this EPA reporting period (2021-25) ensuring targets are challenging for the company.

We use a variety of approaches across our regulatory cycle to drive improvements in water company performance.

Ofwat's Price Reviews (PR)

- NRW input to Ofwat's Price Reviews. We develop the National Environment Programme (NEP) for Wales. For Ofwat's PR24 which will be delivered in Asset Management Programme (AMP) period 8 from 2025 to 2030, we have an agreed NEP which directs the work of DCWW, HD and to a lesser extent Severn Trent, United Utilities and South Staffordshire Water to meet their environmental obligations in Wales.
- AMP8 covers 2025-2030 and the associated NEP will result in nearly £2billion investment in Wales's environment including drinking water resources and infrastructure, wastewater collection and treatment systems as well as wider obligations relating to biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, invasive non-native species and net zero targets. The majority of this investment relates to DCWW sites.
- The [consultation](#) on Ofwat's draft determination of the investment plans closed on 28 August 2024. The final determination of business plans by Ofwat is due in December 2024.

Permitting and permit reviews

- Water discharges are regulated under an Environmental Permit which sets conditions to protect the environment. NRW can review conditions to ensure operators are able to meet modern standards and to respond to changing environmental needs.
- NRW has recently completed the Review of Permits for DCWW water discharge permits in the nine river Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) catchments across Wales. This focussed on the larger water treatment works and resulted in a limit on phosphorus emissions being added to 162 permits across the SAC catchments.
- This is a significant measure in managing nutrient pollution into the SAC rivers which will deliver significant reductions in pollution and contribute towards maintaining and enhancing the ecosystems within our SAC rivers.
- We are also in the process of updating permits to require better monitoring and control of wastewater flows on sewage treatment plants which, alongside AMP8 investment, will lead to a significant reduction in sewer overflow spills through the network.

Regulatory Compliance activity

- We assess compliance of water discharge permit conditions by carrying out a range of regulatory activities, including site inspections and audits, sampling discharges and assessing data, such as water company operator self-monitoring data regulatory returns.
- Following a compliance assessment, we record our findings in a Compliance Assessment Report (CAR), identifying any breaches of permit condition and specifying actions to remedy and minimise the risk of recurrence. These are available on our Public Register.
- Since 2018, the number of water industry compliance assessments carried out by NRW has increased significantly from around 100 in 2019 to over 450 in 2023 and will be further increased in 2024.
- In the same time period, the percentage non-compliance against permit conditions identified at DCWW sites has steadily decreased from about 80% to just under 20%. This demonstrates that there has been a steady improvement in water industry compliance when all permit conditions are considered. The same trend of increasing inspections and decreasing percentage compliance has also been seen at HD sites.
- However, there is a continuing downward trend in the overall performance of DCWW as measured by the EPA. The EPA focusses on seven distinct metrics, which allows the performance of the ten largest water and sewerage companies to be monitored and assessed in a consistent way by the environmental regulators.
- The compliance metric focusses on performance against a series of numeric permit conditions and sampling requirements, i.e. a subset of conditions only, not including, for example, descriptive permit conditions.
- Despite a reduction in non-compliant activity, as mentioned above, we continue to see an increase in the number of serious water pollution incidents from DCWW sewerage and water supply facilities. DCWW have been asked to improve their root cause analysis of incidents to identify areas of intervention to secure improved overall performance.

Enforcement

The enforcement responses we take against the water industry are consistent with our Enforcement and Sanctions policy, and based on our Offence Response Options and incident classification scheme.

Of the 483 enforcement cases resulting from water industry incidents, since the beginning of 2018, 437 of these have been closed with around 80% resulting in Warning letters being issued, 5 Formal Cautions and 3 Prosecutions. The remainder resulted in either Advice and Guidance being given or a decision that no further action was required.

46 cases remain under investigation, with enforcement responses to follow. A number of these cases are significant and may result in prosecution.

There is an inevitable time lag between incident/permit breach and enforcement response while the cause of the incident is investigated. In addition, prosecutions require court time and delays continue within the Court system due to the impacts of Covid-19. This time lag is often years not months.

We currently have two cases listed in court in September and October.

Further activities supporting river quality improvement

Water Quality Taskforce

- NRW lead on the Water Quality Taskforce which has representation from key partners and stakeholders.
- The Taskforce continues to focus and respond to the evolving picture around storm overflows and the ongoing attention from stakeholders, public and politicians. The Taskforce has also begun to look at associated water quality issues that impact on the sewerage network.
- The PR24 final determination and water companies working through the new regulatory guidance will drive new actions which will be shared with wider stakeholders.
- Currently the Taskforce is reviewing the five action plans, with priority given to the “Public understanding and engagement” action plan in April. At the recent Senedd committee, a recommendation to develop greater communications with stakeholders was tabled. The taskforce is already looking at how we communicate the progress and direction we are taking in Wales.
- Of the 62 actions across the five plans, 31 have been completed; the remainder either have completion dates for the future linking with delivery, or are dependent upon confirmation of funding as part of PR24.
- Successes to date include production of NRW Regulatory Report for Event Duration Monitoring (annually), water company real time monitoring, and regulatory guidance for classification of storm overflows, including unpermitted assets.

- Over the coming twelve months, attention will also be given to developing a monitoring programme around storm overflows to help support the evidence piece and inform all stakeholders on their impact.

Reducing impact of Combined Sewer Outfalls

- On 26th October 2023, NRW issued 2 pieces of guidance to Water companies in Wales on classifying and assessing storm overflows and the process for unpermitted overflows (those currently without an EPR permit).
- In addition to implementing this guidance, as part of the Periodic Review (PR24) we have been working with the water companies, Welsh Government and Ofwat to develop the Environmental Improvement Programme that will deliver investment in water company assets in Wales over the next 5 years. Within draft business plans for DCWW, approximately £720m has been allocated to delivery of storm discharge improvement.
- We expect DCWW to have assessed all intermittent assets against our guidance by the end of the 2025-30 AMP period with a view to identifying those assets that require future investment to ensure they do not cause harm or deteriorate in performance.

Legislative change

- We are supportive of the proposals in the Water (Special Measures) Bill and in particular to have a penalty regime applicable to the water sector, to enable automatic penalties to be issued by NRW for a defined list of offences.
- We do not currently have the civil sanction powers to issue Variable Monetary Penalties (VMPs). Fixed Monetary Penalties (FMPs) and Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for water company offences. So, in Wales, this proposal would have to be included in a bundle of changes needed to introduce civil sanctions for the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR) in Wales.
- It is important to note that the Environment Agency has had civil sanctions for EPR since 2016. The recent Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee's Report on performance of DCWW recommended that WG consider extending NRW's enforcement powers to enable the regulator to accept environmental undertakings for permit breaches under the Environmental Permitting Regulations (England and Wales) 2016. The Minister accepted in principle and since then, we have inputted to WG Officials recent considerations on Civil Sanctions

We trust the above helps with context and we look forward to discussing further with you in October.

Huw Irranca-Davies MS

Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

17 July 2024

Dear Huw,

UK/European Forest Institute (EFI): Host Country Agreement

During our meeting on 26 June 2024, we considered the UK/European Forest Institute (EFI): Host Country Agreement as part of our scrutiny of international agreements within our remit.

The agreement relates to the establishment of a UK presence for EFI, which is an international organisation established by European states. The agreement provides EFI with the privileges and immunities necessary for it to function effectively within the UK.

We acknowledge that the agreement falls within reserved competence of international relations, which includes relations with territories outside the UK, and that the conferral of privileges and immunities under international law are not devolved.

Nevertheless, we also noted that EFI's activities relate to forestry, an area of devolved competence of significant interest to us. We noted that EFI appears to have links to Bangor University and that Natural Resources Wales became a member the European State Forest Association, EUSTAFOR, in 2020.

On this basis, we agreed to write to you to seek more information on the potential opportunities afforded to Wales by the agreement.

We would welcome the Welsh Government's view on:

- the establishment of EFI in the UK, including how Wales may benefit from its presence in future;
- the relationship between Welsh agencies, research organisations and EFI;
- whether the Welsh Government was consulted on the agreement's development; and

- information on any intergovernmental work taking place, or due to take place jointly with EFI, including in relation to its intended focus to improve global forest governance.

I should be grateful for a response as soon as possible, and by 14 August at the latest.

Yours sincerely,



Llyr Gruffydd MS,
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

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

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0243/24

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

16 September 2024

Dear Llŷr

Thank you for your letter of 17 July on the UK/European Forest Institute (EFI) Host Country Agreement.

The EFI is an important international organisation with which the UK has a longstanding relationship. It was set up to conduct research and provide policy advice on forest-related issues.

As far as the Host Country Agreement is concerned, we were not consulted on the decision to establish a presence in the UK. We do of course have an ongoing interest though and expect to be kept updated by the International Forests Unit (a joint FCDO and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero team) as well as on an ongoing basis through the International Forestry Advisory post in Forest Research.

The UK, as a member country, is represented on the EFI's Council by Forest Research and the Head of the International Forest Unit sits on its Board of Directors. Bangor University is a member organisation. We have a seat on the Forest Research Board and it is through that relationship that we will hear about and feed into the work of the EFI. But we will continue to engage with the International Forests Unit as work on its establishment in the UK progresses.

EFI's mission is to connect knowledge to action and to fulfil its mission, [EFI's strategy](#) is built around three interconnected and interdisciplinary themes: **Bioeconomy**, **Resilience** and **Governance** and three mutually reinforcing strategic goals:

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales

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.

- An ambitious European forest research and innovation area
- Science-informed policies to address societal challenges and opportunities
- Awareness in society of the importance of forests

Their forward look on key expected impacts for the coming period and new priorities for research and policy topics to explore in collaboration with its partners is set out in its [Strategy Implementation Plan 2022-2025](#).

We understand that the focus of the EFI's UK office will be supporting the efforts to halt and reverse the global loss of forests and land degradation. There would be two main areas of work:

- forest and land-use governance reforms in partner countries;
- transformation of degraded land into regenerative landscapes that are inclusive, biodiversity-positive and climate-neutral, which support sustainable markets and communities.

Two key programmes will be present in the UK office - **International Partnerships Facility** (<https://efi.int/partnerships>) and **Circular Bioeconomy Alliance** (<https://circularbioeconomyalliance.org>). The International Partnerships Facility is a global centre of knowledge and expertise that supports policy and governance reforms to safeguard the world's forests. It facilitates partnerships between producing and consuming countries to foster legal, deforestation-free and sustainable timber, and agricultural commodity production and trade. The FCDO will be working with the EFI to establish an International Forest Governance Hub (IFGH) that will serve a wide network of associates building from EFI's model of engagement with policy makers and research bodies. It is hoped that the IFGH will operate from the new EFI offices in the UK.

The UK office is expected to further strengthen the relationship and mutual understanding between the UK government and EFI and allow EFI experts to participate more actively in meetings and discussions happening in the UK. Once the Host Country Agreement is in place it should be easier for all UK based bodies and individuals to engage directly with the EFI due to their physical presence in the UK. We will continue to monitor how this delivers for Wales through the member organisations.

Once again, thank you for raising this important topic. I hope this information is helpful to the committee.

Yours sincerely,



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

Agenda Item 5.2

Y Ffynnon Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Claire Pillman
Chief Executive, Natural Resources Wales
Welsh Government Offices
Cathays Park
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Copied to the Chair of the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

17 July 2024

Dear Claire Pillman,

Petition P-05-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve

The Committee considered this petition at its meeting on 8 July along with the reply from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, dated 21 June, and the petitioner's response, dated 30 June..

Both the Cabinet Secretary's reply and the petitioner's response indicate that it is still unclear whether Natural Resources Wales has made a final decision regarding the potential closure of the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve. The Committee would be grateful if you could share your decision in writing as soon as possible and when that decision was made and update the Committee on the plans to engage with the petitioners and the local community.

The full details of the Committee's consideration of the petition, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee can be found here:

<https://business.senedd.wales/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=44000&Opt=3>

If you have any queries, please contact the Committee clerking team at the e-mail address below, or on 0300 200 6454.

I would be grateful if you could send your response to the questions and proposals by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales.

Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
Deisebau@senedd.cymru
senedd.cymru/SeneddDeisebau
0300 200 6565

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
Petitions@senedd.wales
senedd.wales/SeneddPetitions
0300 200 6565

Yours sincerely,

Jack Sargeant

Jack Sargeant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Jack Sargeant MS
Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament

By email: petitions@senedd.wales

14 August 2024

Dear Jack,

Petition P-05-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the status of Ynyslas Visitor Centre.

