

# Agenda – Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 – Senedd

Meeting date: Thursday, 6 July 2017

Meeting time: 10.00

For further information contact:

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Committee Clerk

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## Private pre-meeting (10.00 – 10.15)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

2 Inquiry into forestry and woodland policy in Wales – oral evidence session with Natural Resources Wales

(10.15 – 11.15)

(Pages 1 – 72)

Michelle Van-Velzen, Sustainable Land Management Team Leader

Peter Garson, Head of Commercial Operations

### Attached Documents:

Research Brief

Briefing paper on woodland creation in Europe

Written evidence from Natural Resources Wales

Break (11.15 – 11.30)



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

### **3 Inquiry into forestry and woodland policy in Wales – oral evidence session with Welsh Government**

(11.30 – 12.30)

(Pages 73 – 159)

Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs  
Chris Lea, Deputy Director of Land, Nature and Forestry  
Bill MacDonald, Head of Forest Resources Policy Branch

#### **Attached Documents:**

Written evidence from Welsh Government (8 pages)

Woodlands in Wales Action Plan (54 pages)

Action plan progress as at June 2017 (21 pages)

### **4 Paper(s) to note**

**Letter from the Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee regarding one day inquiry into fire safety in high rise blocks in Wales**

(Pages 160 – 161)

#### **Attached Documents:**

Letter from the Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

**Letter from the Chair of the Finance Committee regarding changes to the budget process**

(Pages 162 – 163)

#### **Attached Documents:**

Letter from the Chair of the Finance Committee

**Letter from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee regarding scrutiny of Natural Resources Wales on its Annual Report and Accounts 2015–16**

(Pages 164 – 170)

**Attached Documents:**

Letter from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee

**Letter from Andrew RT Davies AM on the Rural Development Programme Wales**

(Page 171)

**Attached Documents:**

Letter from Andrew RT Davies AM on the Rural Development Programme Wales

**Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs with further evidence on the management of Marine Protected Areas**

(Pages 172 – 188)

**Attached Documents:**

Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

**Additional evidence from Confor on forestry and woodland policy in Wales**

(Pages 189 – 195)

**Attached Documents:**

Additional evidence from Confor

**5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:**

Item 6 of this meeting and the entirety of the Committee's next meeting on 12 July.

On 12 July, the Committee will consider the implications of the Great Repeal Bill, the terms of reference for a forthcoming inquiry into food and drink, and the Committee's draft report on the management of Marine Protected Areas.

**Lunch (12.30 – 13.00)**

**6 Inquiry into forestry and woodland policy in Wales – discussion of key issues**

(13.00 – 14.00)

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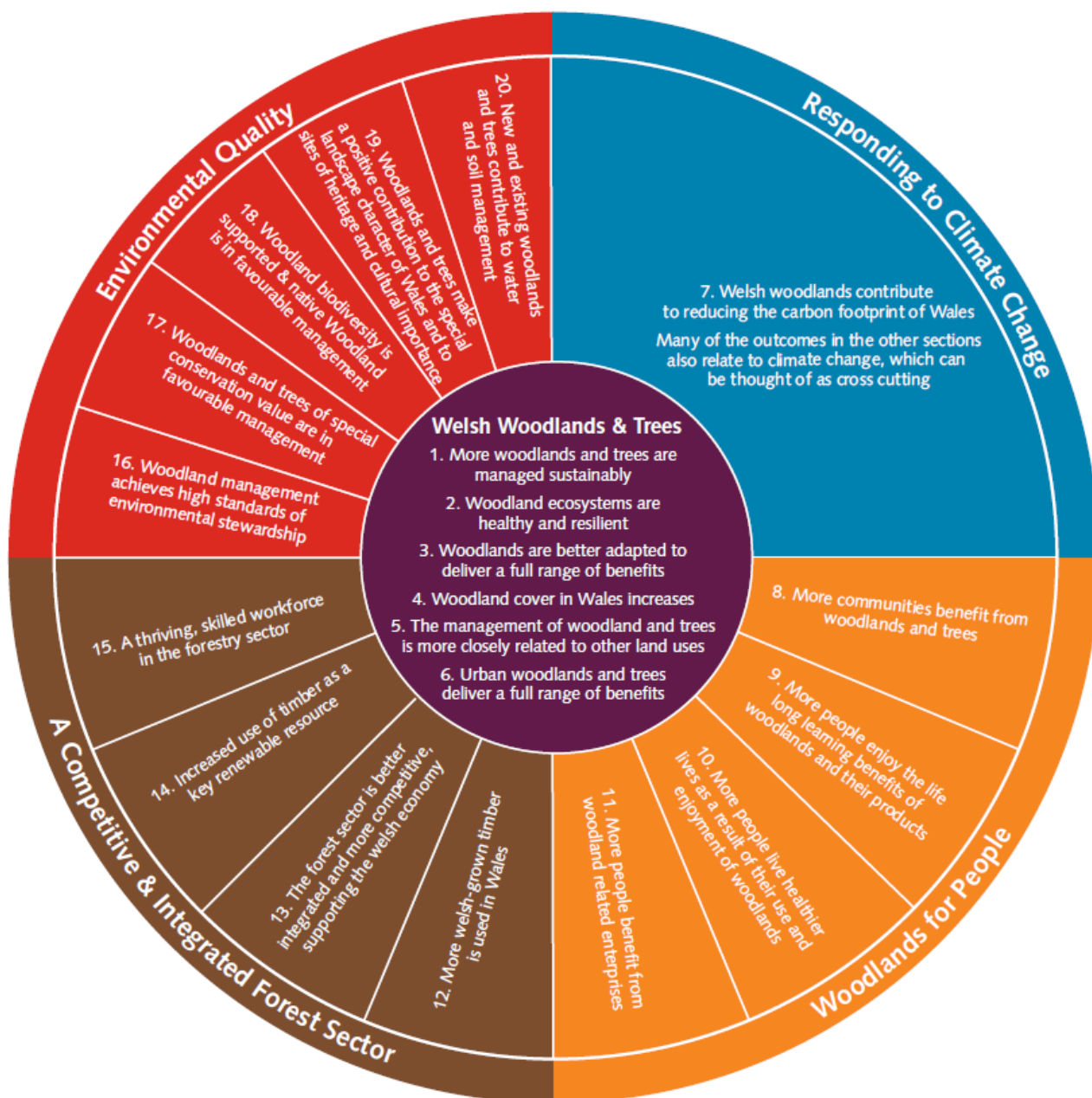
## Natural Resources Wales response to National Assembly for Wales' Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs (CCERA) Committee inquiry into forestry and woodland policy in Wales

### Executive Summary: key messages

1. The Welsh Government's (WG) Woodlands for Wales (WfW) Strategy (2009) remains broadly fit for purpose but a refreshed third edition would allow closer alignment with recent Welsh legislation and the National Natural Resources Policy (NNRP) to fully deliver the aspirations of the WG. It is critical that the 50 year vision remains the same. Once refreshed the strategy must become a more prominent part of Wales' sustainable land management policy and practice to capitalise on the offer that trees, woodlands and the forest industry can make to people, the environment, economy and culture of Wales.
2. There are opportunities to significantly improve the delivery of outcomes contained within WfW via a more ambitious and funded five year Action Plan. Partnership activity could be driven through updated 'agenda for action' sections in a refresh of the eight supporting WfW Policy Positions.
3. The Woodlands Strategy Advisory Panel (WSAP) is a valuable forum providing expertise, oversight and a co-production approach to the delivery of WfW. However the group needs to be revitalised and more dynamic in its approach to securing delivery of partnership actions with clear focus on progress to the WfW vision. If the work of WSAP is to be capable of resonating beyond the woodland and forestry sector its work needs to be better promoted and incorporated into WG policy, programmes and funding.
4. The Welsh Forest Resource makes a valuable contribution to the health and resilience of ecosystems, and generates multiple benefits that directly contribute to well-being (as reported in the State of Natural Resources Report [SoNaRR] 2016). There needs to be greater integration between WfW, NNRP, Area Statements and the work of Public Services Boards (PSBs) as well as collaborative working across the various land management sectors.
5. The foundation theme of WfW - the nature, condition, extent and management of our woodlands and trees – underpins delivery of the whole WfW Strategy. Integrated opportunities to support these outcomes are often overlooked in rural development, land management and other policies yet are critical to achievement of all 20 outcomes sought as well as the 50 year vision. Slow progress has been made to bring more woodland into management and create more new woodland.

6. The ambition to create 100,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030 to help meet Wales' carbon reduction targets has seen little progress, just 104 hectares in 2015-16, and requires a radical change in the level of incentives available together with a more enabling regulatory approach. SoNaRR highlighted that planting the right trees in the right place is the single action most likely to derive the greatest benefit in terms of delivering the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) and making a significant contribution to Wales' well-being goals.
7. The WfW Strategy Action Plan requires a closer link to the contemporary outputs of the Science and Innovation Strategy for Forestry in Great Britain. This is particularly critical to tackling the challenges of the Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 for forestry and tree health. More focused work via the WSAP would help secure the integrated actions required.
8. Illegal activity and anti-social behaviour associated with forests, woodlands and trees is a growing concern which we take seriously in our management of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE) and through our regulatory responsibilities and enforcement activity. Targeted campaigns could be better integrated through key Rural Development Plan delivery models such as Farming and Forestry Connect.
9. The perception of declining numbers of foresters and woodland managers with professional, specialist skills in Wales is a concern. Linked to this, is the challenge of continuing to promote the role of woodlands and trees in education, learning, health and well-being more widely.
10. Land use change and land management policy needs to be more cognisant of the contribution, value and potential of Wales' (soft and hardwood) timber industry to deliver against key WG policies. If Wales does not create more new productive woodland the forecasted drop in softwood timber availability from the 2030s poses a risk to wood supply, jobs and the growth of the forest industry. Wales needs to better support growth in the supply chain and optimise the 'value added' of the timber processed in Wales.
11. The transition from European Union membership presents both challenges and opportunities for the trees, woodland and the forest industry. Wales' future rural development policies must support better delivery of the NNRP, the 20 outcomes sought by WfW and the recommendations of SoNaRR. The positive role of trees and woodlands in urban and peri-urban policies must be reinforced.

Figure 1 - The outcomes for the foundation and four strategic themes of the Woodlands for Wales Strategy and a summary of documents supporting implementation and tracking of progress



Woodlands for Wales (WfW) Strategy documents	Publication Date
Policy Position Statements (eight separate publications providing further evidence for the Strategy)	2010
Woodlands for Wales Strategy (1 <sup>st</sup> edition)	2001
Progress report (2001-2006)	2006
Woodlands for Wales Strategy (2 <sup>nd</sup> edition)	2009
Action Plan (1 <sup>st</sup> edition)	2010-2015
Action Plan (2 <sup>nd</sup> edition)	2015-2020
Indicators (annual statistics)	2009 onwards

## Introduction

1. We welcome this opportunity to contribute to the CCERA Committee inquiry into forestry and woodland policy in Wales. We have multiple roles and responsibilities in relation to forestry, woodlands and trees and our response provides an overview of our work across all areas via case studies (**Annex 1**) as well as more focused content on what we consider to be the key issues.

## NRWs roles and responsibilities

2. NRW's purpose, as set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, is to pursue sustainable management of natural resources. We apply a specific set of sustainable management principles while maximising our contribution to the well-being goals in all of the work that we do. In addition we have various duties delegated to us from WG including many from the extant Forestry Act (1967 as amended) including having '*... due regard to the national interest in maintaining and expanding the forestry resources of Wales*'. We have a general statutory duty to '*... promote in Wales the interests of forestry; the development of afforestation; and the production and supply of timber*'. Our new duties under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 cut across everything that we do, and woodland and trees have an important role to play. Consistent with our statutory duties there are also significant non-statutory opportunities for us to positively influence the management of the wider Welsh Forest Resource<sup>1</sup>, as well as support woodland creation, through partnership working and engagement.
3. We have a close working relationship with WG in relation to our management of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE). This is a public asset and is managed to support delivery of WfW as well as other public policy priorities. Of relevance to our role in managing the WGWE is the previous NAW Environment and Sustainability Committee [inquiry](#) into the Public Forest Estate in Wales in 2014 and our [written submission](#). One of our key actions is the implementation of a forest sector engagement plan known as the '[Ten Areas for Action](#)', in partnership with WG, [Confor](#) and [Wood Knowledge Wales](#). Progress of the 'Ten Areas for Action' plan is reviewed quarterly with NRW's Forest Business Sector Group and actions updated in agreement with partners annually.
4. WG are responsible for the provision and allocation of funding for woodland under the Glastir Woodland element of the Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. In relation to funding towards the cost of establishing new woodland, Glastir Woodland Creation, NRW undertake the verification role on behalf of WG. NRW's roles and responsibilities are summarised in **Annex 1** and a summary of NRW and WG roles and responsibilities in **Annex 2**.

## Policy and legislative context

5. We have a lead or key supporting role to play in delivery of the 20 outcomes under the foundation theme and four strategic themes of WfW (**Figure 1**) through our management of the WGWE, as well as through our regulatory and advisory roles. We recently provided an update on progress to WG on our contribution to delivery of the

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<sup>1</sup> We use this term to include all forests, woodlands and trees in Wales

Action Plan and forms part of the [documentation](#) supporting this inquiry. Our contribution is measured and reported via the [Woodlands for Wales Indicators](#) report.

6. Enshrined within WfW, and the [UK Forestry Standard](#), is the concept of sustainable forest management<sup>2</sup>. This is compatible with the principles of SMNR and we are currently undertaking a piece of work to better understand and communicate the ‘fit’ between these two sets of guiding principles. This work will ensure that NRW’s long term planning (25 year) and management practices within the WGWE fully support the delivery of SMNR and maximise the contribution that forestry makes to the achievement of the well-being goals. It will also underpin our approach to regulation and advisory functions.
7. The nature and extent of ecosystem services and the well-being benefits derived from woodlands are well documented in the 2016 [State of Natural Resources Report](#) (SoNaRR). Increasing woodland cover was identified as one of the seven areas offering the greatest opportunity for dealing with the challenges and risks highlighted in SoNaRR and for contributing to Wales’ well-being goals:  
*“Creating more woodland and bringing existing woodland into more sustainable management would: help increase diversity and connectivity of woodlands (making them more resilient to disease and better for wildlife, for example); increase the woodland resource; provide building materials and fuel; help reduce flood risk; help store carbon to tackle climate change; and provide recreation opportunities to improve health and happiness”.*
8. However, five of the seven opportunities identified in SoNaRR are relevant to wider land management policy and practice. In particular, woodlands and trees can make a significant contribution to:
  - greening our urban areas;
  - increasing active travel;
  - sustainable drainage;
  - restoration of our floodplains;
  - improving air quality;
  - providing urban sound barriers;
  - better soil management; and the,
  - restoration of our peatlands and uplands.

Whilst WfW is broadly in line with these opportunities the strategic actions required, especially for new woodland creation, have not been able to achieve sufficient traction in the development and implementation of broader WG policy and programmes. This is highlighted in the CCERA Committee’s report on [‘The future of land management in Wales’](#).

9. Our response to the [WG consultation](#) to inform the development of the NNRP reinforced SoNaRR’s key messages and highlighted the key issues in relation to forestry and wider land use and its management. It also emphasised the importance of

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<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Forest Management was defined in 1993 by the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe as “... the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems”.

all sectors across Wales breaking away from their traditional silos to seize opportunities to build new partnerships and networks that can drive a significant change in the way that we seek to meet our goals. NRW is committed to playing our part through our role on PSBs, and via the preparation of Area Statements. These priorities will be at the heart of our Well-being Objectives which were published on 31<sup>st</sup> March in [our Well-being Statement](#) and new Corporate Plan which will be published in summer 2017.