On Wednesday 31 July, we launched a consultation with our Trade Unions and started the process of engagement with staff on proposals to restructure our organisation and reduce our Grant in Aid staff budget by £13 million before 1 April 2025.

The purpose is to re-focus our resources on the activities that will have the most impact on nature, climate and minimising pollution, as well as the statutory work that only NRW can do. Our aim is to mitigate job losses as much as possible.

As a result of our prioritisation work, one proposal is that we will no longer operate catering and retail provision at our visitor centres at Bwlch Nant y Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas. Instead we propose to actively seek out other partners to run the centres, while site access will remain open for walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.

The National Nature Reserves and forests around visitor centres are key sites for us. There is no question that we want to conserve and protect these sites so that nature can recover, and we are unequivocal that public access to these sites will be maintained. We will continue to carry out all statutory duties and will consider the indirect effects of any recommendations.

Following our consultation, which will run until Friday 13 September, the NRW Board will make a final decision on the change proposal. At that point, we will write again and explain what the changes mean for the delivery of services at these sites, and our plans to inform and engage with the local community.

There will not be a public consultation on our proposals. In 2022/23 we held a public consultation on our new Corporate Plan, Nature and People Thriving Together, which sets our strategic direction and priorities through to 2030. The current internal consultation is about how we ensure a focus on those Corporate Plan priorities whilst adapting to live within our financial means.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clare Pillman', with a horizontal line underneath.

Clare Pillman

**Prif Weithredwr, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Chief Executive, Natural Resources Wales**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hynny arwain at oedi.
Correspondence in Welsh is welcomed, and we will respond in Welsh without it leading to a delay.

- Specialist librarians are uniquely placed to use the latest tech tools to unlock new opportunities for engaging with material, in an ethical and legally compliant way;
- For the same reason, it is important to position library and information services within your organisation in a way that interacts with other departments as well as digital and strategic plans, and includes public engagement, particularly in light of the urgent environmental issues impacting Wales.
- Professional librarians are best-placed to act as the ‘bridge’ between the potential of your collections and the mission of your institution. The role of our profession is to ensure that change is successful and delivers maximum impact for your institution and community.

We recognise that this will be a challenging and volatile time for Natural Resources Wales as an organisation, but we strongly urge you to reconsider your proposal to close the library and information service, to limit the negative impact on professional staffing to the greatest extent possible, and to maintain access to the collections, resources, and expertise while you work through any restructure.

We remain at your disposal if it would be useful to meet to discuss these concerns. We hope that you will maintain access to the Natural Resources Wales Library and Information Services so that it continues to play a vital role in future decisions about Welsh environmental policies.

Kind regards,



Louis Coiffait-Gunn
CEO, CILIP - the library and information association

Jamie Finch
Chair, CILIP Cymru Wales

CILIP Cymru Wales is CILIP in Wales. It's the leading voice for the information, knowledge management and library profession in Wales. Our goal is to put information and library skills and professional values at the heart of a democratic, equal and prosperous Welsh society. CILIP is a registered charity, no. 313014.

Claire Pillman
Chief Executive, Natural Resources Wales
Welsh Government Offices
Cathays Park
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Copied to the Chair of the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

16 September 2024

Dear Claire

Petition P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres

Today the Petitions Committee considered the following petition from Gareth Jones, which has been collecting signatures on our website. The petition has 13,245 signatures, of which 8,270 are Wales only. The petitioners wanted it to be considered today because they believe the NRW Executive team will be making a final decision to close all visitor centres around 20 September.

Petition text

Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres

Closure of these centres runs contrary to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.

The closure of these visitor centres would have a far-reaching negative impact on the local economy, environment, and community well-being.

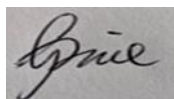
The Committee has also received correspondence co-signed by Cycling UK, Beicio Cymru, the UK MTB Trail Alliance, Mountain Bike Wales and the Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation, along with over 90 other groups, organisations and businesses, also raising concerns about the impact of these proposed closures.

Alongside this petition, the Committee also considered your response of 14 August on a related petition [P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve](#) from Kim Williams. The Committee previously wrote to you to seek clarification about the decision to close Ynyslas visitor centre, and has also kept the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee informed of this issue.

Given the urgency of the situation, the Committee is writing to share the concerns of the petitioners and other interested parties in advance of NRW making its decision. The Committee will also be requesting a plenary debate on this petition, regardless of the decision taken by NRW.

I would be grateful if you could keep the Committee updated on the outcome of the NRW Board's deliberations on this issue, by e-mailing the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely



Gareth Price

Petitions Committee Clerk

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS

Llywydd, and Chair of the Business Committee

19 September 2024

Dear Llywydd,

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee and Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee Joint Debate: Proposals for a sustainable farming scheme

As you may be aware, last term the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee and the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee both published reports on the Welsh Government's proposal for a Sustainable Farming Scheme. The ETRA Committee also published a report on Farming Connect.

Our Committees have been working closely to ensure the development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme is given adequate scrutiny and to reduce any possible duplication of effort for Members and our stakeholders. This builds on joint working the Committee undertook to scrutinise the development of the Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023.

To foster a well-rounded debate on the two Committee reports on the Sustainable Farming Scheme, and to continue our efforts to reduce duplication for Members and stakeholders, we are writing to propose Business Committee considers allowing a joint Committee debate on both Reports.

We also propose that the ETRA Committee's Farming Connect report is also considered as part of this debate. This is because Farming Connect, or its replacement, will play a key role in supporting farmers and land managers to understand and adapt to the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

We anticipate this approach will require some minor changes to the usual process around a Committee debate, namely:

- The motion for the debate would be that the Senedd notes all three reports;
- The title of the debate would be "Joint debate on Committee reports regarding the Sustainable Farming Scheme and Farming Connect";
- The Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee, Paul Davies MS, would open and respond to the debate; and
- The Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee, Llyr Gruffydd MS, would be called to speak immediately after Paul Davies MS has opened the debate.

We hope that this approach will be time efficient for the Senedd as whole. However, in light of the slightly different approach to this debate we ask that you give consideration to the following:

- Giving the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee additional time to speak in recognition that he will be introducing a report;
- Giving the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs additional time to speak, in recognition that he will be responding to three reports; and
- Within reason, giving all Members of the Senedd who wish to speak during the debate the opportunity to do so.

We do not believe it would be necessary to make any other significant changes to normal procedure for Senedd debates on Committee reports. We anticipate that this debate would require an hour.

We hope you are able to respond favourably to this request. We believe this approach will support better scrutiny by allowing Members to debate the matters contained in the reports together and so look at all the issues in the round. We also believe it will be the most time efficient way to examine these reports for Members, the Government, stakeholders and any other interested parties.

We have copied this letter to Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

Kind regards,



Paul Davies MS
Chair
Economy, Trade and Rural
Affairs Committee



Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment,
and Infrastructure Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

CC: Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Agenda Item 5.4

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

Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair,
Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee
Senedd Cymru
SeneddClimate@senedd.wales

12 August 2024

Dear Llŷr Gruffydd MS,

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

I refer to my letter to you of 16 July. I wish to inform the Committee I have given my consent to the Minister of State to lay the Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme: Plant and Animal Health) Regulations 2024. in relation to Wales. I have laid a Written Statement which can be found [here](#).

The Regulations intersect with devolved policy and will apply to Wales. The Regulations extend to England, Scotland and Wales. The Statutory Instrument (SI) is subject to the negative procedure and was laid before UK Parliament on 9 August 2024 and will come into force on 26 August 2024 for Regulation 3 and 2 September 2024 for all other purposes.

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 make this SI wholly 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 continued implementation of the Windsor Framework.

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Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales

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 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, 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

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

Senedd Cymru

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—
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Jack Sargeant MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

14 August 2024

P-06-1395 (Halt significant new development on the Gwent Levels SSSIs)

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June in relation to petition P-06-1395 (Halt significant new development on the Gwent Levels SSSIs).

The Committee is unable at this time to undertake a specific piece of work on this issue but will ensure it is borne in mind as we consider our future work programme. In particular, you may wish to note that the Committee will be conducting an inquiry on Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030, starting in September.

I will provide you with a copy of our report once it is published.

Yours sincerely,



Llyr Gruffydd MS,
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

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

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

Ein cyf/Our ref: HID/PO/227/2024

Mike Hedges MS
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

30 August 2024

Dear Mike,

I am writing in accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement to let you know that the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will be held on 16 September at the Defra offices in Marsham Street, London.

This will be the first meeting of this group since September 2023 and I am hopeful that it will usher in a re-set of relations.

I will be representing the Welsh Government. The meeting will focus on partnership working across the UK, a joint work programme for enhanced collaboration, opportunities and challenges for the UK's agriculture markets and protecting and enhancing the UK's biodiversity. I will update you on discussions, and a communique will be issued, after the meeting.

I have also copied this letter to the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee and the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs committee.

Yours sincerely,



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

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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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.

Agenda Item 5.7

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Trafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport and North Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

2 September 2024

Dear Llŷr,

I am writing in reply to your query regarding the Welsh Government response to the Committee's report 'Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25', particularly in relation to recommendation no. 16. As you will recall I previously wrote to you on 1 July to supply information about the breakdown of Active Travel funding, in addition to this I am now able to provide further information on Bus capital funding. Please accept my apologies for the delay.

Bus Capital spend						
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total	£ -	£ 1,850,000	£ 1,318,164	£16,717,596	£19,900,914	£41,802,000
Population*	3,152,879	3,169,586	3,131,640	3,131,640	3,131,640	3,131,640
Integrated Ticketing					£ 1,815,474	£ 2,622,000
Bus Transformation					£ 80,721	£ 4,185,000
Bus Decarbonisation					£ 7,974,535	£ 23,193,000
Bus related to LA's		£ 1,850,000	£ 1,318,164	£ 21,912,166	£ 25,000	
Cardiff Interchange				£ 17,689,310	£ 6,331,410	
TfW - Metro – Bus incl Burns					£ 8,839,755	£ 11,802,000
Total per capita	£ -	£ 1	£ 0	£ 5	£ 6	£ 13

*Population figures are mid-year population estimates. The calculation for recent and the current years are based on the latest available estimate, which is 2022.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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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.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Ken Skates AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Trafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport and North Wales

Ken Skates AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Trafnidiaeth a
Gogledd Cymru
Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport and North
Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

11 September 2024

Dear Llŷr,

I am writing to provide the committee with further information following my predecessor's letter of the 1 March. In that letter, the Government committed to provide you with an update to recommendation 9, and a response to recommendation 13.

Recommendation 9

The Minister should clarify the criteria for allocating the Bus Network Support Grant and how it will interact with the existing Bus Services Support Grant. The Minister should update the Committee on the operation of the grant within the next six months.

Response: Accept

ATCO (Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers), the umbrella organisation that represents local authority transport co-ordinators; and the WLGA (Welsh Local Government Association) were asked to identify a methodology that would provide an equitable split of funding across regions. Many options were considered, however the one chosen related to the formula used to allocate the Bus Transition Fund. This was agreed by all 22 local authority leaders at a WLGA Executive Board meeting in January of this year and conveyed to all regional lead authorities before funding was distributed.

A number of metrics and considerations were considered which included the methodology around the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) split; Bus Transition Fund (BTF) split; total passengers; mileage; population; Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. Another consideration related to the Public Transport Support and Concessionary Travel within the Welsh Government's Background Information for Standard Spending Assessments (Green Book).

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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.

The WLGA recognised that there were no easy answers when it came to determine a regional equitable split as each region had different characteristics with different metrics favouring regions differently.

Methodology consideration also included looking at expressing the 2023/24 allocations of Bus Service Support Grant (BSSG), BES and BTF as a percentage by region or by taking an average of the best metric-based allocation, an identified need based allocation and the combined BSSG, BES & BTF allocation. Neither met the identified commitments and would involve inter-region transfers which would hamper decisions on which services could be let.

It was therefore agreed with ATCO and WLGA that the most recent formula used to allocate BTF by region remained to be the most equitable method of distribution.

Meetings were arranged by officials with all local authority regional leads, ATCO and WLGA representation to go through the methodology and rationale in ensuring that everyone was involved in the process.

A WLGA report was then prepared based upon the above and presented at its Executive Board (leaders of all 22 local authorities across Wales) on the 19th of January this year (2024) seeking approval of the proposed regional allocations. The report was cleared by Cllr Andrew Morgan and accepted/supported at this meeting by local authority leaders. Following this meeting Welsh Government proceeded to allocate the funding as agreed.

The further split of funding made from each regional lead authority to each of their constituent local authorities has been a matter for them to agree in line with their statutory duties, assessment of local needs, and scheme conditions, and has not involved Welsh Government.

The Bus Network Grant (BNG) scheme is aligned with the existing Bus Services Support (BSSG) scheme in providing local authorities with funding to secure services that would not otherwise be provided through their existing statutory duties.

Since the introduction of the scheme bus networks have stabilised across Wales and has provided confidence to passengers and wider stakeholders. Officials continue to meet regularly with lead regional authorities to ensure the delivery and monitoring of the scheme

Recommendation 13

The Minister should provide an update within the next six month on progress taking forward the recommendations from the Cross-Party Group on Active Travel.

Response: Accept

The Cross-Party Group made 51 recommendations, covering the key areas of:

- Delivery
- Governance
- Behaviour change
- Equality
- Active travel to school
- Monitoring and data
- Legislative change

The most wide-reaching recommendation was the development of a national active travel delivery plan. Our new [Active travel delivery plan 2024 to 2027 | GOV.WALES](#) was informed by the Cross-Party Group's recommendations and sets out the actions Welsh

Government, Transport for Wales and other partners will take to implement the active travel commitments in Llwybr Newydd and to strengthen the framework for active travel delivery across Wales up to 2027. It was published on 14 March 2024. Alongside its publication, the Welsh Government provided a detailed response to each of the 51 actions to the Chair of the Cross-Party Group and the Chair of the Active Travel Board.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Ken Skates AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Trafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Transport and North Wales

Welsh Government Response to Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act's Review of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

The Welsh Government welcomes the Cross-Party Group's report and appreciates its initiative in reviewing the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. The following is the Welsh Government's response.

Welsh Government response to each recommendation

Delivery

1. TfW should endeavour to streamline its active travel funding bidding and monitoring processes whilst maintaining the effectiveness of its audit function.

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government and Transport for Wales (TfW) amended the application process for 2023-24 and further refined it for 2024-25. The processes for delivering the Active Travel Fund are regularly reviewed; for example, the Active Travel Board has scrutinised the management and delivery of the Active Travel Fund. Where improvements are identified that we agree can improve the delivery of the Active Travel Fund, these are implemented.

2. Welsh Government should find digital solutions that will enable greater use of the data compiled in ATNMs [Active Travel Network Maps] such as incorporating route information into services provided by platforms like Google Maps and linking more efficiently into the Street Gazetteer.

Response - Accept in principle

The data is owned by the local authorities and can only be made available with their permission. We are in the process of putting permissions in place and addressing concerns of local authorities about how the data can be used.

3. All local authorities should develop an Active Travel Delivery Programme which should include: its approach to modal shift in favour of active travel; its priorities for the delivery of infrastructure; how it will promote active travel; how the various departments of the council will contribute to developing active travel; its approach to increasing active travel to school; and how it intends to monitor active travel levels. Transport for Wales should develop a model programme, in consultation with the Active Travel Board.

Response - Accept

We have included this in the Active Travel Delivery Plan and accept that it can provide significant value if it has high level ownership within each authority and is concise and focused on actions and outcomes. We need to avoid this being regarded and treated as a hurdle that diverts staff time.

Corporate Joint Committees are currently developing Regional Transport Plans (RTPs). The RTPs will incorporate and apply our strategic national programmes to

regional and local priorities. The RTPs will provide a strategic framework for local authorities to deliver, including planning and prioritisation of strategic cross-boundary active travel routes.

4. An extensive workforce development package for active travel should be put in place. This should involve working with professional bodies, allocating increased funding to better resource active travel delivery units, and developing mechanisms for the effective sharing of best practice.

Response - Accept

We are developing, with TfW, a leadership, training and professional development programme – Academi Teithio Llesol. This will provide a focus for training and development in active travel for leaders and practitioners across Wales. The first training courses and materials were made available in 2023.

5. The development of a small number of centrally funded, expert delivery units, that can be called upon by local authorities to deliver routes and associated services that will deliver high levels of modal shift. This to be accompanied by a new funding package to pay for such routes and measures aimed at addressing all the barriers to active travel likely to be encountered by the target group for the infrastructure. Part of the function of the package will be to demonstrate, with systematic monitoring, how effective active travel can be in bringing about modal shift. In establishing the units, Welsh Government should draw on the experience and best practice of the Burns Delivery Unit.

Response - Accept

We will enhance the capacity and skill base in TfW to support the delivery of active travel schemes and programmes across Wales, in the form of the TfW Active Travel Design Hub and creating regional teams. This will build on TfW's existing roles and includes:

- a design team to develop and design complex and challenging high-impact schemes;
 - enhanced programme management to support the delivery of complex and challenging schemes by partners;
 - provide expert technical advice and guidance to local authorities on delivery of their active travel programmes;
 - updating and developing the Active Travel Act Guidance;
 - identifying and developing innovative technical and delivery solutions; and
 - gathering and sharing best practice.
6. The new National Delivery Plan should set out priorities for infrastructure development and delivery based on maximising modal shift. These priorities will determine how the bulk of the Active Travel Fund is invested, though with increased weighting for projects in deprived areas, and utilising percentages rather than absolute numbers in rural areas. The ATNM compilation process should be amended to make it clear in consultations with the public which routes are being prioritised and indicating projected delivery dates.

Response - Accept in part

The Active Travel Fund appraisal process already gives increased weighting for projects in deprived areas and looks at relative rather than absolute potential to account for schemes in rural areas.

The new prioritisation tool facilitates better provision of information to the public on the relative priority of schemes. Active Travel Act Guidance advises that the main prioritisation stage should take place following public consultation and take feedback received into account. Prioritisation can be iterative and take place before and after consultation.

Requiring local authorities to specify projected delivery dates during public consultation would be unfair when this will depend on how much funding is made available and the competing schemes from other local authorities.

7. The revised approach to WelTAG should reflect and emphasise the important role of the ATNM process in informing the early stages of development of active travel schemes and support a more streamlined approach to the development and delivery of active travel projects, focusing on the inclusion of key requirements and reducing the need for any unnecessary work.

Response - Accept

The new WelTAG approach provides guidance on the appropriate level of appraisal required for schemes of different scales and at different stages of development.

8. Welsh Government should develop a dedicated procurement framework agreement for active travel related activities.

Response - Accept in principle

As part of their remit, TfW are strengthening the public sector's ability to access a wider range of active travel goods and services. They review existing and in-development procurement routes, initially signposting local authorities on how to access and make more effective use of existing frameworks. TfW will also work to inform the development of future frameworks being developed by other organisations, to further widen access to active travel related services and activities. TfW will identify and address gaps in provision for specific active travel activities, such as cycle hire roll-out, to improve access for key partners, including local authorities, whilst ensuring that relevant frameworks also fulfil wider government objectives.

9. Welsh Government should move to a three-year funding allocation cycle for the Active Travel Fund, including the core funding element.

Response - Accept in principle

In practice, multi-year funding can be allocated for construction schemes. If a scheme progresses as intended through the stage gates, there is a presumption in

favour of continued funding and local authorities only need to update the scheme information each year. This approach will continue to be subject to the processes by which the Senedd agrees Welsh Government budgets.

10. There is a need for a significant increase in revenue funding for active travel to develop behaviour change programmes and other measures designed to break down barriers to active travel.

Response - Accept in principle

Welsh Government accepts that an increase in behaviour change activities helps to overcome barriers to active travel and has consequently made additional funding available in 2023-24 and 2024-25. However, budgets, particularly for revenue, are extremely challenging and Welsh Government cannot currently commit to further increases in funding for behaviour change activities.

11. The Welsh Government should develop an active travel communications package for local authorities incorporating the publication of the long promised active travel promotional toolkit.

Response - Accept

TfW has developed a promotional toolkit to support local authorities in engaging with their communities on active travel developments and opportunities. This toolkit, published in Spring 2024, will be used to communicate the use of active travel for purposeful everyday journeys, helping to increase the impact of investment in active travel infrastructure.

The toolkit will support the preparation of high-quality promotional materials for specific schemes or developments, as well as audiences. It includes resources that encompass key information to generally promote active travel such as key statistics, key messaging on the benefits of active travel, case studies, inclusive images and other resources such as templates and designs. These resources can be used for general local campaigns or presented alongside scheme specific materials to reinforce the opportunities to change. The toolkit will be reviewed and updated regularly throughout the life of the plan.

12. The Welsh Government should produce a succinct and practical guide to active travel and the Act targeted at local authority members and officers in departments whose work impacts on the delivery of active travel.

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government will work with local authorities to develop guidance on the new duties, arising from the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024, to promote active travel as a way of reducing or limiting air pollution. As part of this consultation, the Welsh Government will identify and target local authority members and officers in departments whose work impacts on the delivery of active travel and consider how best to support them to promote active travel.

13. The time taken, and inconvenience caused by the difficulty of crossing busy roads is a key barrier to increasing walking. Local authorities should be encouraged to review crossing timings to favour pedestrians and to increase crossing availability significantly. Active travel provision at junctions should facilitate the new priorities given to walkers and cyclists in the recent revision of the Highway Code.

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government was involved in developing the changes to the Highway Code and will, with the support of the TfW Design Hub, identify ways in which these can be best supported when the Active Travel Act Guidance is next updated, alongside guidance on other improvements to the walking and cycling environment.

14. The new National Delivery Plan should set out a series of measures for securing better integration of active travel with public transport.

Response - Accept

Through the Active Travel Delivery Plan, the Welsh Government will continue to improve the accessibility of bus and rail services by active travel through working with local authorities, TfW and other public transport providers. The Welsh Government will work with partners to enhance active travel routes to create a seamless, attractive and efficient transport system, building on and extending the existing station network plan and station travel plan programmes. These programmes will be enhanced by programmes to increase the provision of quality active travel facilities at bus and rail interchanges.

Governance

15. A new National Delivery Plan for Active Travel in Wales should be put in place by the end of 2022. The Plan should contain a clear statement that its aim is to help realise the Welsh Government's commitment in Llywybr Newydd to achieving significant levels of modal shift.

Response - Accept in principle, but reject the timescale

The National Transport Delivery Plan already includes 17 actions for improving active travel in Wales. The Welsh Government agrees that there is merit in supplementing this with a more detailed Active Travel Delivery Plan covering our priorities for 2024-2027, and reinforcing our commitment to achieving modal shift. This Plan needed to be developed in collaboration with delivery partners and had been shared in draft form with the Active Travel Board. The final version was published in Spring 2024.

16. The new National Delivery Plan should clarify and codify the role of TfW, local authorities, third sector bodies and Corporate Joint Committees in the delivery of active travel infrastructure and services. It should include a clear statement of who is responsible for doing what, and to whom they are accountable and how they work together.

Response - Accept in principle

The Active Travel Delivery Plan clarifies the roles and responsibilities of organisations involved in delivering active travel. However, this will be a snapshot and will be kept under review as the roles of Corporate Joint Committees and TfW evolve.

- 17.** Local authorities, TfW and the Active Travel Board should be required to jointly produce ambitious but achievable national and local targets for outputs (such as metres of route brought to Guidance standards, number of schools enrolled in an active travel package) and outcomes (such as modal shift, number of people making at least one active travel journey each week, number of active travel journeys to school). These targets should be coupled with a standardisation of the monitoring of active travel across Wales. Baseline data, which can be used to assess impact on modal shift, should be put in place for all major active travel projects.

Response - Accept in principle

The Welsh Government will commence the development of targets when we have baseline data from the first National Travel Survey; these will be developed in consultation with the Active Travel Board and delivery partners, supported by an appropriate accountability framework.

The Welsh Government is currently finalising the national monitoring framework with TfW.

- 18.** There should be a refreshed and restructured Active Travel Board with a small, dedicated and adequately resourced independent secretariat. The membership of the Board should be reviewed to ensure it has the degree of independence required to support its scrutiny function. The local authority presence and role on the Board should be enhanced. It should have clear terms of reference and defined powers that emphasise its role in scrutinising the Welsh Government and bodies that are charged with delivering active travel or are in receipt of active travel funding. It will have a remit to challenge the pace of change. It will advise on the development and implementation of the new Active Travel Delivery Plan. A key part of its role will be embedding active travel in relevant Welsh Government policies across all departments, with powers to access all relevant policy papers. It should have as an early priority the oversight of the implementation of the new active travel behaviour change programme. It will be a key monitor of compliance with the Act and its guidance, and will investigate and highlight instances of non-compliance. It will keep under review the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's targets for active travel. It will be required to publish an annual report containing enhanced monitoring data (see the Data and Monitoring section of this report) from local authorities and the Welsh Government; progress on the implementation of the Delivery Plan; and progress made, and obstacles encountered, in embedding active travel provision across the Welsh Government and local authorities.

Response - Accept in part

We have reshaped the Active Travel Board with an independent chair, Dr Dafydd Trystan, and independent members to scrutinise and challenge the delivery by the Welsh Government, TfW and local authorities.