## Key messages

10. **WfW remains broadly fit for purpose but it would benefit from a refreshed third edition.** The 50 year vision should remain in place, in recognition of the long timescales needed to establish trees and manage change in woodlands. The environmental, social, economic and cultural issues relevant to the planning and management of forests, woodlands and trees are consistent with contemporary evidence and policy. However the foundation theme and four strategic themes are not easily related to the interconnected and cross-cutting principles of SMNR and the well-being goals. The Strategy, once refreshed, should be more visible across the Programme for Government so that it is clear what action is being taken to improve and secure the future of the Welsh Forest Resource and what 'offer' it can make to the people, environment, economy and culture of Wales by delivering SMNR at National and Area levels.
11. **There are opportunities to significantly improve the delivery of outcomes contained within the Strategy**, through for example:
  - A comprehensive update of the eight [Policy Positions](#) and their 'agenda for action' sections that support WfW, ensuring that prioritised actions then feed into the five year Action Plan;
  - Revision of the five year Action Plan to ensure prioritised, funded and adequate actions relevant to all outcomes in the Strategy, not just some. For example, actions to address the achievement of soil and water outcomes is absent;
  - The role, purpose and committed contribution of each partner is not clearly established within the current Action Plan and Progress Reports are not now regularly published beyond the annual Indicators Report. More focused attention on obtaining commitment of delivery and driving actions by all partners involved in the Action Plan and regularly reporting progress on outputs and progress towards the Strategy outcomes (the WfW Indicators). This should be the core business of the WSAP and could benefit from a 'rapporteur' or 'outcome champion' approach;
  - Reviewing, improving and resourcing the Woodlands for Wales Indicators<sup>3</sup>, as a means of tracking progress over time alongside consideration of the suite of [National Statistics](#) and Forestry Statistics already published at UK and Wales levels. Extending the incorporation of key measures for trees, woodland and forestry into broader WG progress reporting frameworks would be beneficial.
  - More collaborative and secure partnership working with the wider land management sector, alongside cross-directorate working within Welsh Government, will help to ensure delivery of SMNR and well-being benefits in an integrated way. For example, the relevant role of woodlands and trees in new infrastructure and transport developments (National Development Framework for Wales); and by,

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<sup>3</sup> This work is due to commence shortly, via a WSAP commissioned Task and Finish Group

**12. The WGs Woodlands Strategy Advisory Panel (WSAP) should continue but the group needs to be revitalised and more dynamic in its approach.** NRW currently has two members on the panel. WSAP has a long-standing and active role in guiding delivery towards the 20 WFW outcomes since the first Strategy was developed and published in 2001. Without the expertise and representation of this group the WfW Strategy, Action Plan and Indicators risk losing focus in broader WG policy oversight. This risk is especially prevalent with the changes to governance of forestry at UK and country level including tree health, research in forestry, international policy and representation and the production of UK and country forecasts, economics and statistics. If WSAP is to realise its full potential and be capable of resonating beyond the woodland and forestry sector its work needs to be better represented and linked to other key WG stakeholder groups especially those guiding rural and economic development policy and programmes. In summary WfW requires action in eight main areas and yet WSAP and the Action Plan do not sufficiently drive action across the whole Welsh Forest Resource to:

- bring more woodlands under management;
- increase tree species diversity (improve resilience to climate change, pests and diseases but also to improve woodland habitat condition);
- reduce the areas managed by clearfelling;
- increase new woodland creation;
- mitigate for climate change – including the role of timber substituting for other more carbon intensive materials, new woodland creation capable of producing good quality wood products, and woodlands providing locations for renewable energy projects;
- extend native woodland area and improve condition;
- improve public involvement in decision making; and,
- stimulate economic development in the forest sector via investment, enterprise and skills.

**13. Tackling the challenges to meet the six outcomes of the foundation theme is critical to the success of the other four strategic themes (Figure 1).** The Welsh Forest Resource makes a valuable contribution to the health and resilience of ecosystems, and generates multiple benefits that directly contribute to well-being, as reported in [SoNaRR](#). However, we note that the scope of the inquiry does not cover the Foundation theme of the strategy - Welsh woodlands and trees. The six outcomes of this Foundation theme are that:

- More woodlands and trees are sustainably managed;
- Woodland ecosystems are healthy and resilient;
- Woodlands are better adapted to deliver a full range of benefits;
- Woodland cover in Wales increases;
- The management of woodlands and trees is more closely related to other land uses; and that,
- Urban woodlands and trees deliver a full range of benefits.

**14. There are ongoing concerns about their nature, condition and extent of the Welsh Forest Resource<sup>4</sup>:**

- Around 40% (147,000 ha) of Wales' woodlands have little or no management which may affect their resilience and ability to provide ecosystem services and well-being benefits.
- Fragmentation is a significant pressure affecting woodland condition: there are nearly 22,000 woodlands identified as being smaller than 2.0ha.
- Woodland condition continues to be negatively impacted by browsing and grazing pressures from domesticated and wild animals, especially wild deer, and is also affected by Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and increasingly tree pests and diseases.
- The overall conservation status of woodland habitats on protected sites in Wales is regarded as unfavourable although woodland processes operate over long timescales so the recovery to favourable condition may lag behind management action that is being taken.
- Our urban forest is in decline<sup>5</sup>. There is just 1% of urban tree cover to be found in modern high density housing, which is often in our most deprived wards where more tree cover could provide health and well-being benefits.
- Wales is reported as having the highest proportion of declining parks, with the highest percentage reduction in staff and no foreseeable improvement in the condition of parks in the next three years<sup>6</sup>.
- Tree health is declining and pests and diseases are likely to be more prevalent in future due to climate change and our reliance on imported goods.
- The forecasted drop in softwood timber availability in the 2030's poses a risk to wood supply and the wider benefits that woodlands provide. WfW stated that this should be tackled by bringing more woodland into sustainable management and by creating new woodland that is capable of producing utilisable timber but progress has been slow. As a productive resource, Welsh woodlands contribute a GVA of £528.6M per annum<sup>7</sup> to the Welsh economy. There is likely to be an increase in demand for timber, fibre and wood products in the future.

**15. More new woodland creation is needed and the potential for investment needs to be unlocked.** The 2010 ambition to create 100,000 hectares of policy aligned new woodland by 2030 to help meet Wales' carbon reduction targets<sup>8</sup> has seen little progress and requires a radical change<sup>9</sup> in the level of support available including an enabling approach to regulation. Public funding available for new woodland creation currently preferentially supports the creation of small, mainly native woodlands on farms. New woodland creation is recognised as having cost-effective potential<sup>10</sup> to

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<sup>4</sup> More information is available from the [State of Natural Resources Report 2016](#) chapter 3 section 8 pages 48-53

<sup>5</sup> More information is available from our website <https://naturalresources.wales/media/4123/tree-cover-in-wales-towns-and-cities-2014-study.pdf> [accessed on 29.3.17]

<sup>6</sup> HLF (2016) State of UK Public Parks available at <https://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016> [accessed on 29.3.17]

<sup>7</sup> WG (2016) WfW Indicators Report available at <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/woodlands-wales-indicators/?lang=en> [accessed on 29.3.17]

<sup>8</sup> [Climate Change Strategy for Wales](#) Delivery Plan for Emission reduction (2010)

<sup>9</sup> IWA (2012) [Growing our woodlands in Wales](#)

<sup>10</sup> The [Read Report](#) (2009) *Combating climate change – a role for UK forests. An assessment of the potential of the UK's trees and woodlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change.*

significantly contribute to the management of Wales' carbon budgets but requires consistent policy and additional funding to encourage investment and act as a stimulus for green growth. All sectors across Wales have roles to play in reducing emissions and transitioning to a low carbon economy. Confor state that there is at least £20M of potential investment available for Wales<sup>11</sup> and this needs to be matched to WGs ambition for new woodland creation. Investment requires available land, the ability to realistically scope financial return and an enabling decision-making approach to that helps to develop viable planting schemes that meet the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard. If new woodland creation proposals are expected to meet broader WG policy objectives including those required by WfW then additional financial support would be appropriate in line with recommendation 18 made in the CCERA Committee's report on '[The future of land management in Wales](#)' that:

*'The Welsh Government must ensure that future funding for land managers is based on the delivery of outcomes which contribute to the ambitious targets for climate change adaptation and mitigation set out in Welsh legislation such as the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.'*

16. SoNaRR highlighted that **planting the right trees in the right place** is the single action most likely to derive the greatest benefit in terms of delivering the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) and making a significant contribution to Wales' well-being goals. More planting of native broadleaves, mixed woodland and productive softwoods would for example:

- increase the diversity and connectivity of woodlands (making them more resilient to disease and better for wildlife, for example);
- increase the woodland resource;
- provide building materials and fuel;
- help reduce flood risk;
- help store carbon to tackle climate change; and,
- provide access and recreational opportunities to improve health, education and learning outcomes and well-being.

The location and design of planting, including that in urban areas, needs to be carefully considered to maximise these benefits whilst avoiding damage to the structure and functioning of other priority open habitats.

17. The WfW Strategy Action Plan requires a closer link to the outputs of the [Science and Innovation Strategy for Forestry in Great Britain](#). This will be particularly critical in seeking to **tackle the challenges set out in the 2017 Climate Change Risk Assessment for forestry and tree health**. More focused work via the WSAP would help secure the integrated actions required to support the achievement of healthy trees and woodland ecosystems. The [Climate Change Risk Assessment \(CCRA\) 2017 Evidence Report](#) has identified risks and opportunities from changes in forestry productivity and land suitability for particular woodland habitat types and individual native and non-native tree species. There are also risks associated with water scarcity and flooding; from pests, pathogens and invasive species; and from change in frequency and/or magnitude of extreme weather and wildfire events. Woodland productivity and carbon sequestration rates are also likely to be impacted by climate change. The same key messages are highlighted in the [Living with Environmental](#)

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<sup>11</sup> Pers comm

[Change \(LWEC\) Report Card 2016 on Agriculture and Forestry Climate Change Impacts](#). A relevant Welsh example is the '[Living with Climate Change](#)' report for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB which looks at future impacts and resilience issues.

18. **Illegal activity associated with forests, woodlands and trees is a growing concern.** In relation to our management of the WGWE, the additional land manager liability arising from illegal mountain bike trail building and use (known as wild trails), and of illegal off-roading activity is a growing challenge. Increasing and significant numbers of wild trails are being built, particularly in the South Wales Valleys. These sometimes involve illegal tree felling and obstruction of highways, with public safety potentially at risk through unknown trail quality and build. There is a further risk related to the acquisition of rights through prolonged usage. Limited resources are available to manage these activities, either through formal adoption or through their removal. Illegal off-roading is a growing challenge across Wales, and NRW's Enforcement Teams have worked well with local policing teams to challenge perpetrators. Reports of Alleged Illegal Felling (AIFs) have also steadily increased over the last 6 years, from approximately 70 in 2010/11 to approximately 180 in 2016/17. The recent example from Blackwood<sup>12</sup> in Caerphilly highlights that this is an issue that the general public feels strongly about. In addition to illegal activity, there is also concern about anti-social behaviour which reduces public access to, and enjoyment of, woodlands. It will be important to continue with public funding for targeted management campaigns to help tackle these issues.
19. **The perception of declining numbers of foresters and woodland managers with professional, specialist skills in Wales is a concern**<sup>13</sup>. There is a need for investment in skills and training to ensure the future prosperity of the forest sector. As part of the Cyfle Placement Scheme, NRW currently has four Trees and Timber apprentices in their first year of study towards a Level 3 qualification. Linked to this, is the challenge of continuing to promote the role of woodlands and trees in education and learning more widely, from increasing physical literacy and the provision of places to play, through to increasing understanding and appreciation of trees and woodlands and towards long term behaviour change. We now take an enabling role rather than that of direct delivery following difficult choices made as part of our Business Area Review in December 2015, recognising that other providers may be better placed to take on direct delivery of formal education.
20. **Land use change and land management policy needs to be more cognisant of the contribution, value and potential of Wales' timber industry to deliver key WG policies.** If Wales does not bring more woodland into management and the rate of new woodland creation remains low the forecasted drop in softwood timber availability from the 2030s poses a risk to wood supply, jobs and the growth of the softwood forest industry. Hardwoods account for under 5% of the Welsh forest industry. The majority of the forecasted timber potentially available will continue to be coniferous, but the relative proportion of broadleaves will slowly increase. Whilst there is potential to significantly increase production and use of broadleaves in Wales, there are also constraints related to costs, time, planning, woodland fragmentation, access

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<sup>12</sup> Further information is available from the BBC website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-38694393> [accessed on 29.3.17]

<sup>13</sup> Confor Wales Manager and WSAP chair pers comm

arrangements, and poor stem form and timber quality including pressures from pests such as the grey squirrel<sup>14</sup>. Rising prices for timber will make imports more expensive, help drive demand for home-grown supplies and continue to improve the economic case for investment in new woodland creation. Despite continuing to import 80% of our wood product needs Wales is capable of adding high value in the processing sector (UK value-add is not far behind Sweden and more than Finland)<sup>15</sup>. Alongside an enabling approach to release investment for new woodland creation, Wales needs to better support growth in the supply chain and optimise the ‘value add’ of the timber processed in Wales.

21. There are two fundamental issue around wider land use and management, beyond the WfW Strategy that needs to be addressed which we highlighted in our response to the [NNRP consultation](#). The first is the **need for clear direction on land use change** priorities at national, area and local levels<sup>16</sup> alongside a more streamlined regulatory and change support framework. The second is that, by inference, **delivering more sustainable land management requires an ‘intensification’ of land use to achieve SMNR whilst the expectation is that Wales will increase timber and food outputs**. For forestry the pursuit of more nature based solutions (such as the eight actions listed in paragraph 12) is impacting on forecasted future timber availability<sup>17</sup>. There will clearly be a need for compromise at least in the short term, recognising there may be a need to develop an approach to sustainable intensification or increase imports. Compromise could include zoning by objective such as intensive productive, functional protective or extensive multi-purpose forests. Innovative solutions could include better choice of genetic material, changes in planting prescriptions and modified harvesting scenarios.
22. **The forest industry and timber should be included in the development of ‘Brand Wales’ alongside agriculture and fisheries**. These two issues need to be recognised and addressed in the WGs development of future economic and rural policies and programmes to drive clearer SMNR outcomes that embrace the potential for green growth of the forest sector in Wales. Policy choices must be explicit so that all delivery agencies, the private sector and communities are aware of the intended goals. In future more equitable rural development plan support for forestry in line with its value and potential alongside consideration of agriculture is necessary. For NRW, this is particularly important where we have a specific role in managing our own land and regulating natural resources, as in the case of forestry.
23. **The transition from European Union membership presents both challenges and opportunities**. In terms of challenges, an example is the need to maintain, as part of the processes surrounding the Great Repeal Bill, the level of protection for both species and habitats as currently provided by the Birds and Habitats Directives<sup>18</sup>. In terms of opportunities, EU transition may release potential investment flows for woodland management and new woodland creation alongside supporting process improvements in forest regulation, rural development plan support payments and the

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<sup>14</sup> Sylva Foundation (2014) [British Woodland Survey](#)

<sup>15</sup> Forest Europe (2015) [State of Europe’s Forests 2015 report](#)

<sup>16</sup> Area Statements may provide an opportunity to do this

<sup>17</sup> NRW Board paper (March 2017) [Future timber availability](#): implications for NRW, the forest sector and woodland resource in Wales for the delivery of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources.

<sup>18</sup> Ref: “[The EU and Our Environment](#)” produced by WWF, RSPB and Wildlife Trusts

stronger development of woodland related Payments for Ecosystem Services Schemes (and sustainable land management in general).