An independent secretariat was provided by the Design Commission for Wales on a trial basis. We are currently considering options for how the Board can be most effectively supported during 2024-25.

There is no non-legislative mechanism by which the Board can be given powers to access policy papers. However, where Welsh Government is aware of policy being developed that is relevant to active travel, this will be brought to the Board's attention.

19. The new National Delivery Plan for Active Travel should clearly state the importance and value of involving and engaging with local communities and local advocacy groups in all stages of the development of active travel. This must include serious efforts to engage with marginalised groups.

Response - Accept

This is already stated very clearly in the Active Travel Act Guidance and all application documentation. This has also been subject of Ministerial letters to local authority leaders.

20. Local authorities are the key bodies for delivering active travel. They should be supported and guided more to deliver Welsh Government policies on active travel. They should be incentivised further to deliver; and face the possibility of sanctions if they fail to do so.

Response - Accept in principle

The Cabinet is committed to treating local authorities as trusted partners in the context of Welsh Government funding of policy priorities, and this will continue to guide our approach.

Strengthening of local authority support functions is underway within TfW, as stated above. There has also been strengthening of guidance on active travel in relation to other policy areas, such as education and health. Welsh Government will also work with Local Authorities to develop its guidance in relation to the new duties arising from the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024.

Where local authorities fall short of expectations, this almost always translates into failure to secure funding for schemes through the competitive allocation process. Further sanctions will be considered as a last resort and may be explored should support and guidance prove unsuccessful.

21. TfW's role as a centre of excellence and provider of expertise should be built on to deliver the Welsh Government's Active Travel Delivery Plan. TfW's role and

responsibilities in relation to active travel should be clarified and made public by the Welsh Government. Active travel should be built in to TfW's transport integration, including in its brand and publicity.

Response - Accept

TfW has a key role to play as a public transport guiding mind that integrates bus, rail and active travel. Their [remit letter](#) requires the TfW Board to lead the change to a multi-modal organisation.

The Active Travel Delivery Plan clarifies the roles and responsibilities of TfW in delivering active travel.

Active travel features heavily in TfW's brand and publicity. There are dedicated TfW active travel officers to ensure integration into the organisation's wider programme of work.

22. Should the restructured Active Travel Board fail to enthuse and change practice in local authorities, and to hold the Welsh Government to account over active travel progress, such that there is insufficient progress in achieving the aims of the Act, then the position should be reviewed within three years. Consideration should then be given to appointing a Commissioner, as in Manchester and England.

Response - Accept in principle

There are opportunities to consider the Board's work and provide support and make improvements on an on-going basis, rather than wait for a formal review.

The success of the restructured board will be reviewed in 2026.

Behaviour Change

23. Welsh Government should establish a centre of expertise on behaviour change within Transport for Wales.

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of behaviour change in delivering mode shift in Wales. TfW have been growing their capacity in behaviour change and now have staff with dedicated expertise. They have also undertaken extensive research to inform behaviour change and communication activity and this will also be incorporated into the active travel promotional toolkit.

Behaviour change must be informed by reliable insight. We will use data to understand trends and provide information to support the removal of barriers and to influence behaviour change.

24. The new National Delivery Plan should set out the structure for a coordinated behaviour change programme that contains a range of hard and soft measures, which should include a clear role for Public Health Wales. Parallel to this, there

should be a culture change programme to promote the benefits of active travel amongst the general public and to improve driver behaviour around pedestrians and cyclists.

Response - Accept in principle

The Welsh Government supports behaviour change across a number of schemes and portfolios both within and outside of transport. Each scheme has a different focus and will therefore approach behaviour change in different ways and adapt approaches to their specific context or locality. Climate Action Wales is our public facing communication hub to encourage uptake of climate friendly behaviours, including active travel.

The Active Travel Delivery Plan highlights the role Public Health Wales can play in supporting active travel and we will strengthen collaboration between the different delivery partners working in this field to increase synergy and avoid duplication.

Equalities

25. Training in equalities issues for officials and contractors involved in the delivery of active travel, to form an integral part of the training programme advocated elsewhere in this report.

Response - Accept

This will be incorporated into the training programme as well as through dedicated inclusive design reviews.

26. Review the effectiveness and use of Equality Impact Assessments.

Response - Accept in principle

The Welsh Government is of the view that the first priority should be to offer additional training and support on use of EQIA and to identify schemes that would benefit from more detailed inclusive design review, as has been started in 2023-24 and carry these out to improve scheme design. As part of the application process for the Active Travel Fund TfW are already gathering more general information on EQIA, which can form the basis of a wider review.

27. There should be a targeted marketing campaign demonstrating the benefits of active travel and the Act to excluded groups.

Response - Accept in principle

The promotional toolkit provides resources to support local authorities to promote active travel, including specific messaging and resources to target underrepresented groups. The content of the toolkit will grow over time and additional resources will be developed to cover the widest breadth of audiences. The Welsh Government will also consider how best to promote the benefits of active travel, especially in relation to reducing or limiting air pollution. Consideration will also be given to how to best reach excluded groups. This may not necessarily be through a marketing campaign.

- 28.** There should be encouragement and support for third sector enterprises providing access to low cost, quality bikes, and training in riding and maintaining bikes, particularly in areas of deprivation. Bike libraries could be a solution to the need to buy multiple replacement bikes as children grow out of them.

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government has already supported such schemes including E-move, See Cycling Differently, and Beics Ogwen. We will explore the most appropriate mechanism to provide easy-to-access support for not-for-profit schemes across Wales. The Welsh Government funded active travel promotion in schools programme often includes bike maintenance and repair sessions in schools. The Welsh Government also funds cycle training, instructor training and school bike fleets.

We will build on our existing support to not-for-profit organisations that provide access to lower cost second-hand bikes, bike repair and maintenance schemes, with a view to set up a new small volume grant scheme for such and related purposes.

- 29.** Barriers that impede access for people using adapted bikes or trikes should be removed from all active travel routes in Wales.

Response - Accept

We recognise the importance of barrier free routes and fund barrier removal through the core grant to local authorities as well as on the National Cycle Network through Sustrans. As a result, according to Sustrans' own data, we have made quicker progress in barrier removal than elsewhere in the UK.

- 30.** Ensure inclusive messaging in the promotion of active travel. Consideration to be given to the creation of a pooled bank of positive, inclusive active travel images across the sector.

Response - Accept

Inclusive messaging and images are part of the image bank that is being made freely available by TfW as part of the promotional toolkit described above. The content will be further expanded in response to gaps identified and requests from local authorities.

31. Many people have missed out on the opportunity to learn to ride earlier in life, therefore there needs to be widespread provision for adult cycle training, particularly for people with disabilities.

Response - Accept

Guidance for current funding for cycle training already highlights the increased emphasis to offer adult training as well as that aimed at children. Whenever we are able to, we offer additional funding to local authorities to deliver more cycle training, and in particular inclusive, adult and family cycle training. We allocated over £100k to this in 2023-24 in addition to our regular annual funding for cycle training from the Road Safety Grant.

32. To ensure greater equality of access to the benefits of active travel, a package of actions should be put in place aimed at providing better pathways into active travel for groups with currently low levels of participation in active travel, including women, the elderly, deprived communities, disabled people and ethnic minorities. Catering for the needs of these groups will improve active travel provision for all of us. Active travel monitoring data should capture information about these groups.

Response - Accept in principle

Inclusivity is a cross-cutting theme for our actions. Our e-move pilot included gender budgeting and, as mentioned above, inclusivity will be an important part of active travel promotion.

A specific survey commissioned in 2022 included questions about active travel and will provide data on active travel behaviour and attitudes amongst groups with currently low levels of active travel. This data will be published during 2024.

Active Travel to School

33. All local authorities should be encouraged and supported to deliver an extensive School Streets programme.

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government has prioritised School Streets schemes as part of the Safe Routes in Communities Grant since 2021-22. For 2023-24, we offered funding to all local authorities to undertake pre-work to identify suitable schools for the introduction of school streets, where they are not yet ready to implement schemes. School streets guidance will be published in Spring 2024.

34. The Welsh Government and local authorities should work together with Public Health Wales in promoting active travel to schools utilising the opportunities offered by the Travel to Schools Hands Up Survey and the School Health Research Network, Student Health and Wellbeing Survey.

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government is working with a wide range of partners to promote active travel in schools. The Hand Up Survey outputs will become a key way of measuring success and supporting action.

- 35.** All central funding for new and re-developed schools should be dependent on the incorporation of an effective package of measures to increase active travel to school.

Response - Accept in principle

The Business Case guidance for Sustainable Communities of Learning has been revised and a new checklist developed that sets out clearly the expectation of prioritised active travel access. Schemes are amended regularly as a result of this scrutiny process, however there is currently no effective mechanism to mandate embedding ongoing promotion of active travel to school into the schools' operation.

- 36.** Local authorities should be encouraged to apply for the powers that at present only Cardiff has, to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for moving traffic offences, under the Traffic Management Act - which makes it easier to implement Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and school zones. The forthcoming Regulations on pavement parking might provide a suitable opportunity to implement this recommendation.

Response - Accept

We have already facilitated several knowledge sharing webinars to support local authorities' decisions on how to enforce school streets and the practicalities of using Moving Traffic Offence enforcement. The school streets guidance will also cover this topic. The individual decision will be a matter for local authorities.

- 37.** All active travel related activities in schools should be refocused on increasing active travel to school. The encouragement of parents to take up active travel themselves should be seen as a central part of all the packages.

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government's Active Journeys Programme is already focused on promoting and enabling walking and cycling to school in a way that reaches the wider school community. This requirement is also included in the specification for the procurement of the successor programme which will commence in 2024. We are providing funding to Sustrans to develop resources and provide support for introducing active travel school plans. When we review and update child pedestrian training we will seek to strengthen the focus on encouraging walking.

- 38.** Schools should be encouraged to incorporate active travel elements into their new curriculum.

Response - Accept

Active travel curriculum resources have been prepared to support the new curriculum and are being disseminated alongside other interventions. The ethos of the new curriculum is to give greater autonomy to teachers, so this cannot be mandated.

39. Estyn should be required to comment on schools' promotion of active travel.

Response - Accept in principle

A discussion between education and transport policy leads on this is planned.

Monitoring and Data

40. Active travel monitoring systems should be designed, whenever practicable, to capture meaningful information about people with protected characteristics.

Response - Accept in principle

Most automated monitoring systems (counters and camera-based analysis) are not able to distinguish user groups by characteristics, and gathering data on the characteristics of users relies on surveys and the willingness of users to share this information. Many local authorities are supplementing counts with user surveys for this reason, but these are labour intensive. For national programmes the Welsh Government is committed to gather and evaluate data on how these impact on different groups. For example, monitoring for the e-move pilot captured detailed information about people with protected characteristics.

41. If an opportunity to amend the Act arises then the reporting section should be broadened to include a wider range of indicators. Alternatively, the detail could be delegated to a new power for Welsh Ministers to make statutory guidance on reporting. In the interim, an effective solution, and one that should ensure compliance, would be to make complying with revised guidance on standardised monitoring requirements a condition of receiving Welsh Government funding for transport schemes.

Response - Accept

If the opportunity for amendments to the Act arises, this will be consulted on. Work on improving monitoring at the local level by providing detailed guidance is at an advanced stage by Transport for Wales and monitoring and evaluation plans are a requirement of funding.

42. Welsh Government and local authorities must adopt a standard approach to monitoring active travel development and usage in order for the reporting to be meaningful. It should be a requirement that all such reports are published, and in a manner that makes them easily accessible to the public.

Response - Accept in principle

Work on improving monitoring at the local and national level is at an advanced stage by TfW. It is likely that this will recommend a differential approach recognising that monitoring needs to be tailored to the circumstances. The aim is however to have consistent high quality monitoring data.

Legislative Change

43. Change the cycle of ATNM submission from three to five years.

Response - Accept

If the opportunity for amendments to the Act arises, we propose to include this change. In the interim, the timescale for the third iteration has been extended until 1 December 2026 by Ministerial Direction. It is also expected that future reviews of the maps will be significantly less labour intensive than the first two iterations, given the extent of network coverage achieved in the latest cycle.

44. Revise the definition of active travel routes so that it is not dependent on whether a route is located inside or outside of a designated locality.

Response - Accept in principle

If the opportunity for amendments to the Act arises, this will be consulted on. In practice, this has been addressed in the Active Travel Act Guidance and the approved Active Travel Network Maps already include a large number of routes outside the designated localities, which are eligible for funding.

45. Make the design standards of the AT Act Guidance statutory so that they apply to all active travel infrastructure in Wales, however funded and include provisions empowering Welsh Government to make statutory guidance for all sections of the Act.

Response - Accept in principle

If the opportunity for amendments to the Act arises, this will be considered and consulted on.

46. The Act should be amended to strengthen and widen the duty to promote active travel. The current wording of the duty to promote, restricts its application to when Welsh Government and local authorities are 'exercis(ing) their functions under this Act'. The duty to promote active travel should be a general requirement on the public sector, not confined to when they are fulfilling their other duties under the Act.

Response - Accept

The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024 contains provisions amending the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, including new duties on the

Welsh Ministers and local authorities to promote active travel as a way of reducing or limiting air pollution. During 2024, the Welsh Government, working with local authorities, will develop statutory guidance on the exercise of this duty. The Welsh Government will also issue a statement at the end of 2024 on how it intends to carry out its duty to promote active travel.

47. The duty to continually improve the network should be quantified using such indicators as an annual percentage increase in the size of the network meeting design guidance standards.

Response - Accept in principle

If the opportunity for amendments to the Act arises, this will be considered. However, it is unlikely that mandating a specific annual percentage increase in legislation will be advisable or practicable, and this may be better considered as part of the performance framework for local authorities, or local targets.

48. Ensure that the wording of the highways duties in section 9 of the Act are enforceable in law.

Response - Accept in principle

If the opportunity for amendments to the Act arises, this will be considered and consulted on. In the interim, the Welsh Government will work with other partners to significantly raise awareness of these duties and, through the training programme, offer training to improve compliance without the need for legislation.

49. Amendment of the UK contractors' Red Book to bring it in line with Welsh Government's guidance on providing for active travellers at street works.

Response - Accept in principle

Welsh Government does not have responsibility for the UK contractors' Red Book. We will continue to raise this matter with UK Government's Department for Transport and work with partners to increase awareness among contractors of the Welsh Government guidance where it applies.

50. Compliance with the requirements of the Active Travel Act and its guidance should be a condition for the receipt of any Welsh Government transport funding.

Response - Accept in principle

This is already partially the case in so far that eligibility to apply for the Active Travel Fund is linked to inclusion on the approved Active Travel Network Map. In respect of the other duties under the Act, there is currently no mechanism to effectively assess compliance without imposing additional administrative burdens on local authorities (which would not be in line with our Programme for Government commitment to reduce such burdens) and TfW. However, this could be taken forward as part of the scrutiny of local authorities by the Active Travel Board and the development of a wider performance assessment framework for local authorities.

51. Renew the requirement for a review of the Act every five years.

Response - Accept in principle

If the opportunity for amendments to the Act arises, this will be considered and consulted on.

CCEI RECOMMENDATION 21

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE RESPONSE

SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT PRINCIPLES

On 10 September 2024 we launched the consultation period of our Sustainable Investment Principles. These principles set out the traits we seek when considering projects and engaging with investors and developers.

The consultation documents are available at the following links:

- [Egwyddorion Buddsoddi Cynaliadwy drafft | LLYW.CYMRU](#)
- [Draft Sustainable Investment Principles | GOV.WALES](#)

These principles form part of our new approach to sustainable finance for nature recovery, as recommended by the Finance Earth report on developing nature markets in Wales.

The Principles were co-developed with the sustainable finance Task and Finish group which comprises of eNGOs including RSPB, Wildlife Trusts Wales, WWF and Marine Conservation Society, Dwr Cymru and NRW. These Principles aim to increase and diversify the available funding to effectively tackle the nature emergency and the pressures that drive biodiversity loss – including climate change, pollution, and unsustainable management of natural resources. These Principles will help ensure that any funding is of high integrity, benefits and engages local communities and avoids inappropriate land use change and greenwashing.

Welsh Government is proposing the following four principles to guide its approach towards private investment in nature.

1. Support integrated land use and the equitable sharing of the benefits
 - This principle is to ensure that those seeking to invest in natural capital markets do so in partnership with the landowners and managers. Under this principle, investments and projects should strive to deliver supplementary outcomes, such as biodiversity improvements in addition to carbon sequestration.
2. Deliver public, private, community and cultural well-being benefits
 - This sets out that investment and management decisions must account for the local conditions and suitability while showing consideration of the four capital resources (natural, social, economic and cultural).
3. Demonstrate best practice engagement and collaboration
 - Under this investors and land managers must collaborate openly with the wider public and public bodies to develop a coherent approach to delivering their projects.
4. Demonstrate values-led and high integrity

- This principle considers additionality, data robustness, transparency of assessment techniques and methodology and the duration of derived benefits.

SUPPORT FOR NATURE MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable finance, payments for ecosystem services, and natural capital markets are still a relatively new sector. In order to begin building Wales' capacity and knowledge base Welsh Government has funded two pathfinder pilots (see below for further information) and is considering further pilots.

MARINE CYMRU FUND

- Welsh Government has recently provided £85,000 of funding to the WCVA to recruit a Fund Development Manager for the Marine Cymru Fund. The Marine Cymru Fund seeks to invest in programmes and projects that enable, maintain and enhance the resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems for the long term, facilitating the delivery of wider benefits to individuals, communities and businesses. The Fund Development Manager will draft a strategic framework to guide project funding and will work to attract seed funding from investors.

BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

- Welsh Government has provided Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (Y Bannau) with £119,000 of funding for a Head of Natural Capital Development position to accelerate the realisation of benefits from private finance nature investment. This role will help scale up nature recovery funding by exploring and implementing high-integrity ecosystem service markets and disseminating this knowledge across our other national park authorities.

UK GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

- We continue to engage with Defra and the British Standards Institute (BSI) on developing a Nature Investment Standards Programme, which will provide a benchmark for industry codes and markets recognised as sufficiently robust and credible. Our engagement ensures that our Welsh values are reflected within these new standards. BSI concluded their consultation on the Overarching Principles at the beginning of the summer and are preparing to consult on their Biodiversity and Carbon standards early this fall.

Lukas Santos
Deputy Clerk
Climate Change, Environment, and
Infrastructure Committee

Email: seneddclimate@senedd.wales

Date/Dyddiad: 13th September 2024

Please ask for/*Gofynnwch am*: **Michelle Edmunds**
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Dear Sirs,

Re: Report on Restoration of Opencast Mining Sites

Thank you for your letter of 5th August 2024.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council wish to make the following observations in respect of the section that relates to the Ffos- y-fran open cast mine.

We find it important to point out that the scheme was granted planning permission by the Ministers, and that the final report, along with the conditions, was prepared by an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers and approved by the Ministers.'

The Council makes no comment in respect of paragraphs 59 to 64 or in respect of the sections labelled "Incident Response and Preparedness", "Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd – Statement – 9 May 2024", "Restoration", "Application of the Recommendations of the 2014 report", "Interim Restoration Work", "Revised Restoration Plan", "Community Involvement" or "Engagement with Stakeholders".

With regard the section labelled "Our View" the Council notes the view of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee. The Council would however point out that it considers that the Coal Authority's criticism of the Council is unwarranted and lacks credibility. In order to set the record straight we consider it important to clarify the Council was in active discussion with the mine operator in October 2023 and had been for some time. The active discussions which were ongoing at the time of the Coal Authority's letter were in relation to an agreed and updated Strategy for the remainder of the Site. It must be noted that the developer in consultation with the Council has agreed an acceptable restoration of part of the site which accords with the approved restoration Strategy. Discussions are continuing in relation to the submission of a planning application to allow for a revised restoration strategy. It is anticipated that the application will be

received towards the end of 2024. It should also be noted the Coal Authority, together with representatives from NRW and WG have also been party to these discussions.

The Coal Authority's letter of October 2023 appears to conflate "abandonment" with "escheat" and it is fundamentally wrong on the following; (a) if the Site were to revert to the Crown Estate by escheat, this would not mean that the obligations as to restoration of the land, as set out in the planning conditions of the 2011 planning permission, ceased to bind it (and so any third party into whose hands it may later come, including the Welsh Government acting for the Crown), and (b) the obligations currently binding MSW are secured by a parent company guarantee with a limit of £15m and, in addition, a £15m fund held in escrow ("the Fund").

With reference to the recommendations the Council has no observation to make in respect of recommendation 21. This is a matter upon which the Welsh Government should respond.

With reference to recommendation 22 the recommendation is accepted.

With reference to recommendation 23 the Committees views are noted. The Council considers that it would be appropriate to expect any revised restoration scheme to secure the appropriate restoration of the land as approved under the 2015 approved strategy, this would cover re-profiling of the land, cultivation and the establishment of ecological features, as well as the preservation of any historic assets and the reinstatement of public rights of way. Any revised scheme would inevitably differ in that overburden mounds 2 and 3 are likely to be retained and a body of water will be incorporated into the scheme. The developer has also indicated that they would wish to retain the motorcross facility. Any revised scheme that is submitted by the applicant could provide greater ecological interest and the reinstatement of as much land as possible for the commoners.

Recommendations 24 and 25 are noted.

The Council has no observation to make in respect of recommendation 26. This is a matter upon which the Welsh Government should respond.

Yours sincerely



CLlr Geraint Thomas
Leader, Merthyr Tydfil CBC



Restoration of Opencast Mining Sites

Response to the CCEI Committee Report (August 2024)

20/09/2024

On 8 August 2024, the Senedd Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee published its *Report on the Restoration of Opencast Mining Sites*. The report contained 26 recommendations, 22 of which are directed at Welsh Government. This document sets out the Welsh Government's response to those recommendations.

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Responses to the 22 recommendations for Welsh Government	4
Recommendation 1.....	4
Recommendation 2.....	5
Recommendation 3.....	6
Recommendation 4.....	7
Recommendation 5.....	7
Recommendation 6	8
Recommendation 7.....	8
Recommendation 8	9
Recommendation 9	9
Recommendation 10	10
Recommendation 11.....	10
Recommendation 12.....	11
Recommendation 13.....	12
Recommendation 14.....	12
Recommendation 15.....	13
Recommendation 16.....	13
Recommendation 17	13
Recommendation 18.....	14
Recommendation 19.....	14
Recommendation 20	15
Recommendation 21.....	15
Recommendation 26	16

1. Introduction

Throughout early 2024, the Senedd Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee undertook a short piece of work to explore the restoration of former opencast mining sites in south Wales. The work focused on:

- 1.** the financial and practical arrangements for the restoration of the Ffos-y-Fran opencast site;
- 2.** how restoration of opencast sites can be secured, and contingency planning in the event of insufficient funds being available; and
- 3.** the findings and recommendations from the Welsh Government report on [Research into the failure to restore opencast coal sites in south Wales \(April 2014\)](#) and whether these still apply.

The Committee held a series of evidence sessions during May 2024, receiving oral evidence from representatives of the Coal Authority, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, as well as several environmental and community groups.

2. Responses to the 22 recommendations for Welsh Government

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government must ensure that policies regarding opencast coal mining and other mining activities are robust, up-to-date, and provide appropriate protections for local authorities and communities.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government Coal Policy Statement was published on 22nd March 2021 ([Coal policy statement \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)).

The Coal Policy Statement makes clear:

“All proposals for the extraction of coal, **including any secondary coal products produced during mining operations**, which are destined for energy markets, must clearly demonstrate why they are needed in the context of climate change emission reduction targets. Energy markets include, but are not limited to, the domestic consumption of coal products and electricity generation.”

Meanwhile, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) states “proposals for opencast, deep-mine development or colliery spoil disposal should not be permitted. Should, in wholly exceptional circumstances, proposals be put forward they would clearly need to demonstrate why they are needed in the context of climate change emissions reductions targets and for reasons of national energy security” (para 5.10.14). Each proposal would be considered on its individual merits, but must clearly demonstrate:

Why the extraction is required to support industrial non-energy generating uses for coal.

Why the extraction is needed in the context of decarbonisation and climate change emission reductions targets, or to ensure the safe winding-down of mining operations or site remediation.

How the extraction contributes to Welsh prosperity and our role as a globally responsible Wales.

Decisions will be made on the specific circumstances of each case based on its climate impact, with the presumption being against extraction.

We will continue to use all tools available, where they are properly engaged, to give effect to this clear policy objective of presuming against coal extraction.

Whereas our objective is to stop the extraction and consumption of coal, we also have a duty to manage the safe closure and restoration of existing and historic mining infrastructure. The incidental extraction of limited coal may also be required during the construction of infrastructure projects. Therefore, coal extraction may be needed in wholly exceptional circumstances and each proposal will be decided on its own merits, but the presumption will always be against coal extraction.