24. **The condition of woodland and trees is being heavily affected by increasing pressure from pests and pathogens.** *Phytophthora ramorum* is the most significant tree disease to affect woodlands in Wales in recent years. It has caused the widespread death of larch, a significant timber-producing tree species, and is a potentially serious threat to other trees and plants. As of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017, approximately 8,850 of larch in Wales has been found to be infected with *Phytophthora ramorum* and larch is no longer used for restocking on the WGWE. Chalara Dieback of Ash (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is also of concern, having been first confirmed in South Wales in 2012. It is potentially a very serious threat, having caused widespread damage to ash populations in continental Europe, including estimated losses of 60-90% of Denmark's ash trees. Chalara Dieback of Ash has now been found in 63% of the 10km grid squares across Wales (180 of 284)<sup>19</sup>. The disease is now clearly established and sporulating in the wider natural environment across the country, albeit at low levels, and not restricted to new planting sites as previously thought. The majority of new cases have been found in roadside hedgerows and natural regeneration. The predicted effects of climate change together with increased reliance on imported goods will increase the incidence of pests and diseases: for example, more frequent milder winters will increase the size of overwintering populations.

### Key successes

25. In relation to the four strategic themes of the Woodlands for Wales Strategy, the breadth of our work is summarised in **Annex 3** in a series of case studies. Each case study, highlights how it contributes to the achievement of the well-being goals.

### Key opportunities

26. In this section we set out what are considered to be opportunities in the future. Success will be largely dependent on leadership from WG, NRW and WSAP. The WfW Action Plan and activity of WSAP is critical to secure partnership working across the forestry and land management sectors (with public, private and third sector engagement), and that forests, woodland and trees are considered 'in the round' in terms of their contribution to SMNR and the achievement of the well-being goals.
27. The **transition from European Union** membership presents both opportunities as well as challenges. **Leadership and closer collaboration** is needed to seize the opportunities highlighted in SoNaRR for all sectors including greater use of both woodland and trees as part of designing solutions to complex environmental problems. NRW is involved in ongoing discussion with Welsh Government and UK colleagues to inform the debate. Much of the existing framework of environmental regulation is derived from European Union (EU) law. Until such time as the exit negotiations are concluded, the UK remains a full member of the EU, and all the rights and obligations attached to EU membership remain in force. We will continue to implement EU legislation until exit negotiations are finalised.

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<sup>19</sup> Chalara data correct as of 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017

28. A Defra-led public consultation on **amendments to EIA regulations** on forestry has recently closed to examine ways of reducing the burden on applicants which may, in time, result in more ambitious woodland creation proposals. New woodland creation projects are assessed for likely significant effect on the environment according to their nature, size and location. The amendments to the EIA Regulations are intended to ensure that fewer projects are subject to assessment; the size and cost of environmental statements is reduced; and fewer assessments are required. The focus should now be on those environmental factors that are *significantly* affected and not *any potential* impact. Applications received after 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 will be processed to the amended regulations. We are also streamlining our regulatory and verification processes to help achieve the “right trees in the right place” and make planting as simple as possible (see also paragraph 34).
29. The development of a Welsh **policy position<sup>20</sup> on permanent woodland removal and compensatory planting** beyond what may be required in accordance with planning regulations would be beneficial. This would set out clear guidance for new woodland creation to compensate for woodland permanently removed to optimise other benefits and bring together evidence-based policy supporting permanent woodland removal (e.g. wind energy projects, open habitat restoration). The policy could be developed alongside the NNRP, Area Statements and National Development Framework. We have recently recruited a Woodland Creation Advisor who will enable us to manage a £500,000 ring-fenced fund that will increase annually, to achieve compensatory planting for woodland loss that occurs on the WGWE due to our Energy Delivery Programme. The Advisor could also contribute to development of a policy position and supporting framework.
30. The Welsh Government consultation and proposed **White paper on Access Reform in Wales**, will provide opportunities for how access and recreational opportunities on the WGWE (and other woodland where access rights exist) are managed, provided and regulated. These proposals cover:
- Achieving consistency in the opportunities available for participation in different activities and how activities are restricted and regulated;
  - Simplifying and harmonising procedures for designating and recording public access;
  - Improving existing advisory forums and how access rights and responsibilities are communicated to all interests.
31. The **investment potential for the forest industry is high** for all parts of the supply chain. There are big opportunities for the diversification of SME businesses particularly in innovative engineered wood products. This is dependent on the strength of the spotlight placed on the forest industry, woodland management and creation and its integration into WG economic and rural development policy and programmes during the transition from membership of the European Union. This should build upon the recommendations made following the forest sector workshop led by Confor to advise WG on Welsh softwood timber supplies and the green economy.<sup>21</sup> For example NRW are leading a task and finish group<sup>17</sup> in conjunction with WSAP that will report to our Forest Sector Business Group to look at all practical actions linked to future timber

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<sup>20</sup> WfW states that permanent woodland removal should be offset by compensatory planting where possible

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

availability. In addition we are supporting potential applicants in the development of proposals for the Rural Development Plan 2014-20 funded [Co-operative Forest Planning Scheme](#) which aims encourage innovative planning approaches for the creation of broadleaves and coniferous woodland.

32. We will be using the opportunities presented by **Public Services Boards and Area Statement processes** to identify where integrated and collaborative working utilising woodland, trees and forests in a place can maximise the contribution to SMNR and the seven well-being goals. We are mindful of the fact that a place based approach must deliver a coherent whole at a national level in keeping with our key messages in SoNaRR and the emerging NNRP.
33. Having a greater understanding of our urban tree canopy cover resource (via NRW's Tree Canopy in Wales' Towns and Cities Report) enables Wales to understand the extent, nature and trend of our urban forest more comprehensively than ever before. Work through assessments such as i-Tree Eco enable us to **quantify the range of benefits that urban trees provide, and provide a stronger evidence** base on which to build more ambitious and comprehensive local policies and design solutions for urban green infrastructure.
34. Following the NAW Environment and Sustainability Committee's investigation into the management of the WG woodland estate of 2014 **we have been working closely with the forestry sector to improve all aspects of our forestry regulatory processes**. The need for a level playing field between the regulation of public and private forest management, was reiterated in the Better Regulation Delivery Office's (now Better Regulation) report of 2015, and our progress here is monitored by NRW's Forestry Business Sector Group as one of our 'Ten Areas for Action'. In particular we have strengthened the [NRW guidance available to Glastir applicants](#) to support better quality applications and streamline our regulatory and verification role. In conjunction with the forest sector we are finalising our approach to felling permissions linked to delivery of long-term forest management plans compatible with the UKFS and plans produced as part of certification to the [UK Woodland Assurance Standard](#) and capable of adaption to future rural development support for woodland management.
35. We are investigating the scope for **introducing Payment for Ecosystem Services** by considering the roles PES might play, developing our approach to inform WG policy development, and playing an active part in the development of some pathfinder schemes. This includes looking at Green Markets to establish how we can support Wales to harness a range of funding sources to deliver the environmental outcomes we seek. We are working with WG to develop the proposals and processes to utilise experimental powers and incorporate new thinking into our work. All of this will be built in to the Area Statement guidance we are developing. For example, there is growing support for the use of tree planting in areas where it can reduce the flow of diffuse pollutants from agriculture into water. Forest Research is leading [a European wide project](#) called [PESFOR-W](#) to understand better how Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) can be developed to provide cost-effective solutions to enable tree planting for water benefits.
36. We are working closely with WG to better communicate the opportunities stated in SoNaRR and how they may be communicated spatially through platforms such as

WGs [GeoPortal Y Lle](#). Also under development is an approach to natural capital inventory and accounting which has the potential to better inform integrated policy development and decision making about land use, land use change and management priorities for better outcome delivery. Building on the SoNaRR 2016 report we are working on improved spatial analysis to inform land use and land management policy development and decision-making including the identification of 'opportunity spaces'<sup>22</sup> for key WG policy delivery.

### **Index of annexes**

**Annex 1** - NRW roles and responsibilities in relation to forests, woodlands and trees

**Annex 2** - Simplified governance structure and relationship to NRW and WG forestry role and responsibilities

**Annex 3** - Case studies demonstrating success against the four strategic themes of WfW and the well-being goals

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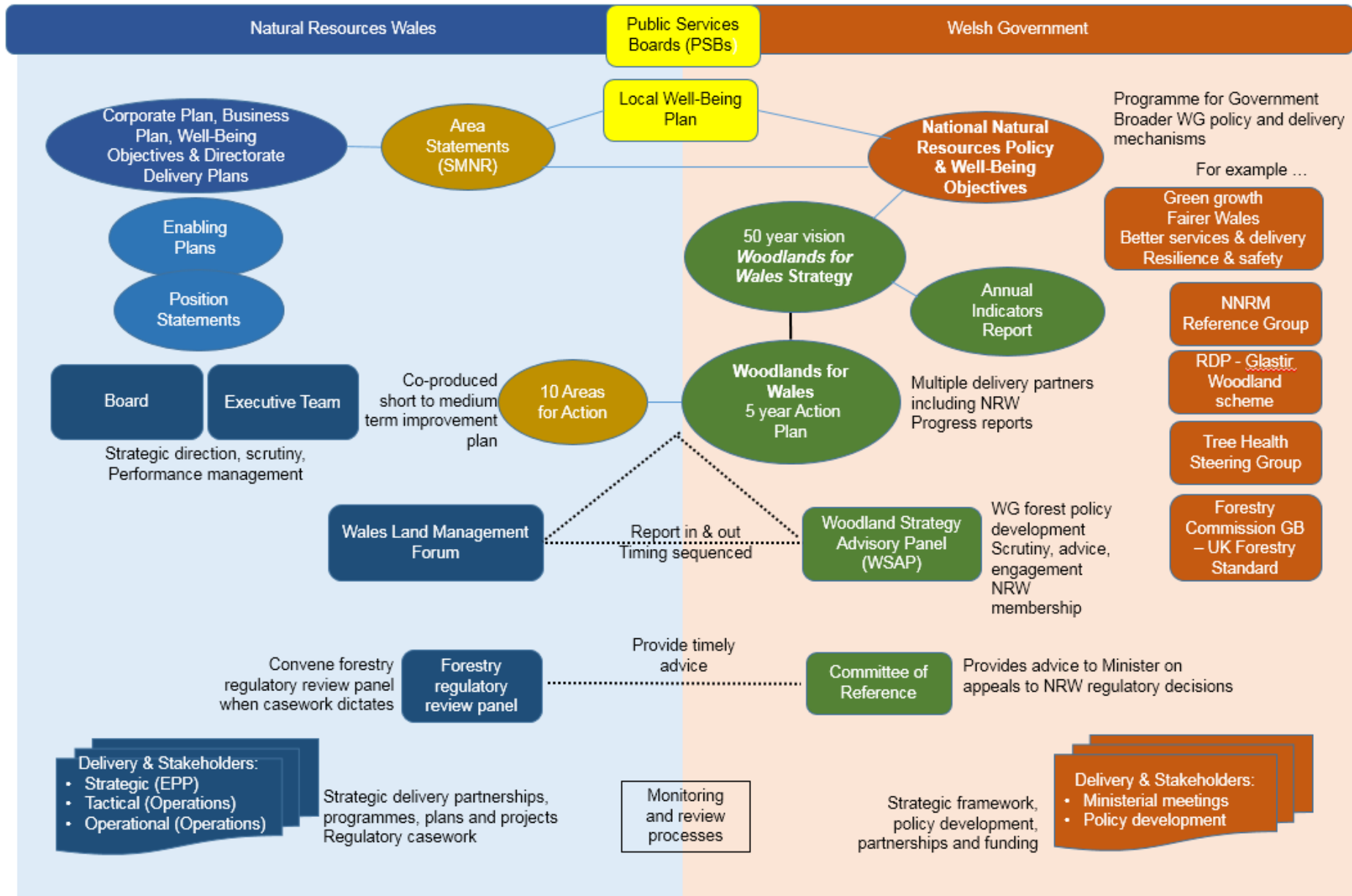
<sup>22</sup> SoNaRR (2016) chapter 7 [Towards sustainable management of natural resources](#)

## Annex 1: NRW roles and responsibilities in relation to forests, woodlands and trees

Role	Responsibilities
<b>Land manager</b>	<p>We manage the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE) as well as National Nature Reserves which include some of the finest native woodlands in Wales with very high cultural and biodiversity value.</p> <p>The WGWE accounts for approximately 40% of the Welsh Forest Resource, and supplies almost 60% of Welsh timber certified to FSC/PEFC.</p> <p>The WGWE is dedicated Open Access Land, providing opportunities across Wales for access under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000), often close to where people live and work.</p> <p>In addition, we provide and manage a range of recreational events, facilities and trails including visitor centres, walking, riding, cycling, running and mountain biking routes. These opportunities attract over 4 million visits annually, providing opportunity for increased physical activity, for learning in and about the environment and for downstream economic benefit to communities.</p>
<b>Regulator</b>	<p>We are responsible for the control of felling and replanting of woodland, new woodland creation, deforestation, forest tracks and quarries, and tree health in forest situations through the granting of permits and licences, the assessment of compliance, the investigation of potential offences and taking enforcement action.</p> <p>We are the statutory conservation body for designated sites: SSSI to comply with Countryside and Rights of Ways Act (1981) and CRoW Act; SAC and SPA under EU Habitats and Species Directives. These sites safeguard some of our native woodland.</p> <p>We also administer the Ancient Woodland Inventory.</p> <p>We are a regulator under the Habitats Regulations (2010) where forestry/woodland activities may affect European Protected Species.</p>
<b>Advisor / consultation body</b>	<p>We provide statutory and non-statutory advice and guidance across our organisational remit, to Welsh Government, industry and the wider public and voluntary sector. This includes development planning advice, conservation advice for protected sites, forest management and regulatory advice and guidance.</p> <p>We are a consultation body for our own and others programmes, plans and projects in respect of environmental assessments.</p> <p>We also advise on management of species that may be damaging woodlands such as deer and grey squirrels.</p>
<b>Evidence gatherer</b>	<p>We monitor our environment, commissioning and undertaking research, developing our knowledge, and being a public records body, including in relation to forestry and woodland management.</p>

<p><b>Partner / Educator / Enabler</b></p>	<p>We manage third party activity on the WGWE (on which we may then provide statutory advice to other authorities and be required to consider applications for permits against regulatory regimes where we have responsibility).</p> <p>Through our Mynediad (formerly Woodlands and You) framework we encourage individuals, groups and other organisations to use the WGWE for activities, projects, events and learning.</p> <p>We aim to be a catalyst for others' work, helping them to also contribute to well-being goals. For example, we offer advice, guidance, training and resources on woodland based learning, working with Forest School Practitioners and facilitating the Outdoor Learning Training Network which ensures the standards and quality of training for practitioners in partnership with Agored Cymru.</p>
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# Annex 2 – Simplified governance structure and relationship to NRW and WG forestry role and responsibilities



## Annex 3: Case studies demonstrating success against the four strategic themes

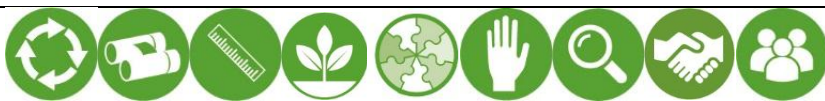
The following infographics highlight the relevance of each of the case studies to the achievement of the well-being goals.

	Adaptive management
	Long term
	Scale
	Building resilience
	Multiple benefits
	Preventative action
	Evidence
	Collaboration and engagement
	Public participation

### Index of case studies

WfW strategic theme	Case study
Responding to climate change	Good Practice Guides – Forest Resilience Carbon sequestration Carbon substitution
Woodlands for people	Actif Woods project Spirit of Llynfi woodland Green infrastructure
A competitive and integrated forest sector	NRW five year Timber Marketing Plan Innovation Fund
Environmental quality	Biodiversity - Protected species and habitats Water quality management New Woodland Creation and Plant!