It is worth noting that Welsh policy pre-dates the equivalent Scottish Government policy by almost two years. It is also worth noting that the Scottish Government Policy was informed by discussions with Welsh Government officials and uses very similar language to the policy adopted in Wales. The Scottish Government National Planning Framework 4 states "Development proposals that seek to explore, develop, and produce fossil fuels (excluding unconventional oil and gas) will not be supported other than in exceptional circumstances. Any such exceptions will be required to demonstrate that the proposal is consistent with national policy on energy and targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Minerals Technical Advice Note 1 Aggregates (MTAN1) and Minerals Technical Advice Note 2 Coal (MTAN2) contain comprehensive planning policy which is robust about controlling the impacts of mining and quarrying.

Development plans should set out clearly the criteria that will be applied to minerals proposals to ensure that they do not have an unacceptably adverse impact on the environment and the amenity of nearby residents. Issues that must be addressed include access and traffic generation including the routes to be used for minerals transportation; noise, in terms of limits, type and locations; and blasting controls.

PPW states that one of the key principles of mineral extraction is to protect environmental and cultural characteristic of places, including those highly cherished for their intrinsic qualities, such as wildlife, landscapes, ancient woodlands and historic features, and to protect human health and safety and general well-being. The role of the planning authority is also to reduce the impact of mineral extraction and related operations during the period of working by ensuring that impacts on relevant environmental qualities caused by mineral extraction and transportation, for example air quality and soundscape, are within acceptable limits.

Planning policy, including PPW, is kept under continual review to ensure it is kept up to date, fit for purpose and relevant

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 2

The Welsh Government must clarify its policies relating to coal tip remediation with the aim of ensuring that the negative impacts of opencast mining are not repeated

Response: Accept

Welsh Government's policy on coal tip reclamation is to reduce threats posed to the people of Wales and identify potential opportunities to turn disused tips into beneficial assets for communities.

It is important that any long-term reclamation strategy both works with and compliments existing systems (planning, regeneration, the environment etc.) and that opportunities are identified to support wider strategic ambitions for Wales.

Not only can reclamation bring significant economic benefits, new skills and more employment to areas that need it, but reclaimed tips can also assist with addressing the climate and nature emergencies. Some of our coal tips can be sites for biodiversity enhancement, contributing to ecological networks and improving ecosystem resilience.

Nevertheless, there is no 'one size fits all' approach for coal tip reclamation. The best option for reclamation will ultimately depend on each individual tip, including its hazard status and proximity to sensitive receptors such as communities.

At the present time, our primary focus is to ensure that disused tips are safe and to deliver a modernised, fit-for-purpose regulatory regime. Once the Bill has been implemented, it will be important to focus on developing resource capacity and capability (which is a limiting factor in the delivery of a long-term reclamation strategy), as well as developing a more detailed strategic approach to mining and industrial legacy in Wales – this will need to include reclamation of disused tips and management of open cast mining.

Financial implications: Costs to deliver a long-term disused coal tip reclamation strategy are not currently known. However, our assumption is that it will not be possible to proceed with a strategic approach without a significant financial input from the UK Government – for example it is estimated that the reclamation of a single disused coal tip can cost between £30 - 40 million.

Recommendation 3

Planning Policy Wales says that coal extraction can be permitted “in wholly exceptional circumstances”, where the proposals “demonstrate why they are needed in the context of climate change emissions reductions targets and for reasons of national energy security”. The Welsh Government should clarify the criteria that must be used when assessing proposals in this regard.

Response: Accept in Principle

As referred to in response to Recommendation 1, Planning Policy Wales states that “[p]roposals for opencast, deep-mine development or colliery spoil disposal should not be permitted. Should, in wholly exceptional circumstances, proposals be put forward they would clearly need to demonstrate why they are needed in the context of climate change emissions reductions targets and for reasons of national energy security” (para 5.10.14)

All coal-mining operations require a licence from the Coal Authority under the Coal Industry Act 1994 (“CIA”). Section 26A of the CIA states mining activities in Wales authorised under a Coal Authority licence can only take effect if the authorisation is approved by the Welsh Ministers. It will be the responsibility of mine operators to ensure that any licence issued by the Coal Authority has the approval of the Welsh Ministers before commencing coal mining operations.

Guidance for mine operators seeking the approval of a Coal Authority licence was published by Welsh Government on 22 July 2022, following a public consultation which ended 21 October 2021.

[Requesting approval for Coal Authority mining operation licences \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

This guidance document is intended to assist mine operators in providing the necessary evidence to support a licence approval request.

It is recognised that all mines, operations and licence applications are different, and that flexibility is required to ensure the licensee is afforded a proper opportunity to make a

case for a licence approval. Therefore, this guidance does not prescribe specific evidence requirements, allowing the mine operator the freedom to determine how best to support the request for licence approval. This guidance does, however, provide an overview of the licence approval decision-making framework and the type of evidence that will help the Welsh Ministers to make a prompt decision on the request.

Where a Coal Authority mining operations licence is not required, for example, where the extraction of coal is incidental to a wider development, or as part of a restoration project, the Welsh Government Coal Policy Statement and Planning Policy Wales still apply in full.

Further, in all cases where coal extraction is proposed, the relevant requirements of the Well-being of Future Generation Act 2015, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the pathway to net zero, set out in Welsh secondary legislation and material policies such as Net Zero Wales will apply.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Government should make the Coal Authority's best practice guidance recommendations into statutory requirements.

Response: Reject

National planning policy is clear in that planning conditions should be able to secure the restoration, aftercare and after-use of mineral sites. Operators and landowners should ensure that sufficient finance is set aside to enable them to meet restoration and aftercare obligations. The full cost of restoration does not need to be put on deposit at the outset, but it should build up commensurate with the programme of activity or extraction.

Local Acts in South Wales contain powers to impose bonds or other financial guarantees for the restoration of coal sites, secured by way of conditions / legal agreements.

For coal sites, the policy requirement is to ensure that the full restoration costs are covered commensurate with the stage of the development as set out in the Coal Authority's Best Practice guidance note.

Given the fact that it is highly unlikely that new opencast mines will be granted planning permission, we do not see the need to place the best practice guidance on a statutory footing.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 5

The Welsh Government must consider how the best practice guidance can be applied more broadly, particularly for coal-tip reclamation.

Response: Accept

The guidance is intended to help mitigate the financial problems caused by the failure to restore opencast coal sites in Wales.

The primary purpose of the guidance is to assist in the interpretation of policy and guidance contained in Planning Policy Wales and Minerals Technical Advice Note 2 - Coal. It also gives more certainty to those working in the industry as to what financial controls are required to ensure site restoration and aftercare.

The Welsh Government will write to the committee when we have considered how the guidance could be applied more broadly.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Government must engage with the UK Government and Local Government to determine how to address the funding shortfall for site restoration.

Response: Accept

The operator and landowner is responsible for restoration and aftercare of opencast sites. They must also ensure that sufficient finance is set aside to enable them to meet restoration and aftercare obligations.

The Welsh Government is engaging with the UK Government on funding for disused coal tip site reclamation. Our position remains unchanged; coal tips in Wales need a sustained programme of investment to make them safe and sustainable for the future, and the case for UK Government to contribute to the longer-term funding that will support this work is clear and compelling. Welsh Government had discussions with previous UK Governments and called on them to contribute to a long-term reclamation programme, but they refused to provide support. With two Labour governments working together, there is now an opportunity to develop a shared UK and Welsh Government plan.

Financial implications: Costs to deliver a long-term disused coal tip reclamation strategy are not currently known. However, our assumption is that it will not be possible to proceed with a strategic approach without a significant financial input from the UK Government – for example it is estimated that the reclamation of a single disused coal tip can cost between £30 - 40 million.

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government should commission an independent review to assess the extent of the funding needed to restore opencast sites to an acceptable level. The independent review should consider what constitutes an “acceptable level” in consultation with local authorities and communities.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government will need to consider how it evaluates the potential cost of dealing with open cast mining and land reclamation as part of developing a strategic approach to mining and industrial legacy in Wales. This will be completed after the implementation of a bill looking at safety of disused tips in Wales. The Mines and Quarries (Disused Tips) Bill will be introduced to the Senedd this autumn.

Financial implications: Neither Welsh Government nor the Welsh Ministers have a direct liability for funding a programme dealing with open cast mining and land reclamation. However, Welsh Government has had statutory powers over 'derelict land' since April 2006 through the transfer of functions of the former Welsh Development Agency. Those discretionary powers were previously used to protect public safety, create development land and enhance the environmental and social well-being of Wales. In recent years funding for such activity has been restricted and undertaking an exercise to assess the costs of restoration of open cast sites may give rise to an expectation that Welsh Government funding for such activities will follow.

Recommendation 8

The Welsh Government must clarify the roles of local authorities, the Coal Authority, and Natural Resources Wales in the restoration of opencast sites, with particular emphasis on their responsibilities in the decision-making process, and make this information publicly available.

Response: Accept

The operator and landowner is responsible for restoration and aftercare of opencast sites. They must also ensure that sufficient finance is set aside to enable them to meet restoration and aftercare obligations.

Meanwhile, the local planning authority is responsible for monitoring the restoration of opencast coal sites as part of the approved restoration requirements.

The main functions of the Coal Authority are to manage the coal resources under its control, encourage economically viable operations to work these resources, grant licences for coal exploration and extraction, provide effective management of subsidence damage claims, and provide information on past, present and proposed future coal mining activities. Any activities which intersect, disturb or enter any of the Authority's coal interests require the prior written permission of the Authority.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) issue permissions and licences including abstraction licenses to protect surface and groundwater resources and will undertake monitoring during periodic checks, particularly if complaints are received.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Government should require local authorities to ensure all Planning Officers' reports are available online alongside associated planning documents, including revised restoration plans, where relevant.

Response: Reject

Planning applications and accompanying documents are required to be incorporated into the Planning Register, which is the primary way that planning applications are made available to the public. Most local planning authorities now display their planning register

online but progress to this point has been variable because authorities operate different corporate software systems that have varying functionality.

We agree that transparency in planning decision making must be achieved, however, insisting on specific web publishing requirements at this time is premature. The Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) is currently supporting the Welsh Government in exploring how digital solutions can enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of the planning system in Wales. The project is taking a holistic view of the planning application process and it is anticipated that the communication of decisions will form an integral part of that work. This will bring together the variability currently seen across authorities in a managed cost-effective way. The discovery phase of the project has just been completed and CDPS will be announcing the next phase of their work shortly

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 10

The Welsh Government must engage with local authorities to assess and meet the future staffing needs of local authorities for specialist roles such as mineral planners.

Response: Accept

Welsh Government acknowledges that local planning authorities' budgets have experienced very significant reductions due to public sector austerity and recognises that this has had a detrimental effect on their ability to always make timely planning decisions. As a result, the Welsh Government increased planning application fees by 20% in August 2020 to provide additional resources to local planning authorities and is undertaking further work to achieve full cost recovery in the delivery of the development management service.

Planning application fees do not currently cover the actual cost of processing applications in most cases. A review of planning application fees to cover inflation and start the journey to full cost recovery is underway. As part of this commitment, a conversation is taking place with local authorities about retention of planning fees within the planning service and performance monitoring and improvement. Corporate Joint Committees could have an important role to play by providing critical mass, especially in specialist areas such as minerals and waste planning, built heritage, ecology, urban design, etc.

The Welsh Government encourages action to be taken at a local level to shore up service standards, including investigating local options for collaborative or joint delivery of services and the streamlining and standardisation of local practices. The Corporate Joint Committees established to prepare Strategic Development Plans can also contribute to this collaborative approach.

Further work is currently being undertaken on this with a view to a consultation to be held in the autumn.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 11

The Welsh Government should reconsider the proposal from the 2014 report to establish a virtual "Centre of Excellence" for restoration planning, particularly in light of potential coal-

tip reclamation proposals, and lead discussions with local government on how to implement this.

Response: Accept in principle

Minerals and Waste planning is already a successful model for working regionally. Teams in Carmarthenshire and Flintshire operate shared service level agreements acting as experts in minerals and waste planning in south and north Wales. Both services could potentially enhance their remit to provide advice on restoration schemes.

Welsh Government coal extraction planning policy is clear that development proposals will only be approved in wholly exceptional circumstances. There will therefore be very few schemes being brought forward and those that are proposed are likely to have a tip safety objective.

At the present time, our primary focus is to ensure that disused tips are safe and to deliver a modernised, fit-for-purpose regulatory regime. Once the Bill has been implemented, it will be important to focus on developing resource capacity and capability (which is a limiting factor in the delivery of a long-term reclamation strategy), as well as developing a more detailed strategic approach to mining and industrial legacy in Wales – this will need to include reclamation of disused tips and management of open cast mining.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 12

The Welsh Government must engage with the UK Government with the aim of removing the Coal Authority's statutory duty to maintain and develop an economically viable coal mining industry.