## WfW strategic theme - Responding to climate change



### Good Practice Guides – Forest Resilience

We have produced three new good practice guides that are intended for all forest and woodland managers in Wales. They provide information and advice to support decision-making to manage and improve the diversity and hence resilience of Welsh woodlands, and also improve outcomes for people. The guides address structural, species and genetic diversity, and they support compliance with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), the benchmark for sustainable forest management across the UK. They also directly contribute to delivery of the Woodlands for Wales Strategy<sup>23</sup>.

The guide on **structural diversity** summarises the main types of silvicultural management systems, and explains the significance of each in terms of opportunities for improving structural diversity, and the impact they have on the range of benefits (or ecosystem services) that woodlands provide.

The guide on **tree species diversity** discusses the factors and variables that influence tree species selection, including climatic zones, forest type, soil type and exposure, and the importance of scale, and identifies the tree species or range of species that are most likely to be suited to a range of different forestry scenarios.

The guide on **genetic diversity** explains a range of different approaches to sourcing forest reproductive material (seeds, cones, cuttings and planting stock used in forest establishment). Genetic diversity is an important consideration as it will affect the extent to which tree species can adapt to the predicted effects of climate change in Wales. Options for managing genetic diversity, for native and non-natives species and for different planting scenarios, are discussed.



### Carbon sequestration

The Carbon Positive Project is evaluating NRW's net carbon status, accounting for both carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions across the whole of NRW's owned or managed estate. Part of the project has involved estimating the amount of carbon stored in the vegetation and soils of habitats on the NRW owned or managed estate, and the rate of additional carbon being stored each year (annual sequestration).

Woodland and peatland habitats make up approximately 84% of the land that NRW manage, and make significant contributions to the Wales' carbon budget. An improved understanding of carbon storage in these valuable habitats and soils will help us to plan how we can best manage them to protect existing carbon stocks

<sup>23</sup> See p17 of the Strategy

and enhance sequestration, e.g. by restoring and expanding our key peatland and woodland habitats. In relation to the restoration of afforested deep peat to open habitat, approximately 650 ha have undergone restoration to date. 1,095 hectares have been identified for restoration over the next five years, with another 1,000+ ha in the following five year period.

The project has identified mitigation opportunities to reduce our carbon impact as an organisation, and is in the process of analysing the costs, carbon savings and wider benefits of these measures to produce a costed, prioritised programme of work for NRW. Through sharing our approach and experience, the Carbon Positive Project will help to disseminate best practice in carbon management across the Welsh public sector, with the ambition of accelerating decarbonisation.



### Carbon substitution

Wood and timber products are renewable and effective at sequestering carbon; approximately 50% of wood is carbon<sup>24</sup>. Every tonne of wood that grows absorbs approximately 1.8 tonnes of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>. This carbon remains sequestered until the wood decays or is burned. Whilst this is not permanent sequestration, it is estimated that there is currently around 20 million tonnes of absorbed carbon (representing 70 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>) in the UK housing stock, with the potential to increase this to 29 million tonnes of carbon by 2019. There is significant potential to increase the use of locally processed and grown timber in sustainable construction as Wales currently imports 80% of its needs.

In our recently published Timber Marketing Plan for the period 2017-22 (see later box), we have committed to adopting a simple 'carbon hierarchy of use' as a way of comparing the contribution of different wood products to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the effective storage of carbon. The hierarchy means that for roadside sales (which we directly control), we will: :

- Sell and grade out products to encourage the greatest degree of added value in the supply chain, e.g. maximise the availability of timber for construction
- Encourage the production of wood fuel from forest products with low end-value-use in areas close to high-value markets and established processing businesses
- Explore the potential to harvest additional biomass from all parts of the tree including branches/lop/top and roadside vegetation management programmes, to maximise the use of low-grade timber for fuel.

We have also been working with WoodKnowledge Wales, a not-for-profit, for public good, membership organisation that promotes green growth and the sustainable use of timber and wood products in Wales as part of a circular economy. The organisation's mission is to, '*... champion the development of wood-based industries for increased prosperity and well-being in Wales*'. A series of joint site visits are planned in 2017 that highlight use of timber in sustainable construction. WoodKnowledge Wales are also working with Powys County Council

<sup>24</sup> [Low Carbon: How Does Timber Fit the Bill?](#)

on a [new approach](#) to join-up timber supply with housing demand to facilitate the construction of modern high performance timber houses and do this in a manner that maximises the social benefit of their procurement helping to create much needed employment opportunities for local people. An early priority has been to develop the Powys Wood Encouragement Policy which is to be underpinned by an Action Plan to help turn aspiration into reality. It is hoped that the pioneering leadership shown in Powys will spread to other Local Authorities, with the ultimate hope that Welsh Government will create and implement an industrial strategy for wood.

## WfW strategic theme - Woodlands for people



### Actif Woods project

Delivered by Coed Lleol with funding from NRW and Big Lottery, the Actif Woods programme provides woodland activities for people with chronic health conditions (including heart disease, obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, depression and mental health conditions). Overseen by a steering group comprising, amongst others, Public Health Wales, National Exercise Referral Scheme, Welsh Wildlife Trust, Coed Cymru, Age Cymru and Llais y Goedwig, Actif Woods has worked since 2013 with local organisations to provide woodland activities developed co-productively around the needs of participants in order to improve mental and physical health and well-being.

Delivering in ten areas across Wales, identified by high levels of deprivation and health inequalities, Actif Woods has worked with over 1000 participants in 1400 sessions (2013- 2016) with wide ranging positive impacts on individual health and well-being.

Actif Woods has had a broader impact through sharing experiences and learning with a wide range of stakeholders, including research, policy and practitioner communities. Through this the programme makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of green and social prescribing and the social value of the natural environment.

[www.coedlleol.org.uk](http://www.coedlleol.org.uk) <https://vimeo.com/157699484>

<https://vimeo.com/102464719>



### Spirit of Llynfi woodland

An opportunity to create 30ha of new woodland planting, transforming a former industrial site (Coegnant Colliery and Maesteg Washery) into a multi-functional 75ha community woodland in Upper Llynfi Valley, nine miles north of Bridgend and bordering the communities of Maesteg, Caerau and Nantyllyn. Demonstrating

how under-utilised land can be managed to bring multiple benefit to environmental and local people, helping communities become healthier, build resilience and be more prosperous. The challenge was to bring people together to develop a dynamic and resilient woodland resource to respond to the changing needs of people and the environment, both now and in the future.

Over the last decade, site investigations coupled with evidence demonstrating local deprivation and reduced healthy-life expectancy, led to Welsh Government, NRW and Ford Motor company funding. Collaboration and engagement with various partners including Swansea University, the Amphibian Reptile Conservation Trust and Bridgend Borough Council has helped to ensure the success of the project to date.

Public participation has been fundamental in the early development of site and will be integral to its long term management. Working with the community to prepare plans for the site, enabled local needs and aspirations to be assessed and incorporated. The community have taken an active role in developing the site including participating in the planting of 60,000 trees and 50,000 bulbs, choosing the site's name, creating an outdoor learning area and participating in the 'keeping the collieries' sculpture initiative.

The site has delivered numerous benefits including the creation of accessible space for relaxation and exercise, improved biodiversity, landscape and local flood risk. It provides performance space and a celebration of local industrial heritage. As site-based volunteering group has been established with the aim of further embedding the project within the community, ensuring the long term success and sustainability of the site. Projects which the group will be involved in include a geocache trail, dog activity area, pond creation, a sensory area and green exercise prescription pilot.



### **Green infrastructure**

Trees and woodlands are important elements of Green Infrastructure in urban areas and beyond, and deliver multiple benefits including encouraging exercise, improving health and well-being, improving community cohesion, removing dust from air, slowing surface floodwater run-off, providing shelter, shade and cooling, and storing carbon.

The City of Cardiff Council, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and NRW are investing £2 million in Greener Grangetown, an innovative scheme to better manage rainwater in the community. Using the latest techniques, this scheme will catch, clean and divert rainwater directly into the River Taff instead of pumping it over eight miles through the Vale of Glamorgan to the sea. It will help to make Grangetown a greener, cleaner place to live. We want to ensure Greener Grangetown delivers a wide range of benefits for the environment and the local community. The street designs include installing attractive rain gardens and curbside planting areas. These will not only enhance local biodiversity and wildlife, but deliver important improvements to water quality in the River Taff, and encourage water efficiency. At

the same time, planting 135 new trees, from 19 different species, and creating 1,600m<sup>2</sup> additional green space will open up new opportunities for people to enjoy walking, cycling and other recreation close to where they live and work. There is overwhelming research that being closer to green space also improves people's physical and mental well-being. More greenery and tree planting will also mean noise and pollutants should be better absorbed, and air will be cleaner too. The scheme will be completed by December 2017.

[www.greenergrangetown.wordpress.com](http://www.greenergrangetown.wordpress.com)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQW84iRZUXo>

We have also worked with Local Authorities and others to produce local tree assessments in [Wrexham, Bridgend and the Tawe Catchment](#). These used an approach called 'i-Tree-Eco' to gain important extra information on the quality of the urban tree resource to inform local tree management strategies. Looking to the future, we will be focusing our work at a strategic level to recognise opportunities for green infrastructure, but also working to help others turn policy into good design and management practice on the ground. This will happen through National and Local Planning Policy and Local Development Plans, master planning, Public Service Boards and Well-being Plans, and Area Statements.

## WfW strategic theme - A competitive and integrated forest sector



### NRW five year Timber Marketing Plan

In January 2017 we published our [Timber Marketing Plan for the period 2017-22](#). This plan communicates our approach to the harvesting and marketing of timber from the WGWE, and was informed by a [public consultation](#) exercise in 2015. As managers of 38% of the Welsh forest resource we currently supply around 60% of the harvested timber volume in Wales, making this plan unique in many ways. All of our forests have long term plans setting out how their nature and character will change over the next 25 to 50 years. Timber harvesting and sales are a crucial part of the forest management cycle allowing us to restructure and shape our future forests.

We aim to secure the best value from the sale of timber by offering it for sale in a fair, open and transparent way that allows as many customers to compete for it as possible. This includes community woodland groups, social enterprises, new entrants and micro-business. Our [Woodlands and you](#) / Mynediad scheme encourages those wishing to be involved in the sustainable management of natural resources on the WGWE.

The maximum level of timber offered for sale each year will remain at 850,000 cubic metres over-bark standing (m<sup>3</sup> obs). This will comprise a "baseline volume"

of around 700,000m<sup>3</sup> obs in the form of Direct Production or conventional Standing Sales contracts. Up to a further 150,000m<sup>3</sup> obs will be offered in the form of Standing Sales contracts with special conditions, in which the buyer will be responsible for carrying out their own civil engineering work and restocking clearfelled areas to an agreed specification. This will help to improve integration across the supply chain.

We will continue to have a number of Long Term Contracts, although these will reduce during the period of the plan with a resultant increase in open market sales which will enable us to be more responsive to market conditions. In the past, LTCs have helped to stimulate supply chain investments and in the future they may also be used to support our wider marketing objectives and policies in the context of SMNR.

We will continue to sell our timber with FSC and PEFC certification, which supports the wider supply chain in Wales who rely on this to maintain their own certification. We are committed to achieving best practice including the UK Forest Industry Safety Accord, UK Forestry Standard and Timber Haulage Code of Conduct, and work closely with our contractors and customers to help protect their safety and livelihoods.

Via quarterly formal sector business meetings, an annual Customer Liaison Meeting, and regular contact between customers and our sales team, we maintain good working relations with the sector.

Our performance against the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme is regularly audited, to support our certification to FSC and PEFC. In 2016, we received a number of commendations, including in relation to our timber harvesting standards (roadside stacking of timber), the mitigation of environmental and social impact linked to timber traffic management via the Tywi Timber Transport Forum, the management of accidental spillages during operations, the community woodland partnership project known as 'Coed y Bont', the use of long term timber sales contracts to facilitate supply chain investment in machinery, and support given to new entrants to the harvesting sector.



### **Innovation Fund**

Working with the ES&T Department in Welsh Government and Innovate UK, we have set a number of challenges to industry and academia. The challenges are designed to develop new innovative products and services which, if adopted across Wales, will not only help solve significant environmental problems but also deliver economic benefits. Two of the challenges are directly related to the woodland sector.

The first considers extending the life of fence posts. Two solutions are currently being taken to the commercial stage and look at solving the issue of rotting that can take place at the soil interface. One product involves coating the lower section of the fence post with a plastic compound. The other uses nano-scale bio char

(carbon) derived from local wood. This is made into a coating which is applied under pressure to the fence post. Both approaches considerably extend the life of fence posts. This will ensure fencing is more cost effective, and this is essential in protecting newly planted trees from grazing stock.

A second challenge has also used locally sourced nano scale bio char, but this time as a soil improver. Many areas of Wales suffer from the inundation by invasive non-native species such as Rhododendron. These plants damage the native flora and fauna in the soil. This damage is often so great that even after clearing the invasive species, native plants are unable to re-colonise. A test site near Pontarddulais is being used to test how adding bio char to these damaged soils can assist natural regeneration. The results of applying bio char has to date been very encouraging.

## WfW strategic theme - Environmental quality



### **Biodiversity - Protected species and habitats**

The Environment Act places a duty on public authorities to “seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity” and “promote the resilience of ecosystems”. The WGWE, as well as the wider Welsh Forest Resource, support a whole range of protected species and habitats, and we are committed to playing our part in managing these to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote resilience.

Wales holds a diverse range of semi-natural woodland types, reflecting variations in climate, soils, hydrology and historical management. Six broad types have been widely recognised, for example as priority habitats within Section 42(7). Upland Oakwood is the predominant of these types in Wales, occupying up to 50% of the semi-natural habitat area. The Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in Gwynedd contains internationally significant rare mosses, lichens and liverworts. We have been working in partnership with other organisations such as Plantlife, National Trust, RSPB and the Woodland Trust to manage this unique “temperate rainforest”, to maintain and enhance biodiversity and resilience but also the economic and social values of the area, by providing a high quality environment for peaceful enjoyment by local people and visitors. Despite the protection afforded to these woodlands, and the ongoing work to conserve them, there are worrying declines for several Welsh woodland specialists of upland Atlantic Oakwood such as wood warbler, pied flycatcher and tree pipit.

Our management of National Nature Reserves in Wales, including the Meirionnydd Oakwoods, was featured in a recent publication which highlights the contribution NNRs make to the well-being objectives.

<http://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/our-work/conservation-projects/woodland/meirionnydd-woodlands-gwynedd>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20150605-important-rainforest-in-wales>

Welsh woodlands are the home of many protected species, including European Protected Species such as the hazel dormouse, some of our rarest bats such as the lesser horseshoe bat and barbastelle bat, and great crested newt, and a host of other protected Section 42 (7) species. There are mixed success stories in relation to protected species in Wales. Monitoring information indicates that dormouse populations are declining across Wales and England. The reasons for this are likely to be complex but this decline emphasises the importance of sympathetic woodland management for this species which requires a highly diverse habitat. Red squirrels are now widespread in Anglesey, but remain vulnerable in other parts of Wales. Their success is intrinsically linked to woodland habitat and grey squirrel management. The ongoing reinforcement of pine marten populations in mid Wales is a recent success story with the relocated pine martens giving birth to their first offspring in 2016.

Annually, approximately 200 coupes within the WGWE are identified as having protected species which are subject to licensing or constraints requirements, including in relation to foraging and roosting bats, dormice and several raptor breeding sites. A range of Section 42 (7) species utilise the rides and edges of conifer forest including reptiles, butterflies and moths that require the open or flowery conditions found there. Our management of these sensitive areas is important, as it is for other niche habitats such as upland conifer restock for nightjars. As we implement long term FRPs in the context of SMNR, we will deliver more diverse and resilient woodlands, including restoration of our ancient woodland, and there will a greater opportunity to enhance woodland habitats and connectivity to support more species populations in Wales.



### **Water quality management**

We are working hard to tackle EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) pressures related to forestry and woodlands. In Wales, forestry is identified as a reason for failure to achieve “good status” in 42 river catchments and two lakes, some 4% of our rivers. The failure is caused principally by acidification with the dominant causes of failure being low pH and poor fish populations. Other threats include sedimentation, pesticides, excessive shading, nutrient enrichment, contamination from fuel oils and barriers to fish migration.

We are committed to reducing the number of times forestry is identified as a reason for failure by dealing with the causes of those failures and improving environmental quality across the WGWE. We have a programme of work in place to achieve this, particularly to in relation to acidification.

- We have identified 22 prioritised water bodies where our actions can lead to a significant improvement in their status, and made a commitment to review the forest riparian management and drainage systems and ensure they meet best practice for water management by 2021. This is being done by undertaking river surveys along all the watercourses of a failing waterbody

that lie within the forests of the WGWE. The surveys record a wide range of information including riparian habitat quality, fish blockages, forest and roadside drain connections. Following the survey, a programme of works is identified for these watercourses that is further be prioritised where there are protected sites downstream, or communities at risk of flooding.

- We have published an '*Implementation guide to managing forests in acid-sensitive areas*,' with the aim of clarifying and simplifying the ways in which the Forestry Commission (FC) Practice Guide (2014) on [Managing forests in acid sensitive catchments](#), is put into practice in Wales. Implementing the guidance is an important step towards ensuring “good status” in some of our failing upland water bodies. We have several roles to play in order to ensure proper progress is made, working as forestry regulators, water regulators, a conservation body and as an advisor and land manager.

Despite some success to date, challenges remain, for example in relation to tackling diffuse pollution from forestry and agriculture more generally and when using the critical load exceedance methodology on a site by site by site basis where felling or new planting is planned (assessment using catchment-based critical load assessments would allow greater understanding on a Wales-wide basis to support SMNR).



### **New Woodland Creation**

We are involved in delivering a number of different strands of Welsh Governments sustainable land management scheme, Glastir. One such strand is Glastir Woodlands. The Glastir Woodland Creation scheme provides support for the creation of new woodlands, including agroforestry options, which are designed to integrate the management of trees and woodlands into rural businesses.

We play an important role in delivering the Glastir Woodland Creation (GWC) scheme on behalf of the Welsh Government by advising applicants about whether new planting management plans meet Glastir scheme rules, the [UK Forestry Standard \(UKFS\)](#) and value for money requirements. This process is known as verification. Our verification role sits independently of our role as Regulatory Authority under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999. In accordance with these regulations, we determine whether new planting proposals will have a significant impact on the local environment.

A recent example of a successful application under the GWC scheme relates to an organic farm in mid Wales where 17ha was planted up in February and March 2016 with a “native carbon” broadleaves mixture (sessile oak, rowan, silver birch, alder, hazel and hawthorn) at 2m spacing. The farm business comprises 120 milking cows, a flock of 700 sheep and 50 fattening cattle.

Over 40,000 trees were planted with 6,000m fenced-out over a number of compartments on three farms. GWC is realising a number of benefits to the farm business and wider economy.

- The fencing and new planting are improving the structure and biosecurity of the farm by enhancing boundaries with neighbouring holdings.
- A regular income from GWC premium grants for 12 years
- A supply of timber and firewood in the future. The farm has a biomass boiler to heat the farmhouse and farm buildings.
- An improved carbon footprint, which the farmer feels will become more important in the future, especially with farm assurance schemes.

Benefits to the local economy, with the farm using a local planting contractor to carry out the work and trees purchased from a local tree nursery.

### **Plant!**

The Welsh Governments Plant! Programme began in January 2008, in partnership with the Woodland Trust, and for the past three years has been delivered by Natural Resources Wales on behalf of the partnership. This long standing and very successful programme has had continued and consecutive Ministerial support and created national and international interest. The programme is designed to contribute to the Welsh Governments tree planting target of 100 000ha of trees to help mitigate against climate change and provide a tangible link between young children, their families and the natural environment. The programme contributes to the people of Wales feeling the connection between themselves and the benefits of trees and woodlands, and therefore contributes to the Well-Being goals.

The programme has successfully planted a tree for every child born and adopted in Wales since January 2008 and the tree total now stands at 312,034 trees over 143.02ha. Areas planted include locations Usk, Tredegar, Bridgend, Wrexham, Llanwrst, Blaenavon and Anglesey.

From 1st April 2014 the commitment was extended to plant an additional tree in Uganda for every child. Wales and Mbale work together through the Welsh Government's Wales for Africa Programme and the Ugandan project is run by the Size of Wales charity <http://plant.sizeofwales.org.uk/> Welsh Government's Wales for Africa Programme is covering the direct costs of the Ugandan trees as part of its wider efforts to promote greater resilience to climate change in the Mbale Region. By making a direct connection between people and communities in Wales and by tree planting both in Wales and in Uganda, Wales for Africa is building on the strong links that have been developed between communities over many years.

More information can be found at [www.wales.gov.uk/plantatree](http://www.wales.gov.uk/plantatree)

End

Wednesday, 29 March 2017

## Evidence Paper

### 1. Context

- 1.1. Over 300,000 hectares of Wales is woodland and forest. There are another 93,000 hectares of trees in small groups, in hedgerows, fields, roadsides, railway embankments, parks and gardens across Wales. Just under one-fifth of the land of Wales is made up of trees, woodlands and forests. 117,000 hectares (almost 29%) is on the Welsh Government's (WG) woodland estate, managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- 1.2. *Woodlands for Wales* is the WG's 50-year strategy for woodlands and trees in Wales. It recognises the management of woodlands and trees is a long-term activity providing a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits to the people of Wales, including making a significant contribution towards mitigating the impact of climate change. The principles of sustainable forest management delivering a wide range of benefits provide the foundation for the strategy. These principles enable woodlands to play a full and essential part in delivering a Wales which is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, united and connected and which is committed to the sustainable management of its natural resources, as embodied in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- 1.3. The *Woodlands for Wales* Action Plan, (published in February 2016 and running until March 2020) sets out short-term actions and activities to deliver the long-term ambitions of *Woodlands for Wales*. The Action Plan contains fifteen priority actions which describe what will be delivered towards achieving the outcomes and vision of the strategy. The Action Plan provides a detailed breakdown of the priority areas which will contribute towards the delivery of the four strategic themes.
- 1.4. The full Action Plan is at Annex 1. A diagrammatic explanation of the aims of the Action Plan and how it contributes towards sustainable woodlands is provided on Page 6; and the priority actions and their links to the strategy's outcomes and the well-being goals are summarised in the table at Page 15.
- 1.5. The summary at Annex 2 provides an update on our progress with the priority actions identified.
- 1.6. This evidence paper explores some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing forestry in Wales.

### 2. Progress and Key Funding for the Forestry Industry

- 2.1. Wales Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-20 (RCRDP) makes provision for supporting woodland management and woodland creation. The Glastir Woodland Creation Scheme has allocated support of £8.5 million towards the creation of more woodland. Additionally funding of £438,000 has been allocated to support the preparation of forest management plans. Further funding of £11.8 million is being provided for maintenance and premium payments over 12 years (although not all of this funding will come from the current RCRDP). A further £1.04 million has been allocated towards an NRW project to undertake forest monitoring and risk management and the Co-operative Forest Planning

Scheme has been allocated £480,000. All woodland creation funded under the RCRDP must meet the standards set out in the UK Forestry Standard and this requires extensive consultation with stakeholders including local people, archaeological trusts, conservation organisations and others including NRW.

- 2.2. Funding is being provided to support businesses through the Timber Business Investment Scheme and this amounts for £8 million of support over the Programme period.
- 2.3. Our woodlands face significant challenges from disease. At the start of our RCRDP it was clear woodland owners needed support to cope with the outbreak of *Phytophthora ramorum* in larch and WG has allocated £7 million of support for private woodland owners to address this challenge through the Glastir Woodland Restoration Scheme.
- 2.4. This package of measures gives a total spend on the sector of £37.258 million over the Programme period.
- 2.5. Farming Connect offers a package of support for the forestry industry in Wales to develop their businesses. This is provided through knowledge transfer activities, specialist advice as well as training and support for innovation. This represents significant progress in extending Welsh Government advisory services for the forestry sector.
- 2.6. Research and evidence are at the heart of informed policy-making and sustainable land management practices. Forest Research is the UK's foremost body for forest and tree related research which provides support to woodland owners, NRW and Welsh Government. Their core budget for the year ended 31 March 2016 was £12,597 million. Farming Connect works closely with Forest Research to raise awareness about the latest research on forestry, including delivering a series of tree health seminars for stakeholders.

### 3. Areas for Future Focus

#### New Woodland Creation

- 3.1. It can be difficult to find the right place for new woodlands, and to optimise the benefits from them. Additionally land availability for new woodland planting is a significant challenge partly due to land price and other competing land uses such as food production. Once planted there is a presumption the land will remain as woodland in perpetuity which can be a deterrent to landowners who want flexibility to change their plans in the future. Creating and managing woodland is a long-term commitment but also an opportunity. Working with landowners to grasp this challenge is an example of the long-term approach built into the sustainable development principle.
- 3.2. Where businesses are considering the case for planting new woodlands, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) may be necessary. The consultation required by the Forestry Standard and the requirement for NRW to consider in nearly every case, whether an EIA is required for new planting, can be a barrier to woodland creation schemes. WG and NRW will work collaboratively to bring forward measures to support stakeholders in developing new woodland creation proposals and to improve the way EIA regimes are implemented. This will include assessing consistency between the application of the EIA regime for forestry and agriculture and testing new approaches to protecting important habitats while also allowing for an increase in the amount of new woodland creation in the context of the Natural Resources Policy and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to help to meet our goal of planting more trees.
- 3.3. WG funding through the RCRDP for the Co-operative Forest Planning Scheme is intended to fund the development of a bottom-up approach where woodland managers work with stakeholders and UK Forestry Standard consultees to seek agreement about where woodland can be created. Evaluation of the first round of this Scheme has been completed and announcements about the successful bids will be made soon. A further round will be announced this autumn. This should assist in tackling barriers to new woodland planting.

- 3.4. In the past, working in silos has been a barrier to achieving our goals. WG has made sure funding through the RCRDP (our final round of EU funding) has been focussed on co-operation to break down these barriers and encourage interest groups to work together. Through the Sustainable Management Scheme, support is being provided to forest owners and land managers who want to work together to create woodland in places where it will prevent pollution, improve water quality in our rivers and lakes and provide shelter for livestock.
- 3.5. WG has been encouraged by the response from stakeholders such as the Confederation of Forest Industries (ConFor) who have participated enthusiastically in the round-table events which have been held since the EU referendum. It is essential Welsh organisations work together to tackle the challenges and opportunities ahead.

#### **4. Opportunities to Develop our International Context for Forestry**

##### **The Economy and Added Value**

- 4.1. As we move towards the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, there are opportunities to build on Wales' reputation for high quality goods and services underpinned by resilient natural resources across both local and international markets. WG would like to encourage a strong focus on improving processing and added value within supply chains across Wales to support our competitiveness. The resilience of our natural resources and the opportunities they provide become even more important to Wales as we define a new place in the world.
- 4.2. The economic value of the wider benefits which trees and woodlands provide, for example improved air quality, reduced risk of flooding and better health and wellbeing - are becoming better understood. Optimising timber production alongside maintaining a forest resource for environmental and for social benefit is at the heart of *Woodlands for Wales*.
- 4.3. Timber produces a financial return for woodland owners. The immediate impact of the decision to leave the EU (together with the weakness of the £ sterling) has produced some short term benefits. In 2016, the forestry sector in Wales had an annual Gross Value Added (GVA) of £528.6 million and employed over 10,000 people. This contribution to the economy comes from forestry and logging (£22.3 million), the manufacture of wood and products of wood and cork (£172.6 million) and the manufacture of paper products (£333.7 million). In time it is hoped to increase our market share of home produced timber and to rely less on imports.

##### **Carbon and Woodlands**

- 4.4. Raising the level of ambition in respect of tree planting in Wales is likely to require additional funding as well as further examination of regulatory/policy issues to ensure we can deliver our objectives. WG will be looking at proposals to scale up woodland planting as part of a range of policy proposals which will be tested by way of pulling together our Low Carbon Delivery Plan by spring 2019.
- 4.5. In 2016 Ministers strengthened the legislative framework for reducing green house gas emissions through the Environment (Wales) Act which sets a legal emission reduction target minimum of 80% by 2050. The Act requires a system of 5-yearly carbon budgets and interim targets. These will serve as stepping stones and ensure regular progress is made towards this long-term target. The Act stipulates Welsh Ministers must publish a report, the Low Carbon Delivery Plan, setting out their proposals and policies covering areas of ministerial responsibility for each carbon budget.

- 4.6. The Woodland Carbon Code is now a well-established mechanism which allows landowners to calculate and verify the amount of carbon which will be locked up by new woodland creation projects. They can use the platform provided by the code to sell Woodland Carbon Credits on the voluntary emissions reduction market. This can provide a welcome additional income from carbon, just one of the ecosystem services provided by new woodland.
- 4.7. At just under one fifth of the land area of Wales, our woodlands have a critical role alongside agriculture, to address climate change. Trees sequester carbon from the atmosphere as they grow. They are for now, the only way society has to do this. Alongside other measures to reduce further emissions of fossil carbon, protecting and expanding the area covered by woodlands and trees, ensuring they remain healthy and resilient, is an essential part of our future low carbon delivery plan. The low carbon economy is outperforming the economy as a whole, and there are further opportunities around renewable energy and a move to a more circular economy. Trees and woodlands play their role in this economy.

### **Disease Threats**

- 4.8. Our woodlands face many risks to their effective functioning from the impacts of climate change including the spread of pests and disease such as *Phytophthora ramorum* in larch woodland, and *Chalara fraxinea* in ash woodland.
- 4.9. Maintaining the health of our woodland is a key priority. The clear felling of large areas of woodland close to the communities of the Afan Valley and at Cwmcarn illustrates the significant impact such events can have not just on the timber and wood processing sector but also on the landscape and the people who live, work and enjoy their leisure time there.
- 4.10. The WG's *Phytophthora ramorum* Management Strategy sets out a pan-Wales approach to slowing its spread, accepting due to the nature of the disease and its distribution across Wales, eradication is not an option. Controlled felling of larch is carried out in areas with already high levels of infection, whilst targeted felling to prevent the spread of the disease is being pursued in areas of zero or very light infection.
- 4.11. As the effects of *Chalara fraxinea* become more apparent, Welsh Government has established an operational response team bringing together experts from across the industry, transport managers and local authorities with scientists from Forest Research to lead our response to this disease. The early advice suggests Ash may prove more resilient than Larch and landowners should not fell Ash trees showing symptoms of Chalara unless they are dangerous. More information will be available from the NRW, Forest Research and Welsh Government at the Royal Welsh Show and on organisations websites.

### **The Role of NRW in Tackling Disease**

- 4.12. NRW is to be congratulated on the work it is doing in felling and removing diseased trees from the Welsh public forest estate and on the restoration work. They have played a key role in the battle against managing the effects of *Phytophthora ramorum*.
- 4.13. Whilst damaging to existing woodland, the current disease outbreaks are an opportunity to speed up change and replant with more resilient species to develop healthier and more varied woodlands and to provide a greater variety of trees to produce high quality Welsh timber. This will make our woodlands more attractive for future generations.
- 4.14. The WG has supported NRW to ensure it is able to restock the large area of larch felled on the public woodland estate. Since 2013, WG has provided NRW with an additional £11.01 million in support of this. The Glastir Woodland Restoration grant now offers financial support to

private landowners to replant areas which have been felled under a Statutory Plant Health Notice and we will continue to monitor and amend our management strategy for the disease based on sound research and in consultation with those affected.