Response: Accept in principle

Any coal mining development in Wales, be it an extension of time or space at an existing mine, or an entirely new mining activity, would require planning permission from the local planning authority. Regardless of any licence being issued by the Coal Authority, a relevant planning permission is always required (Coal Authority licences are conditional on such planning permission being in place). Therefore, it is entirely within the control of the Welsh Ministers to determine whether any coal mining takes place in Wales.

Further, any new licence issued by the Coal Authority must be approved by the Welsh Ministers before it can take effect. There are no existing conditional licences that pre-date this power coming into effect via the Wales Act 2017, therefore, the approval of the Welsh Ministers is required in all cases (i.e. for any proposals for new or extended mining operations).

Whereas we would wish for the Coal Authority to remove its statutory duty to maintain and develop an economically viable coal mining industry, this duty has no practical effect in Wales. However, Welsh Government would wish to see this duty removed to support wider global decarbonisation efforts, and the continued transition away from fossil fuel extraction and consumption.

Welsh Government officials have previously engaged with both UK Government and the Coal Authority to secure a commitment to remove the statutory duty of the Coal Authority to maintain and develop an economically viable coal mining industry. Officials will continue to encourage UK Government to adopt policies that presume against fossil fuel extraction, and to make the necessary legislative changes. However, Welsh Government is confident that it has in place the necessary policy and processes to ensure the climate emergency and nature emergency are fully reflected in any decision making.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 13

The Welsh Government must consider making a degree of community ownership a requirement for opencast sites and similar developments, including coal tip reclamation sites.

Response: Reject

The planning system is unable to determine planning applications on the basis of ownership. As the committee recognises, robust safeguards are possible by various ownership models, despite the abysmal record of the private sector delivering successful restoration of some coal extraction sites across Wales.

Community ownership of an opencast site would mean the liability of the site would rest with the community and therefore the cost of restoration would lie entirely with the community.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 14

The Welsh Government should review and update the Minerals Technical Advice Note 2 (MTAN2) to ensure it is fit for purpose, particularly in the context of new developments and coal tip remediation.

Response: Reject

Minerals Technical Advice Note 2 Coal (MTAN2) contains comprehensive planning guidance which is robust about restoration and aftercare schemes for coal extraction.

Planning Policy Wales, Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statements, Minerals Technical Advice Notes and Circulars should be taken into account by LPAs in Wales in the preparation of development plans.

MTAN2 sets out how impacts should be assessed and what mitigation measures should be adopted, and seeks to identify the environmental and social costs of coal operations so that they are properly met by the operator.

MTAN2 contains guidance on achieving a high standard of restoration, aftercare, and afteruse. Coal developments must meet the restoration and aftercare requirements of PPW and ensure that land is restored to a sustainable and beneficial afteruse.

Restoration schemes should seek to maintain or enhance the environment for the benefit of local communities and the long-term quality of the land for the intended afteruse

Along with all other planning policy, MTAN2 is kept under continual review to ensure it is kept up to date, fit for purpose and relevant.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 15

The Welsh Government should incorporate provisions for the restoration of former opencast sites within the forthcoming Disused Tips (Mines and Quarries) Bill.

Response: Reject

In his Legislative Statement on 9 July 2024, the then First Minister made clear that inclusion of provisions relating to restoration of former opencast sites within the forthcoming Disused Tips (Mines and Quarries) Bill (the Bill) is not feasible at this time. To incorporate such provisions would significantly expand the legislative reach of an already complex Bill and would mean we would be unable to deliver the Bill in this Senedd term. .

It would also have significant financial implications, which would likely make the Bill unaffordable. To put this in context, it is estimated that the reclamation of a single disused coal tip can cost between £30 - 40 million.

The aim of the Bill is to reduce the likelihood of landslides on disused coal and non-coal tips through the establishment of a new public body that will have functions in relation to assessment, registration, monitoring and management of disused tips. This is a significant undertaking and is what the government has committed to delivering.

At the present time, our primary focus is to ensure that disused tips are safe and to deliver a modernised, fit-for-purpose regulatory regime. Once the Bill has been implemented, it will be important to focus on developing resource capacity and capability (which is a limiting factor in the delivery of a long-term reclamation strategy), as well as developing a more detailed strategic approach to mining and industrial legacy in Wales – this will need to include reclamation of disused tips and management of open cast mining.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 16

The Welsh Government must proactively engage with the UK Government to seek funding for coal tip remediation.

Response: Accept

Please see our response to Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 17

The Welsh Government must mandate public consultation for all stages of the restoration process, including when revised restoration plans are brought forward.

Response: Accept in principle

Public participation is very important at all stages of the planning process and is to be encouraged. The wide range of development types and scales mean planning legislation can only set a minimum standard of consultation.

All planning applications for mineral development are subject to pre application consultation with communities. Proposals must be publicised both by the developer before submission and by the planning authority once submitted. It is at the planning application stage that the substantive issues of any planning application must be understood before a decision can be taken. If planning permission is granted subject to conditions, further details may be required to be submitted. Local planning authorities have discretion about whether to consult at this later stage as the details may range from the inconsequential to more significant. Consulting on very minor details would unnecessarily slow the consenting process however we expect planning authorities to consult where the public is materially affected by the submitted details.

There will be a limit on what scale of change can be submitted to discharge a condition. If the change goes beyond the parameters of the original planning permission, then a new planning permission would be required and the mandatory consultation arrangements would apply.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 18

The Welsh Government should advise local authorities to designate a specific officer as a point of contact for the local community, providing a direct communication channel between residents and local authorities on matters relating to sites or similar developments.

Response: Accept in principle

Appendix B of Minerals Technical Advice Note 2: Coal includes detailed advice on how community liaison arrangements could be set up. This recommends a site liaison officer be appointed by the site operator to maintain a clear contact point for dealing with complaints and maintain accountability for doing so.

Local planning authorities are best placed to determine how best to arrange their resources to provide similar clear focus for regulatory activity within their remit. The relevant officer will depend on the status of the application. For new applications the case officer will be the relevant officer whilst for operational sites the enforcement team are likely to be the appropriate contact.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 19

The Welsh Government should advise local authorities to create online portals where residents can access up-to-date information on all stages of the restoration process.

Response: Reject

Please see our response to Recommendation 9.

Recommendation 20

The Welsh Government should encourage the use of citizens' assemblies as forums for discussing the future of restoration sites, particularly where restoration failed to meet the original planning permission and compromises need to be made.

Response: Reject

National planning guidance already recognises that well established liaison committees help to provide a better understanding of the impacts to be expected from mineral extraction. Many quarries and coal sites have established liaison committees which act as a forum for regular discussion and explanation of current problems. Such forums can be set up through the initiative of the operator or the local planning authority.

Where regular complaints are received or there is concern about local impacts the local planning authority should request that the operator cooperate in establishing regular meetings of a nominated group. Such a group should comprise an equal balance of residents and representatives of the operator together with officers and local elected members of the authority and others, such as town or community councillors, as appropriate. Every effort should be made to ensure the groups are open and as transparent as possible.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 21

The Welsh Government must explore stronger enforcement mechanisms to address breaches of planning controls without delay, such as the mining activities that continued at Ffos-y-Fran after the licence expired.

Response: Reject

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides a range of effective enforcement options depending on the circumstances. Enforcement is focused on addressing the unacceptable impacts of unauthorised development rather than punishing the developer. Given the complex nature of planning impacts on both the environment and people it is sometimes acceptable to allow unauthorised activities to continue while consideration is given to the best course of action. That is what Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council concluded at Ffos-y-Fran. However, where unacceptable harm is happening, the law does currently provide authorities with powers to stop activities immediately, either through a stop notice or Court injunction.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 26

The Welsh Government should consider the broader implications of the failures at Ffos-y-Fran and implement systemic changes to prevent similar issues in future, including in relation to coal-tip reclamation sites.

Response: Accept in principle

Welsh Government coal extraction planning policy is clear that development proposals will only be approved in wholly exceptional circumstances. There will therefore be very few schemes being brought forward.

At the present time, our primary focus is to ensure that disused tips are safe and to deliver a modernised, fit-for-purpose regulatory regime. Once the Bill has been implemented, it will be important to focus on developing resource capacity and capability (which is a limiting factor in the delivery of a long-term reclamation strategy), as well as developing a more detailed strategic approach to mining and industrial legacy in Wales – this will need to include reclamation of disused tips and management of open cast mining.

Financial implications: None

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

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

Llŷr Gruffydd
Chair
Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/water-special-measures-bill).

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.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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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

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

Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0237/24

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

19 September 2024

Dear Chair,

I am writing in relation to the commitments made to provide further information during my appearance as Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs at Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee on 26 June.

Woodland Creation

It was agreed to provide an update to the Committee on the lean review of the Woodland Creation Process. The following actions have been completed as part of the review:

Process changes

- Changed the Woodland Creation Grant (WCG) window, instead of several short windows, we now have one long window open for nine months per calendar year with monthly selections, reducing the time between a plan being verified and getting a contract to plant woodland.
- Requirement for Environment Impact Assessments (EIA) has been reduced following the review. NRW only send one in 20 plans for an EIA check, reducing time to verify all plans.
- Terms & conditions for registered woodland planners have been updated and disseminated. To improve quality and consistency in the process, a preferred supplier model was introduced, which ensures only woodland planners registered via RPW Online can submit plans under the scheme.
- Capital works claims guidance has been updated and a presentation given to woodland planners at their training in April 2024.

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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.

- Rural inspectorate Wales have provided a presentation to woodland planners to explain how the verification process works to reduce the level of scheme non-compliance.
- New literature has been produced to explain the benefits of Woodland Creation and which scheme is right for the customer, explaining the different approaches depending on where the customer would like to plant and available options and funding.

IT changes

- An additional question has been added to the Expression of Interest online form, to confirm the Pre-Application detail and surveys to validate them prior to the plan being created.
- Woodland Plan Register implemented on the Rural Payments Wales online platform. This allows uploading of plan 'shapefiles' and the immediate validation of the plan, reducing the time for plans to be submitted and checked.
- Automated scoring process introduced to speed up selection for plans for approval.
- Changes to WCG windows with monthly automated selections.
- Implemented advance groundworks payment, up to 15% of the total Woodland Creation Grant Contract capital works value in advance of planting.

During the session a Committee Member asked whether Local Authorities still have to produce tree strategies. Local Authorities are not required to produce a separate tree strategy however they can be a useful means to fulfil broader obligations placed on Local authorities via Planning Policy Wales and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and to contribute to the Woodlands for Wales Strategy.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW), para 6.4.39 requires planning authorities to consider: *“the importance of trees and woodland, particularly native woodland and valued trees, and to have regard to local authority tree strategies or SPG and the Green Infrastructure Assessment.”* *“Planning authorities should adopt appropriate, locally relevant, time sensitive, minimum tree canopy cover targets for their authority area to guide the protection and where appropriate the expansion of canopy cover.”* The policy then refers to a number of tools they could use to help them establish a baseline and set appropriate and measurable canopy targets.

Local Authorities are required to undertake green infrastructure assessments as part of their development plans and respond accordingly, and so should be considering trees and woodlands as part of this. Planning officials input into the preparation of local development plans pointing, amongst other things, to the requirements in PPW outlined above.

Officials have recently met with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and presented to a network of Local Authority Environment Directors. Officials discussed the current approach to tree planting and whether they had a tree planting strategy / targets. My officials have heard back from 12 Local Authorities (over half so far) and all either have tree or woodland strategies, are renewing or developing, their strategy or it is part of their wider climate change or decarbonisation action plan. We are collating the information Local Authorities have given us and identifying how we can work together to maximise Local Authorities' contribution to tree planting and support effective of maintenance of the woodlands they already have.

Clean Air Act

I agreed to provide the Committee with further information on the work Welsh Government is doing around engagement and communications for the Clean Air Act and how we are

drawing on the learning from our climate change communication and engagement work. This work includes our Climate Action Wales programme.

Climate Action Wales

The approach to our Climate Action Wales programme was informed by extensive behavioural research and analysis. The progress made to date in shaping the methodology behind the programme and in delivering the commitments made in the [Public Engagement Strategy](#) was recognised by the Climate Change Committee (June 2023) report, which acknowledged that Wales is a step ahead of the UK in this area.

The programme focuses on encouraging everyone to play their part in tackling climate change by cutting carbon emissions through behaviour change linked to home energy, transport, food and consumption choices. However, where relevant, it also highlights the range of additional benefits these actions will bring, such as cleaner air through greener travel behaviours.