Whilst the disease is a disaster for larch in Wales and its management presents a continuing problem for the woodland sector, local communities and visitors to Wales, it is also an opportunity to replant and increase the species diversity and resilience of Welsh woodlands. This will provide a better quality environment capable of making a significant contribution towards tackling poverty by creating employment opportunities, generating income for businesses involved in the forestry and tourism sector and in making our communities attractive places to live, work and visit.

## **5. Growth and Change to Deliver our Vision for Forestry**

### **Woodland Diversity**

- 5.1. Wales needs both large scale and small scale highly diverse woodlands which include conifer and broad-leaved species, which also need to be integrated within open spaces and other habitats. A more diverse land use is needed incorporating woodland, removing the artificial distinctions between farmland, trees and towns.
- 5.2. A continued increase in tree cover and woodlands wherever it can contribute positively to ecosystem resilience and well-being is needed. New woodland should be created and trees planted to provide greater connectivity between, and increase the size of, woodland habitat and to address other challenges identified in NRW's The State of our Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR), in both rural and urban areas. Trees and woodland which have high environmental values (including ancient woodland sites, ancient, veteran and heritage trees) are an irreplaceable resource which can provide a wide range of benefits. They should be managed so their condition steadily improves.
- 5.3. There is potential to develop new markets, both through new and innovative products which add value along the supply chains and replace less sustainable products, and through diversifying to further develop markets in carbon, water, biodiversity and energy.

### **The Role of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate**

- 5.4. The 117,000 hectares of woodland owned by the Welsh Government is a significant asset. It allows NRW to develop approaches which deliver sustainable management of natural resources at significant scale. The estate makes up just under one third of Welsh woodland. Welsh Government is working with NRW in the context of SoNaRR to develop a statement giving more detail about our shared vision for the role and purpose of this public forest estate. This will be shaped by our Natural Resources Policy and will be completed early in 2018.

### **Timber in Construction and House Building**

- 5.5. Timber is an alternative to other more traditional and less sustainable construction materials and can contribute significantly to the carbon sink effect of forests and through its sustainable use in a circular economy. Use of timber in buildings sequesters carbon for the long term and is a low carbon option when substituted for carbon intensive materials including steel and concrete. There is less waste in manufacturing and demolition as timber by-products and waste can be used for energy generation in biomass power plants to generate power.

The WG's £30 million investment to deliver 20,000 new affordable homes provides an opportunity for partners to collaborate and innovate in terms of materials such as timber and methods of construction. Technical issues regarding quality of domestically grown timber for construction have been largely overcome and the increased use of timber will help to develop

the domestic supply chain to meet demands of the construction sector for a sustainable supply of raw material. The use of home grown timber in the construction of housing reduces the amount of wood imported into Wales. The shorter travelling distance reduces the amount of emissions produced during its transport and finally the absorbed carbon in the form of timber can then be locked up for a very long time in a wide range of construction uses.

### **Community Projects**

- 5.6. Attractive and accessible woodlands and other green spaces provide a focus for community activities and identity and are a stimulus to regeneration and investment.
- 5.7. Community-run assets, such as community woodlands or community energy schemes, can provide local income, employment, skills and improved community cohesion through volunteering. Since March 2016 the community woodland network Llais y Goedwig has received WG core funding support to enable community woodland groups to establish and grow. Two capacity building officers provide support and advice to woodland owners and volunteers. They help broker agreements for activities to take place, from community- led woodland management to outdoor gyms and for forest schools and other learning opportunities. Where parcels of woodland have seemed uneconomic to manage, there can be untapped opportunities for communities to take an increasing role and find innovative ways to improve and add value to such woodlands.

### **Health Benefits, Recreation and Tourism**

- 5.8. The natural environment provides options for significant physical and mental health benefits by increasing opportunity to engage in physical activity. Woodlands and trees are important to people's health and well-being. Outdoor play and learning in green spaces is particularly important to children and their healthy development and understanding and appreciation of the environment. The WG woodland estate is a huge recreational asset which benefits the health of residents and visitors to Wales. Walkers, horse riders and cyclists are some of the groups who enjoy the results of NRW's sustainable management of the woodland estate both at established visitor centres and within woodlands close to communities, for example in the south Wales valleys. NRW's role includes important community engagement and an example of new woodland providing well-being benefits for local people can be seen at the Llynfi project near Maesteg.
- 5.9. Trees in green spaces (in and around towns and cities) also support health and well-being. They provide a natural backdrop for communities which can improve well-being through cleaner air and by enhancing open spaces for people to enjoy. Good urban tree management on the ground is critical to sustain these and other benefits.
- 5.10. The evidence on the extent to which trees absorb harmful pollutants continues to improve. Trees and other green infrastructure including hedgerows provide an effective barrier to harmful particulate matter which is linked to ill health in humans. The siting of trees and species selection of trees has a significant bearing on whether pollution is absorbed or potentially worsened.
- 5.11. NRW's study 'Tree Cover in Towns and Cities' presented the world's first country-wide survey of urban tree canopy cover. In 2016, with WG funding, NRW updated the report to complete analysis from 2006, 2009 and 2013 for all urban areas in Wales. The resulting series of reports shows a trend of a canopy loss with an average rate of cover across Wales of 16.3% in 2013, down from 16.8% in 2009.

- 5.12. The surveys provide a baseline to plan targeted action, for example in areas which experience particularly low in tree cover, and suggest over 35% of land in Wales' major towns may potentially be available to be planted with 'the right tree in the right place'. The results have been shared with Public Service Boards and others to influence local plans, policies and strategies including the development of Well-being plans.
- 5.13. Three iTree Eco Studies have been completed in Wales. iTree Eco is a tool for quantifying the benefits of urban trees in relation to air quality improvement, carbon dioxide reduction and flood control. Local authorities are encouraged to use evidence such as iTree Eco to inform decisions which support improved diversity and resilience of tree cover in urban areas.

### **Biodiversity and Water Management**

- 5.14. Woodlands provide a valuable contribution to our environment through water regulation, soil protection, air quality and as carbon sinks, as landscape features and havens for biodiversity. Targeting planting on flood plains and riparian areas or integrating woodland planting with other land uses, has the potential to reduce flood risk, reduce the effects of agricultural run-off and protection of soils, as well as providing on-farm timber or firewood, shelter for livestock and habitat for wildlife. Welsh Government is working with NRW and a range of stakeholders to maximise the opportunities to develop market-based funding streams – more commonly known as Payments for Ecosystem services (PES). This approach recognises the importance of ecosystems and the benefits derived from these systems to help deliver positive changes for wildlife, water quality, flood risk reduction, health and well being.

## **6. Finally**

- 6.1. *Woodlands for Wales* provides a sound basis on which to build as Wales faces the challenges and opportunities of leaving the EU and developing our international markets. Trees, woodland and forests make up one fifth of Wales land use delivering a significant contribution to industry, jobs, recreation, tourism, health and actions to take forward climate change.
- 6.2. They are a vital element of our Natural Resources Policy and the key to the delivery of our ground-breaking Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The industry must continue to collaborate, engaging all sectors – public, voluntary and business to ensure Welsh woodlands provide and develop new opportunities to benefit today's and future generations.



Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

June 2017



# Woodlands for Wales Action Plan



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

[www.cymru.gov.uk](http://www.cymru.gov.uk)



## *“Woodlands for Wales”*

*The Welsh Government's Strategy for Woodlands and Trees*

## Woodlands for Wales Action Plan

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## Minister's foreword



I am very pleased to be providing the foreword for the *Woodlands for Wales Action Plan*. This Action Plan sets out the action and activities that are planned to make progress towards achieving the vision and outcomes of our 50-year *Woodlands for Wales Strategy*. I want to thank all those who have engaged in the preparation of the Plan, particularly the Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel for their independent input.

High-quality, resilient and healthy woodlands provide real social and community benefits for the people of Wales. This results in a better quality environment and makes a significant contribution towards tackling poverty and creating opportunities associated with green growth for employment and income generation. As well as adapting to climate change themselves, woodlands and trees help Wales respond to the effects of climate change through woodland creation and the wider use of Welsh timber for sustainable construction.

There is no doubt that woodlands and trees are a valuable natural resource that can help to meet the needs of people and communities. Through the actions in this Plan, we aim to make our woodlands more diverse and resilient and to increase woodland planting in order to realise the social, environmental and economic benefits that woodlands and trees can provide, now and in the future.

The Natural Resources Policy Framework is developing as a means of planning and prioritising the opportunities presented by natural resources in Wales. Woodlands and trees are a key asset and make up a significant part of our natural resources contributing towards the goals to improve the well-being of Wales that have been given statutory effect by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This Plan will help to take forward the wider policy context for Wales' natural resources.

Everyone with an interest in woodlands and trees will want to see the vision and outcomes of *Woodlands for Wales* achieved. I am grateful to all those who have agreed to progress this Plan and we are now all challenged to deliver the actions to ensure that woodlands provide real benefits for today's and future generations.

**Carl Sargeant AM**

**Minister for Natural Resources**

# PART 1

## “Woodlands for Wales” – Synopsis of the Welsh Government’s Strategy

1. “Woodlands for Wales” is the Welsh Government’s fifty-year strategy for woodlands and trees in Wales. It was originally published in 2001 and revised in March 2009. It sets out the Welsh Government’s policy aims and objectives for *all* woodlands and trees in Wales, namely those in public and private ownership and whether in rural, peri-urban or urban environments.
2. “Woodlands for Wales” recognises that the management of woodlands and trees is a long-term activity capable of providing a range of social, economic and environmental benefits to the people of Wales, including making a significant contribution towards mitigating the impact of climate change. Forestry, woodlands and trees are a key part of the more holistic approach to managing Wales’s natural resources in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way. This approach is being developed in the Environment (Wales) Bill. Because of the range of benefits that they can provide, Wales’s trees will contribute to achieving the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, helping to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Wales’s trees are therefore an important asset contributing to the delivery of Welsh Government priorities of **driving green growth**, **resilience and safety** and, in particular, **tackling poverty**.
3. The foundation of “Woodlands for Wales” is the concept of sustainable forests, woodlands and trees delivering a full range of benefits. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe<sup>1</sup> defined sustainable forest management as “*the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local national and global levels, and does not cause damage to other ecosystems*”. The sustainable management of Wales’s forests, woodlands and trees is the basis on which they can then contribute towards each of the wider goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
4. The long-term *Vision* of “Woodlands for Wales” is:

*Wales will be known for its high-quality woodlands that enhance the landscape, are appropriate to local conditions and have a diverse mixture of species and habitats.*

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the Second Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, 16-17 June 1993.

“*Woodlands for Wales*” envisages that delivering the *Vision* will: -

- provide real social and community benefits, both locally and nationally;
- support thriving woodland-based industries; and
- contribute to a better quality environment throughout Wales.

5. “*Woodlands for Wales*” identifies 20 high-level *Outcomes* that act as a long-term focus for implementing the *Vision*. The *Outcomes* are framed around five *Themes*:

- *Welsh Woodlands and Trees*
- *Responding to Climate Change*
- *Woodlands for People*
- *A Competitive and Integrated Forest Sector*
- *Environmental Quality*

The nature, quality, distribution and management of Welsh woodlands and trees underpins the delivery of “*Woodlands for Wales*”. The *Welsh Woodlands and Trees* theme is therefore the foundation supporting the other four themes which are focused around specific issues. The “*Woodlands for Wales*” *Themes* and *Outcomes* are, together with the *Vision*, set out at **Annex 1**.

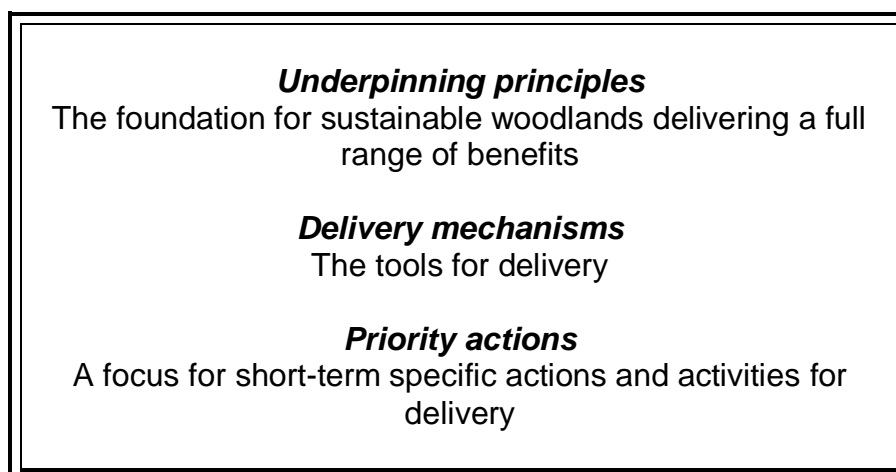
6. This *Action Plan* is designed to set out the short-term actions and activities to deliver the long-term ambitions of “*Woodlands for Wales*”. It is part of a series of five-year plans that set out the actions being undertaken over the lifetime of each respective plan. Short-term actions and activities (described as “*priority actions*”) are linked in this *Plan* to the high-level *Outcomes* identified in “*Woodlands for Wales*”. These *priority actions* together with “*underpinning principles*” and “*delivery mechanisms*” (which are more on-going in nature and likely to continue beyond the five-year life of this *Plan* into the next and subsequent plans) form the key components of the *Action Plan*. Collectively, the components provide a focus on actions and activities to make progress towards achieving the *Outcomes* and *Vision* of “*Woodlands for Wales*”.
7. The diagram below illustrates how this *Action Plan* sets the short-term actions and activities to deliver the long-term ambitions of *Woodlands for Wales* which, in turn contributes, towards the wider well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (set out in detail in **Annex 2**).



## PART 2

### Action Plan

8. There is wide-ranging cross-sectoral involvement and interest in forestry, woodlands and trees including: the Welsh Government; Natural Resources Wales (“NRW”); local authorities; businesses; woodland and other community groups; charities; landowners and individuals. They all have a role to play in achieving the “*Woodlands for Wales*” *Vision* and delivering the actions set out in this *Action Plan*.
9. This *Action Plan* is built around three components which, together, focus the actions and activities of all these organisations and individuals. The components are:



10. This *Action Plan* runs until 31 March 2020. The ***underpinning principles*** and the ***delivery mechanisms*** are more enduring and fundamental in nature and will carry forward beyond this *Plan* into the next and subsequent plans. The ***priority actions*** are specific actions and activities to be actioned during the period of this *Plan*. There may not always be clear dividing lines between these three components and particular matters could fall within one, two or even all three of them. For example, reference to the UK Forestry Standard is included in this *Plan* as supporting the *underpinning principle* of “sustainable forests and woodlands”. Adherence to the Standard also demonstrates “best practice”, one of the *delivery mechanisms*. Therefore, ***underpinning principles, delivery mechanisms*** and ***priority actions*** are not mutually exclusive components. They are very much interlinked and together in this *Plan* provide a focus for activity to achieve the *Outcomes* and *Vision* of “*Woodlands for Wales*”.
11. The significance of the ***priority actions*** is that they are those specific actions that will be undertaken in the short-term (up to 5 years) over the life of this

*Plan*. They are linked to the “*Woodlands for Wales*” *Outcomes* and progress against them will be reported annually.

12. The ***underpinning principles***, ***delivery mechanisms*** and ***priority actions*** are set out below.

### ***Underpinning principles***

***The foundation for sustainable woodlands delivering a full range of benefits***

13. The ***underpinning principles*** are the key principles that provide the framework and context for the delivery of the specific *priority actions* set out in this *Action Plan*. By their nature, they are of a more enduring character and they will continue beyond this *Plan* into the next and future iterations.

14. The ***underpinning principles*** are: -

- ***Sustainable management of natural resources*** to maintain and enhance the resilience of Wales’s ecosystems, their ability to mitigate for and adapt to the impacts of climate change and their capacity to provide benefits for the people, environment and economy of Wales, in the present and in the future.
- ***Sustainable forests and woodlands as defined by the following documents:***
  - UK Forestry Standard;
  - UK Woodland Assurance Standard.
- ***International commitments:***
  - Wales’s contribution to UK, European and Worldwide commitments to sustainable management of forest ecosystems, for example under the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the European Landscape Convention.

- ***Multiple benefits of forestry, woodland and trees over the short, medium and long terms such as:***
  - timber;
  - carbon capture;
  - water management;
  - green energy;
  - business development and social enterprise;
  - education and skills;
  - recreation and access;
  - health and well-being; and
  - bio-diversity and other ecosystem services.
  
- ***Increasing woodland cover in Wales***
  - to optimise the sustainable benefits that forestry, woodlands and trees can provide across rural, peri-urban and urban areas to meet the needs of people and local communities; and
  - integrating the management of forestry, woodlands and trees with other land uses to build resilience.
  
- ***Working together to access opportunity:***
  - Welsh Government;
  - Natural Resources Wales;
  - Participants<sup>2</sup> in the delivery of the “Welsh Forest Resource Ten Areas for Action” Plan.
  - woodland and other community groups;
  - local authorities;

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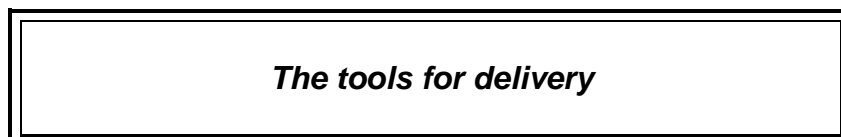
<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government, NRW, Confederation of Forest Industries and Wales Forest Business Partnership.

- registered social landlords;
- businesses;
- charities;
- landowners; and
- individuals.

- **Monitoring:**

- through the proposed statutory framework for the sustainable management of natural resources;
- *Woodlands for Wales* Indicators and surveys;
- National Forest Inventory;
- Glastir monitoring and evaluation programme;
- *Action Plan* reporting/review; and
- other evidence.

### **Delivery mechanisms**



15. The ***delivery mechanisms*** are the principal tools for delivering the specific *priority actions* set out in this *Action Plan*. Like the ***underpinning principles***, the ***delivery mechanisms*** are enduring in nature and will continue beyond this *Plan* into the next and future iterations.

16. The ***delivery mechanisms*** are: -

- ***The proposed delivery tools for the sustainable management of natural resources, such as:***

- **Carbon budgeting** to drive delivery of Wales' contribution to the 2050 target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
  - **State of Natural Resources Reporting** providing the evidence base to identify opportunities to improve the resilience of Wales' natural resources and to maximise the long term social, economic and environmental benefits that they provide to drive green growth;
  - **National Natural Resources Policy**, setting out the high-level direction of travel for all natural resources related policy in Wales;
  - the **Area Based Approach** planning and priority setting process that co-ordinates resource use so that long-term sustainable benefits are optimised for the people, environment and economy of Wales in the present and in the future; and
  - **Planning Policy Wales**, the national planning policy framework to safeguard existing and introduce new green infrastructure as part of new development in order to promote sustainability, economic growth and the health and well-being of our communities.
- **Existing environmental legislation:** functions, duties and powers under legislation including the Forestry Act 1967 and the Plant Health Act 1967.
  - **Best practice:** including forest management planning adhering to the principles of the UK Forestry Standard.
  - **Incentives:**
    - timber production;
    - primary and secondary processing;
    - green energy;
    - carbon capture;
    - cultural and social services and benefits;
    - payments for ecosystem services; and
    - public sector support (RDP and Glastir, ERDF and ESF funding, Europe 2020 funding, LEADER, LIFE and other grant funding).

- ***Policy, information and guidance*** including:
  - National Natural Resources Policy;
  - Climate Change Strategy for Wales;
  - *Woodlands for Wales*;
  - Nature Recovery Plan for Wales;
  - Planning Policy Wales and the supporting suite of Technical Advice Notes;
  - Social policies including child poverty, tourism and vibrant and viable places regeneration framework;
  - Farming Connect;
  - UK Forestry Standard;
  - UKWAS; and
  - Glastir advocacy.
  
- ***Management of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate:***
  - exemplar of good forestry practice;
  - opportunities to test research and best practice; and
  - NRW Corporate Plan and annual Business Plan priorities.
  
- ***Research and evidence:***
  - sound science and robust evidence supporting the delivery of sustainable forests and woodlands.
  
- ***Joined up working:***
  - working together to deliver agreed outcomes;
  - creating links between initiatives to maximise available funding and benefits;
  - working with other land-use sectors towards integrated land-use.

## **Priority actions**

***A focus for short-term specific actions and activities for delivery***

17. Within this *Action Plan* there are fourteen ***priority actions***. They provide a short-term focus on the specific actions to be delivered over the life of this *Action Plan*. Each year, progress against the *priority actions* will be monitored and reported on. Part 3 – *Monitoring and Reporting* – explains how this will be done.
18. New *priority actions* might be identified as circumstances change over the period covered by the *Plan*. But no *priority action* will be removed until it has been reported on.
19. The fourteen *priority actions* appear below and they are grouped under the following six areas: -
  - ***Tree health***
  - ***Supporting woodland creation and management***
  - ***Enhancing the management and production of Welsh timber and its economic benefits***
  - ***Improving the condition of woodlands and trees***
  - ***Non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees***
  - ***UK cross-border working***
20. A consistent format is used for setting out the *priority actions*:
  - a brief overview providing an introduction for each area and for each *action*;
  - details of the lead organisation and partners, which together will drive delivery of the action;

- the evidence base for the *action*;
- the activity required to deliver the *action*; and
- progress against the *action*.

In addition, set out under each area are the wider well-being goals that the *priority actions* in that area make a contribution towards delivering.

21. A summary list of the *priority actions* is set out below (pages 15 to 18) followed by the detail for each action (pages 19 to 48). Representatives of the woodland sector and other stakeholders participated in a “*Driving Delivery*” workshop on 15 October 2015. The purpose of the workshop was to engage with stakeholders on driving delivery of the 100,000 hectare woodland creation aspiration and the *priority actions* set out in this *Action Plan*. The deliberations of delegates at the workshop have been incorporated into the commentary on the *priority actions* set out below.

### Priority Actions – Summary List

Area	No	Priority Action	“W4W” Outcomes	Contribute towards: Well-being goals
<b>Tree Health</b>	<b>1</b>	Develop and maintain a risk register of pests and diseases and their threat to tree health in Wales.	1; 2; 3; 16; and 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>a prosperous Wales;</b></li> <li>• <b>a resilient Wales;</b></li> <li>• <b>a healthier Wales;</b> and</li> <li>• <b>a globally responsible Wales.</b></li> </ul>
	<b>2</b>	Implement the Phytophthora ramorum recovery programme.		
<b>Supporting woodland creation and management</b>	<b>3</b>	Use the statutory and policy framework in Wales to deliver woodland creation to optimise the benefits provided by forestry, woodland and trees.	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 13; 14; 15; 16; 18; 19; and 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>a prosperous Wales;</b></li> <li>• <b>a resilient Wales;</b></li> <li>• <b>a healthier Wales;</b></li> <li>• <b>a more equal Wales;</b></li> <li>• <b>a Wales of cohesive communities;</b> and</li> <li>• <b>a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.</b></li> </ul>
	<b>4</b>	Manage woodland planting and current and future harvesting programmes to ensure long-term continuity of timber production.		
	<b>5</b>	Deliver increased and safeguard existing tree cover in towns and cities and support sustainable urban tree management.		

Area	No.	Priority Action	“W4W” Outcomes	Contribute towards: Well-being goals
	6	Explore the issues associated with enabling and building the capacity of community groups and enterprises to be involved in woodland management in order to help them use woodlands to realise well-being goals.		
<b>Enhancing the management and production of Welsh timber and its economic benefits</b>	7	Promote the uses and utilisation of Welsh timber, including as an essential material for sustainable construction central to the delivery of new housing.		
	8	Develop models for woodland related enterprises and provide opportunities for employment, education and training across the forestry sector by developing sector relevant skills and providing work experience as pathways to employment.	1; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13; and 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a prosperous Wales;</li> <li>• a resilient Wales;</li> <li>• a more equal Wales;</li> <li>• a Wales of cohesive communities; and</li> <li>• a globally responsible Wales.</li> </ul>
<b>Improving the condition of woodlands and trees</b>	9	Examine the adequacy of and scope to improve existing measures and procedures for the protection of valued trees, particularly ancient, veteran and heritage trees.		

Area	No.	Priority Action	“W4W” Outcomes	Contribute towards: Well-being goals
	10	Continue to bring identified special sites, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (“PAWS”), native woodlands and priority habitats into favourable management on WGWE and encourage private landowners to do so.	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 10; 16;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a prosperous Wales;</li> <li>• a resilient Wales;</li> <li>• a healthier Wales;</li> <li>• a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and</li> </ul>
	11	Develop, promote and implement programmes to manage invasive non-native species which damage woodland habitats.	17; 18; 19; and 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a globally responsible Wales.</li> </ul>
<b>Non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees</b>	12	Gather evidence to measure and evaluate the non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees in Wales.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a prosperous Wales;</li> <li>• a resilient Wales;</li> <li>• a healthier Wales;</li> </ul>
	13	Promote and enhance access to forestry and woodlands for more people to participate in and benefit from outdoor recreation experiences more often. Target resources in areas where the health, well-being and economic benefits will have the greatest impact.	3; 6; 8; 9; 10; and 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a more equal Wales;</li> <li>• a Wales of cohesive communities; and</li> <li>• a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.</li> </ul>

Area	No.	Priority Action	“W4W” Outcomes	Contribute towards: Well-being goals
UK cross-border working	14	Participate in the Forestry Governance Project to shape the future delivery of GB cross-border forestry functions ensuring that the needs of Wales, and of the other GB administrations, are accommodated.	2; 3; 5; 6; 13; 14; 16; and 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a prosperous Wales;</li> <li>• a healthier Wales; and</li> <li>• a more equal Wales.</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY ACTION AREA

### **Tree Health**

#### Overview

*Pests and diseases have significant potential to impact on the health of trees and woodlands and to undermine the Vision of Woodlands for Wales. Over the past decade, several new pests and diseases have been found in the UK and some have become established with serious economic, social and environmental consequences. Wales's reliance on a very narrow range of tree species and the former practise of growing them in monocultures makes us particularly vulnerable to the impact of pests and diseases, as the impact of *Phytophthora ramorum* on larch trees has demonstrated.*

*The Welsh Government's Tree Health Strategy aims to "preserve the health and vitality of trees and woodland in Wales through strategies which exclude, detect and respond to existing and new pests and pathogens of trees, whether of native or exotic origin". Delivery of the Strategy is managed by the Wales Tree Health Steering Group. The Group comprises of representatives of the Welsh Government, NRW, ConFor, Wales Environment Link and others with expertise in this area. Its purpose is to advise and support the Welsh Government to develop its strategic response to outbreaks of pests and diseases affecting trees, including their impact on plants in the wider environment. Specific approaches to the management of *P.ramorum* and *Chalara dieback of ash (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus)* have already been put in place in response to the impact of these diseases in Wales. In addition, the Nature Recovery Plan for Wales will set out goals for supporting Wales's biodiversity and building resilience of Wales's ecosystems.*

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<b>Priority Action 1:</b>	<b><i>Develop and maintain a risk register of pests and diseases and their threat to tree health in Wales.</i></b>
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<b>Lead and Partners:</b>	<b><i>Wales Tree Health Steering Group; <u>WG</u>; <u>NRW</u>; <u>FR</u>; <u>FC</u>; <u>APHA</u>; <u>ConFor</u>; <u>WFBP</u></i></b>
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**Evidence base:** There are many pathways for pests and diseases to enter the UK and the impact of environmental factors, and particularly climate change, will have a major influence on the behaviour and population dynamics of those organisms.

The creation and maintenance of a risk register for Wales is central to monitoring current and future threats, taking account of climate change, and informing decisions about tree species selection, effective tree health control methods and woodland management within the umbrella of sustainable woodland management and woodland certification.

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The risk register will enable timely development of disease management strategies in response to any emerging biotic threat to woodlands and trees in Wales.

WG/NRW will participate in the GB and NI Tree Health Advisory Group to ensure that Wales has access to the latest information about management approaches to pests and diseases across the UK countries.

“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators<sup>3</sup>:

- No.8: Tree health and resilience.

<b>Activity required:</b>	Core activity of WG and NRW, for example involving the aerial flights programme for surveillance; sharing of accurate information to ensure informed support from Partners.
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<b>Progress:</b>	To be reported annually.
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<b>Priority Action 2:</b>	<b>Implement the <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> recovery programme.</b>
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<b>Lead and Partners:</b>	<u>WG</u> ; <u>NRW</u> ; FR; APHA; ConFor; UKFPA; WFBP; Major wood processing companies
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**Evidence base:** *Phytophthora ramorum* (*P ramorum*) is an exotic fungus-like pathogen known to affect a wide range of host plants. It is present in a number of European countries and was first confirmed in Great Britain in 2002. Initial infections were in nurseries and gardens on rhododendrons and other shrubs and subsequent spread was slow and at a low level. In 2009 the disease was found on larch and has become widespread across western GB.

The *P.ramorum* disease management strategy, developed by the Wales Tree Health Steering Group, sets out the pan Wales approach to managing the disease outbreak, accepting that due to the nature of the disease and its distribution across Wales, eradication is not an option. Whilst *P.ramorum* is a disaster for larch in Wales, and its management presents a continuing problem for the woodland sector, it is also an opportunity to improve the age structure and increase the species diversity of Welsh woodlands to meet the vision of *Woodlands for Wales*.

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<sup>3</sup> See Part 3 “Reporting and Review”. The Indicators can be accessed at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/woodlands-wales-indicators/?lang=en>.

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To achieve this objective, restocking of sites in response to *P.ramorum* needs to be of productive species of the right provenance that are capable of producing timber to support the forestry sector as well as biodiversity and building ecosystem resilience.

The recovery programme assesses the impact on and recovery of all infected woodlands in Wales, both publicly and privately owned, with the objective of enabling those woodlands to continue to make a positive contribution to the delivery of the Welsh Government’s Green Growth agenda and *Woodlands for Wales*.

“*Woodlands for Wales*” Indicators:

- *No.1: Woodlands and trees;*
- *No.2: Diversification of woodlands;*
- *No.3: Sustainable woodland management; and*
- *No.8: Tree health and resilience.*

<i>Activity required:</i>	Core activity of WG and NRW; active and collaborative participation of Partners; up-to-date and accurate information; successful implementation of Glastir; lessons learnt opportunity to inform the management of any future disease outbreak including in terms of communications, use of citizen science and raising public awareness.
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*Progress:* To be reported annually.