Communications delivered through Climate Action Wales also exemplify what the Welsh Government is doing to make climate action easier, more convenient and affordable. This work explains how inter-connected these policies are to in delivering benefits to public health and wellbeing, protecting the environment and nature, promoting social justice and tackling the cost of living crisis.

The programme's scope extends beyond communications and also encourages upstream public engagement. The [Public Engagement Strategy](#) explains how these two aspects are interlinked and the importance of delivering national opportunities for engagement e.g. through [Wales Climate Week](#) and outreach community engagement through the [Climate Conversations Fund](#). If people are more engaged in decision-making, they are more likely to engage in action. It can also help to shape understanding on why changes are happening and to build trust in Government.

The programme provides a national framework for the Welsh Government to work alongside other public sector bodies, regions and communities, influencers and trusted voices to ensure a joined-up approach to public communications and engagement on climate change. It also involves the gathering, analysis and sharing of behavioural and social research to ensure Government policies are evidence based, fair and deliver mutually beneficial outcomes for the climate, air quality, public health, and for communities and households across Wales.

We recognise the need for clear, positive engagement with the public if we are to meet the commitments to delivering air quality improvements set out in our National Air Quality Strategy for Wales (also known as the Clean Air Plan for Wales) and in the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024. Raising public awareness about air quality is crucial and so the Act includes a new duty on Welsh Ministers to promote awareness of air pollution. We are currently developing a delivery plan setting out how we will promote awareness of the risks to human health and the natural environment associated with air pollution, alongside ways of reducing and limiting it. This is likely to include actions related to raising awareness of local air quality, as well as actions aimed at reducing pollution from vehicle idling and domestic burning. Enabling the public to make informed choices about the impacts of poor air quality and required mitigations is essential to informing and changing public attitudes and behaviours. These actions are important in delivering the ambitious changes needed to improve air quality and support wider government ambitions, such as for decarbonisation

As part of our action to promote awareness of air pollution, we have also continued to support Clean Air Day, which was held this year on 20 June. As the UK's biggest air pollution campaign, it is an important event to engage the public and raise awareness of actions they can take to improve air quality, for example using different modes of transport for everyday travel.

Natural Resources Wales

I agreed to provide an update on work that's going on between NRW and other agencies, and the work that's being done on a multi-agency basis across the UK in terms of investigating and tackling criminality within the waste industry, please see Annex 1.

Biodiversity Deep Dive

I published an update on the Biodiversity Deep Dive as a Written Statement on 25 July, which can be viewed here: [Written Statement: Biodiversity Deep Dive \(25 July 2024\) | GOV.WALES](#)

Review of Marine Planning Approaches in Wales

I agreed to provide the Committee with an update on Independent Review of Marine Planning Approaches in Wales.

The review will consider how we can further develop our marine planning framework to provide greater spatial direction, balancing support for renewable energy and protecting and enhancing the marine environment. As part of this, the review will consider marine planning approaches elsewhere to inform our understanding of good practice and future opportunities for marine planning in Wales.

Specifically, the independent review will:

- Assess the merit of approaches taken by other planning regimes (including terrestrial and other marine planning regimes).
- Consider opportunities and tools for providing greater spatial clarity and direction through the marine planning framework in Wales.
- Consider options on how to reflect environmental considerations within the marine planning framework; including balancing development with protecting the marine environment, and planning approaches to help recognise, protect and enhance marine biodiversity.
- Consider the implications and opportunities of working with strategic UK-level spatial planning initiatives.
- Assess options for taking common approaches with neighbouring UK marine plan areas.
- Consider options for promoting stronger integration with terrestrial planning policy.
- Consider evidence and impact assessment requirements associated with providing greater spatial clarity.

Subject to procurement, we anticipate the review will commence in autumn 2024, with work to be completed in spring 2025.

Sustainable Farming Scheme Ministerial Roundtable

The Committee asked to be provided with a list of organisations in the Sustainable Farming Scheme Ministerial roundtable and its subgroups. This is provided at Annex 2.

Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

Finally, I agreed to provide an update on how Welsh Government is working with The Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS). Welsh Government officials maintain an awareness of the research conducted at IBERS and engage on specific issues as relevant. IBERS colleagues are also active in the Wales sub-group of the UKRI and Government funded Land Use for Net Zero People and Nature (LUNZ) Hub which has a remit to provide rapid access to findings from the best available, established and novel research from the consortium partners, synthesising and sharing knowledge across disciplines in easily accessible formats. More generally, we are working to improve our pro-active engagement with Wales' Higher Education Research Institutes, including IBERS.

Yours sincerely,



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 & Rural Affairs

Annex 1

Natural Resources Wales multi-agency work to tackle waste crime

The briefing note has been produced in response to a request from Welsh Government.

Natural Resources Wales is responsible for providing a risk-based approach to regulation of the waste industry to ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources for human and environmental well-being. Our role in waste is vital in supporting WG to deliver their strategic aim of achieving a more circular economy in Wales whilst ensuring that waste is appropriately managed without having an impact on human health and the environment.

Our responsibilities are wide ranging and include the regulation of permitted sites and activities concerned with the movement, storage, treatment, and disposal of waste, as well as responding to incidents and taking enforcement action. We seek to achieve this directly through delivery of our regulatory duties, using powers and tools available as set out in legislation; and indirectly through wider interventions that support the delivery of relevant outcomes, such as raising awareness with waste producers to ensure they are taking steps to segregate, classify and manage their waste responsibly.

How NRW works on a multi-agency basis to tackle serious and organised crime

The most common route for waste offences to be identified is through reports from the public, industry or other partner agencies. We also gather criminal intelligence and assess business intelligence, e.g., waste data from operator returns, that can help us to identify waste crime. Where we investigate and detect offences, we consider the most proportionate response to the offending in line with our [Enforcement and sanctions policy](#), which can range from advice and guidance to prosecution, particularly where the matter is serious.

In the course of investigating waste crime NRW collaborates with a range of partners including the Police, DVSA, Local Authorities and the Welsh Revenue Authority. NRW also has Police Officers seconded from 3 of the 4 Welsh Police Forces (Dyfed Powys, Gwent and North Wales) that play an important role in obtaining support for our action to tackle serious waste crime.

NRW is also engaged with multi-agency partnerships aimed at tackling serious and organised crime at Wales, UK and International levels:

- NRW actively participates in the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN). The Government Agency Intelligence Network is a collaboration of law enforcement partners and government agencies and partners who work together to tackle serious and organised criminality. The network disrupts criminality by sharing intelligence, exchanging information and undertaking joint working. GAIN groups are organised by the 9 Police Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU), and also have representatives in the Joint Unit for Waste Crime.

- NRW officers regularly attend police led multi-agency meetings with the specific remit of tackling serious organised criminality. It is apparent that there is crossover in areas of criminality and these meetings help target criminals of interest to a broad cross section of partners.
- NRW is an active partner in the Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) and there is a Wales based member of staff in the JUWC. The JUWC is a collaborative network of law enforcement agencies that works to target criminals that are engaged in serious and organised waste crime. The JUWC can help to co-ordinate a multi-agency response where this is likely to be the most effective way of addressing illegal activity.
- Serious and organised waste crime activity is financially motivated. The Economic Crime Unit is an England only initiative funded by the Environment Agency. In NRW we currently have an Accredited Financial Investigator (AFI) that carries out financial investigations related to serious waste, and other environmental offences. Our AFI can take action through the Courts to freeze bank accounts and recover the financial benefits of criminal conduct.

To further tackle the criminal financial benefit that is derived from illegal activity, NRW works in partnership with the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) who are responsible for the collection and management of Landfill Disposals Tax (LDT) within Wales.

As part of our close working relationship, the WRA has delegated certain functions to NRW in relation to the collection and management of LDT. NRW has a specific team operating on a national basis fully funded via the WRA, focussing solely upon LDT matters, working closely with the WRA.

NRW and the WRA have developed a 3-year Joint Strategy (2023-2026) which focusses our partnership on two key areas - tackling tax evasion (primarily the misdescription of waste) and unauthorised disposals of waste (disposals made at sites other than authorised landfill sites).

Together we are engaged in ongoing operational activity including:

- A joint misdescription project which has so far identified multiple points in the waste chain at which waste can be misdescribed. Moving forward, the project will focus on ways to mitigate opportunities for misdescription.
- Enquiries into multiple landfill site operators involving the misdescription of waste, where relevant NRW has been supporting this work with assistance from its LDT team and regulatory officers.
- Referrals to the WRA's Unauthorised Disposals Team of potentially unauthorised disposals.

In addition to the above, NRW and the WRA also collaborate with law enforcement agencies throughout the UK to tackle waste crime, including via the JUWC and GAIN, as mentioned above.

- NRW is not directly involved in the Environment Agency's (EA) Waste Shipment Intelligence Service. NRW's 'Waste Shipment Unit' works closely with EA colleagues as well as the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to check and ensure compliance of waste exports arising from Wales. In addition, NRW separately reviews available

information (including waste site data returns, Waste Data Flow for Local Authority reporting, cargo bookings through Welsh ports) to identify higher risk exports and target our compliance checks / inspections accordingly.

When non-compliance / illegal waste shipments are identified, NRW takes necessary actions to investigate and takes an appropriate enforcement response in line with our policies. Illegal waste exports may also become subject to a 'repatriation' order at a cost to the responsible exporting parties and NRW will facilitate this.

NRW has been a part of the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL), which is a collaborative network of European regulators since 2015. Our officers are part of IMPEL's Waste and Trans-frontier Shipment (TFS) of Wastes Expert group and use IMPEL resources to keep up to date with how other EU / UK countries regulate International Waste Shipments.

Our Waste Shipment officers have participated in officer exchanges as part of the Shipment of Waste Enforcement Actions Project (SWEAP). The project, which is co-ordinated by IMPEL, aims to disrupt the illegal waste trade, through increasing collaboration and skill sets amongst inspectors and law enforcement agencies.

- NRW also coordinates the Fly-tipping Action Wales (FtAW) Programme which is a partnership initiative sponsored by Welsh Government. A key role of FtAW is to support the enforcement work of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales through provision of training, support and sharing of best practice in relation to surveillance and enforcement activities.

The partnership's Enforcement Working Group meets bi-annually to share best practice and to discuss any emerging trends or issues in relation to fly-tipping, attendance is made up of Officers from Local Authorities, NRW and the Police as well as representatives from WG.

The FtAW team also attend the National Fly-tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG) meetings chaired by DEFRA. These meetings provide another opportunity to alert us to any emerging threats in relation to fly-tipping and make us aware of any links to more organised criminal gangs operating in this arena in England and Scotland.

FtAW also collect and validate the national fly-tipping statistics on behalf of Welsh Government which are published each year. This data is monitored to identify any emerging trends in terms of hazardous waste types that are being illegally fly-tipped.

FtAW also run a project called FlyMapper that enables the spatial recording of fly-tipping incidents and runs national public awareness campaigns that aim to educate householders in Wales about their Household Waste Duty of Care responsibilities, which helps prevent waste from ending up in the hands of fly-tippers.

- NRW's Tackling Waste Crime project is a Welsh Government funded initiative that works to develop and test innovative approaches that can help to prevent and disrupt waste crime. Active across all parts of Wales, we work operationally to deliver interventions on the ground, and more tactically to develop new approaches and improve NRW's capability to tackle waste crime. For example, we are:
 - Undertaking investigations into cross border waste crime.
 - Participating in investigations led by the Joint Unit for Waste Crime, and British Transport Police to tackle scrap metal related crime.

- Participating in the UK Waste Compliance Taskforce, led by Waste Industry representative bodies that are committed to reducing waste crime.
- Bringing forward approaches that can improve our ability to detect indicators of waste crime, particularly misdescription.

Annex 2

Membership of stakeholder groups

Partner	Ministerial Roundtable	Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel	Officials Working Group
Afonydd Cymru			✓
Agriculture Horticulture Development Board	✓		✓
Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group	✓		✓
Central Association of Agricultural Valuers			✓
British Meat Processors Association	✓		
British Veterinary Association (Cymru)	✓		
Coed Cymru			✓
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 5.11

Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mike Hedges MS and Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chairs
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee / Climate
Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
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20 September 2024

Dear Mike and Llyr,

As Chairs of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee, I would like to draw your attention to a written statement I have recently published in relation to the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024.

The statement sets out details of a consultation paper which has recently been issued on our proposals for the subordinate legislation to implement the Act.

A link to the written statement can be found here:

[Written Statement: Infrastructure \(Wales\) Act 2024 – Publication of consultation \(20 September 2024\) | GOV.WALES](#)

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Evans AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning

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Agenda Item 10

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

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Agenda Item 11

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

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