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*Relationship to government priorities*

*Priority Actions 1 and 2 contribute towards:*

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 1; 2; 3; 16; and 18.*
- *Well-being goals of: a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales and a globally responsible Wales.*

## PRIORITY ACTION AREA

### **Supporting woodland creation and management**

#### Overview

*Woodlands and trees, in public and private ownership and whether in rural, peri-urban or urban environments, are valuable habitats in their own right and integral to the functioning of the Welsh environment. They are often of a significant landscape value connecting people and communities to a sense of place. “Woodlands for Wales” sets out the Welsh Government’s policy to avoid the unnecessary removal of woodland and to increase woodland cover in Wales in order to ensure that trees and woodland can continue to provide the full range of ecosystem services, including woodland as a resource for people in terms of recreation, access and amenity and woodland as a source of raw material supporting a thriving forestry sector. But this is against the backdrop of Wales being one of the least wooded countries in Europe with much natural woodland being fragmented and isolated.*

*Almost half (46%) of woodland in Wales is certified under the Forest Stewardship Council Scheme and managed under the UK Forestry Standard and its associated suite of guidelines. The majority of this area is comprised of the public woodland estate managed by Natural Resources Wales. But a significant proportion of woodland is currently unmanaged or undermanaged. The challenge is bringing more woodland, including that which is small in scale and often fragmented, into management in accordance with the principles of the UK Forestry Standard. Improving woodland networks will support Wales’s biodiversity and help build ecosystem resilience.*

*The right species of tree planted in the right place and properly managed can help to regulate water flow, alleviate flooding and intercept both diffuse pollution from agriculture and air pollution in towns and cities. Trees can reduce soil erosion, protect soil carbon stores and increase water percolation reducing run-off. They provide shade to livestock and watercourses, act as windbreaks and landscaping, and provide valuable habitats supporting a wide range of biodiversity. They sequester carbon and provide a renewable source of material, as well as giving rise to recreation and health opportunities.*

*The Wales Climate Change Strategy, published in 2010, contains an aspiration to create 100,000 hectares (ha) of new woodland between 2010 and 2030 as a means to help Wales meet its carbon emission reduction targets. The aspiration was a key recommendation of the Land Use and Climate Change Group. The recommendation was accepted by the Welsh Government as a climate change target to achieve levels of reduction in Wales green house gas emissions by long-term carbon sequestration. The aspiration required planting of 5,000ha of additional woodland cover per annum from 2010 to 2030, a higher level of planting than any ever previously achieved in Wales, including the large scale planting during the 1950s and 1960s. In 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned ADAS to review the climate change target. ADAS recommended a reduction in the target to 50,000ha of woodland creation to be delivered over 25 years up to 2040.*

*Both the Land Use and Climate Change Group and ADAS recommendations envisage new woodland creation at a level that is much higher than the actual achievement over recent years: between 2010 and 2015, 3,203ha of woodland has been created in Wales. The Committee on Climate change has recommended<sup>4</sup> that consideration should be given as to whether further measures are needed to ensure tree planting targets are met – on the basis of current achievement, there needs to be a better approach to ensuring woodland creation supports delivery of our climate change targets.*

*In short, woodland has the potential to create economic activity, create employment opportunities and improve the biodiversity and functioning of Wales’s environment. In particular, we need to make special efforts to encourage farmers and other major land and woodland owners such as local authorities, through the Rural Communities – Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 for example, to bring their woodlands into sustainable management for biodiversity, timber, wood fuel and other environmental benefits. Such activity will provide a range of ecosystem services, as well as enabling landowners like farmers to diversify their businesses.*

*But woodland creation and management must be guided by the need to protect semi-natural habitats, historic features and characteristic landscapes. Whilst “Woodlands for Wales” has a strong presumption against the permanent removal of woodland, in certain circumstances it may be justified if there is a need to restore high priority open habitats.*

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**Priority Action 3:** ***Use the statutory and policy framework in Wales to deliver woodland creation to optimise the benefits provided by forestry, woodland and trees.***

**Lead and Partners:** ***NRW; WG; FR; ConFor; WFBP; Coed Cadw; Coed Cymru; Llais y Goedwig; Local Authorities.***

**Evidence base:** The Welsh Government’s Natural Resources Policy Framework (“NRPF”) is a means of planning and prioritising natural resource management (“NRM”) to capture the value of and opportunities presented by natural resources in Wales and woodlands must make a major contribution to the implementation of this approach. The Welsh Government’s Environment Bill aims to put in place a legislative framework around NRPF and NRM, which will support planning for woodland creation and management in a way which takes account of a wide range benefits provided by trees. The statutory requirements outlined in the Bill therefore present an opportunity to support delivery of the woodland creation target,

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<sup>4</sup> Recommendation 32 of “Reducing emissions and preparing for climate change: 2015 Progress Report to Parliament” (June 2015) (<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-emissions-and-preparing-for-climate-change-2015-progress-report-to-parliament/>)

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and the benefits provided by forestry, woodland and trees will need to feature strongly as this new legislation is implemented.

The Environment Bill also proposes a duty on the Welsh Ministers to ensure that in 2050 greenhouse gas emissions are at least 80% lower than the baseline levels. Interim targets are proposed in order to provide an appropriate pathway to achieve this, which will provide the direction for carbon budgets on the total amount of emissions that can be emitted in Wales. Carbon budgets will be set for specific periods, known as budgetary periods, starting for 2016-2020 and then every five years up to 2050. This aligns with the period covered by this plan, and woodland creation and management will play an important role in meeting carbon budgets, the interim emissions targets and the 2050 emission target. Carbon budgets will act as an incentive for tree planting as the costs of using trees to remove carbon compare favourably with the costs of other abatement options. Budgets will be set on the basis of the best available evidence which will in turn inform what future woodland creation targets should be.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets a framework within which specified Welsh public bodies will seek to achieve well-being goals in order to improve wellbeing both now and in the future (see Annex 2). The Act provides for national indicators to be developed that will measure the difference being made to the well-being of Wales over time<sup>5</sup>. The management and creation of forestry and woodland will make a fundamental contribution to well-being and how the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Reference has already been made to the Wales Climate Change Strategy aspiration to create 100,000 hectares (ha) of new woodland between 2010 and 2030 as a means to help Wales meet its carbon emission reduction targets. This aspiration recognises the potential for trees and woodland to sequester carbon. The emerging statutory and policy framework in Wales will, in addition to carbon storage, emphasise the range of other benefits for society and biodiversity that trees and woodlands can provide.

The woodland sector and other stakeholders considered the climate change aspiration at the “*Driving Delivery*” workshop<sup>6</sup>. Tree planting was recognised as a significant measure to sequester carbon that will combine with other measures, for example peatland restoration, to contribute to meeting Wales’s

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<sup>5</sup> The suite of national indicators is being developed.

<sup>6</sup> See paragraph 21.

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overall carbon emission reduction target. The combined effect of such measures will have a bearing on the total number of trees and the area of woodland creation that will be required to achieve the desired reduction in carbon emissions. The carbon budgeting framework being taken forward through the Environment Bill will influence the scale of new tree planting and other measures required to balance carbon emissions.

Delegates at the workshop noted that the climate change aspiration does not recognise the other benefits that will accrue from planting the right tree in the right place for the right reasons. “Smart” tree planting will focus on the wide range of benefits that trees can provide, including carbon sequestration. Planting close to towns and cities was seen as a means of delivering community benefits including outdoor recreation and facilities for orchards, allotments and community gardens. To achieve this, different enablers, processes and incentives will be required compared to those that have traditionally been in place to support tree planting on land of low agricultural productivity. The Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 was seen as one such enabler, namely acting as an incentive for public bodies to collaborate with others, including the construction sector and third sector, to realise the range of benefits that trees can provide. Tree planting and woodland creation therefore has the capability to help public bodies to maximise their contribution to achieving the well-being goals set out in the Act.

Delegates concluded that a short-term goal for woodland creation will provide a focus for activity while carbon budgeting becomes established in Wales. Delegates considered that during this period there will be an opportunity to assess the level of tree planting and other measures that will be required to achieve Wales’s carbon emission reduction targets, together with the timescales over which such measures will be effective in terms of their capacity to sequester carbon.

To deliver woodland creation, the Welsh Government has set a new short-term target over the life of this Action Plan of 10,000ha of new woodland to be created by 2020. This will require an average of 2,000ha of tree planting per annum. The principle tool for delivering this target will be funding through the Rural Communities – Rural Development Plan via direct funding for woodland creation and by encouraging co-operation between land owners in the public and private sectors to deliver additional tree planting. In terms of direct funding, the Welsh Government opened the revised Glastir Woodland Creation Scheme at the earliest opportunity following the approval of the Rural Communities – Rural Development Plan by the European Commission. The application window for the new Scheme has

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generated a significant increase in demand compared to previous years, reflecting improvements made to the Scheme to increase its flexibility and interest to potential applicants.

The short-term target sets a challenging goal in the context of woodland creation delivered in recent years. It provides an opportunity over time to set a revised woodland creation target as the statutory and policy framework in Wales develops that recognises the range of benefits that are provided by trees – not only the volume of carbon stored by planting blocks of traditional woodland but also as a result of “smart” planting to help realise the range of ecosystem services and community benefits that woodlands and trees can provide<sup>7</sup>.

This action recognises the opportunity to ensure that the benefits provided by trees are clearly understood and that public bodies are well placed to optimise those benefits for the long term. Indicators will steer action towards planting trees in ways which provide the greatest long term social and environmental benefit, so that trees can continue to help rural economies, lock up carbon, help to reduce flood risk, improve air quality in urban areas and provide spaces that can help improve physical and mental health.

Tools will be required to enable public bodies to make decisions that can enable these multiple benefits to be achieved. Delivery partners will need the best available advice and decision making tools to inform how they meet their wellbeing objectives through woodland creation and management.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

- *No.1: Woodlands and trees;*
- *No.2: Diversification of woodlands;*
- *No.3: Sustainable woodland management;*
- *No.5: Farm woodland;*
- *No.6: Urban woodland and trees;*
- *No.7: Carbon balance<sup>8</sup>;*
- *No.8: Tree health;*
- *No.11: Recreation;*
- *No.12: Accessibility*
- *No.21: Woodland as a pressure on Water; and*
- *No.22: Woodlands as a solution for water management.*

<b>Activity required:</b>	Core activity of WG and specified public bodies to take forward the sustainable development principle and ensure appropriate
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<sup>7</sup> Cross refer to PA5 and 6.

<sup>8</sup> “Carbon balance” is the current indicator in *Woodlands for Wales* measuring carbon stocks in woodland soil, biomass and wood products. Carbon sequestration in forests, woodlands and trees will, in due course, be calculated in accordance with the carbon budgeting regime.

evidence and information is available to inform ‘smart’ tree planting. Core activity of NRW and WG to implement the Natural Resources Policy Framework and support development and delivery of carbon budgets; WG and NRW review of the role and purpose of the WGWE; direction and leadership from partners to support implementation. With our Partners, develop tools to assist public bodies to recognise and enhance the benefits provided by forestry, woodlands and trees which support integrated Natural Resource Management and contribute to the achievement of the well-being goals, for example, the role that Public Service Boards can play to facilitate woodland creation particularly on publicly owned land.

*Progress:* To be reported annually.

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**Priority Action 4:** *Manage woodland planting and current and future harvesting programmes to ensure long-term continuity of timber production.*

**Lead and Partners:** WG; NRW; WFBP; ConFor; UKFPA; FR; forestry contractors and wood processing businesses.

*Evidence base:* The forestry sector in Wales has an annual Gross Value Added (“GVA”) of £499.3 million. Of this, £25.2 million can be attributed to forestry and logging, and £173.8 million can be attributed to the manufacture of wood and product. In total, the forestry sector employs between 8,500 and 11,300 people<sup>9</sup>.

Based on existing woodland planting, harvesting plans and growth assumptions, the NFI 50-year forecast data of softwood timber availability indicates that there is a significant gap in softwood timber supplies in the medium to long-term. The reasons for this are varied including the creation of open habitats, PAWS restoration and emphasis on broadleaf planting. There is a risk that this gap may indeed broaden through the need for species diversification for forest resilience in order to both adapt to the effects of climate change and to the risks posed by tree pests and diseases.

The forecast shortfall in softwood timber availability has the potential to impact on the Welsh economy in terms of less investment in the forestry sector and fewer employment opportunities created.

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<sup>9</sup> Woodlands for Wales Indicators release 2014-15.

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Welsh Government, NRW, ConFor and WFBP have agreed “Ten Areas for Action” for Wales’s forest resource and this includes an action for improved management of timber production and supply from the WGWE and the Welsh Forest Resource. The WGWE accounts for two-thirds of the conifer woodland in Wales and the review in to its role and purpose will also be relevant to the issue of improved management of timber production and supply.

There are a number of other factors to consider in addressing the matter, in particular woodland creation<sup>10</sup> and sustainable forest management – including the scope to bring more woodlands into production through more effective management and crop rotation cycles (such as continuous cover forestry techniques, low impact silvicultural systems or short rotation forestry techniques). Data on the properties and suitability of alternative tree species that can be planted for production forestry is also vital. All of this will need to be assessed in developing the policy in order to ensure the continuing competitiveness and profitability of the forestry sector and the multiple benefits provided by Wales’s forests, woodlands and trees.

“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:

- No.1: Woodlands and trees;
- No.3: Sustainable woodland management;
- No.4: Management system;
- No.5: Farm woodland;
- No.14: Use of Welsh wood;
- No.15: Value of forestry sector; and
- No.16: Demand for wood.

*Activity required:*

Direction, leadership and resource from WG and NRW to ensure a collaborative partnership approach to provide effective and proportionate regulation, facilitate trials for analysis and encourage landowners who want to plant woodland; promoting the woodland opportunities map as a guide to land owners and managers, including farmers, of those areas most suited to new woodland creation; WG and NRW role and purpose review of the WGWE; grant funding for woodland creation and management via successful implementation of Glastir.

*Progress:* To be reported annually.

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<sup>10</sup> Cross refer to PA3.

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**Priority Action 5:** *Deliver increased and safeguard existing tree cover in towns and cities and support sustainable urban tree management.*

**Lead and Partners:** WG; NRW; local authorities; Coed Cadw; Coed Cymru; FR; Llais y Goedwig; Local Health Boards; registered social landlords; Bat Conservation Trust; Archaeological Trusts

**Evidence base:** A growing body of evidence illustrates that well maintained, attractive urban green infrastructure is crucial to increasing the amount of time people spend engaged in healthy outdoor activity. In addition, green infrastructure can contribute to community cohesion by helping to build pride in local communities and a sense of ownership by enabling volunteering activities for local people. Green infrastructure can take numerous forms: playing fields; nature reserves; community gardens, allotments and orchards<sup>11</sup>; and trees.

Trees in urban settings play an important role in providing a clean, attractive and resilient built environment be that in large cities and towns or small urban settlements. Evidence in favour of urban tree planting has shown the role of trees in reducing air pollution, regulating against urban flooding, reducing surface temperatures and providing valuable habitat for wildlife and pollinators which are essential for healthy functioning urban ecosystems<sup>12</sup>. As in rural areas, trees in urban settings are likely to become important tools in future efforts to adapt to a changing climate whilst also improving well-being and standards of living, for example as a means of addressing the prevalence of illnesses like asthma.

NRW has collected evidence in favour of the management of urban trees and increased tree cover in urban areas. NRW's study "*Tree Cover in Wales' Towns and Cities*" provides an analysis of the canopy cover in our towns and cities. Urban tree canopy cover in Wales was 16.8% in 2009 – mid range in terms of world rankings but lower than the 20% level of cover of the UKFS woodland definition.

Urban tree planting can deliver a range of ecosystem services and community benefits, as well as contributing to carbon capture and storage<sup>13</sup>. Recent i-Tree Eco studies in Wrexham, Bridgend and Swansea and the Tawe catchment have demonstrated the value of urban trees. Every year, trees in

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<sup>11</sup> Cross refer to PA6.

<sup>12</sup> See the "Action Plan for Pollinators in Wales"

(<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/conservationbiodiversity/action-plan-for-pollinators/?lang=en>)

<sup>13</sup> Cross refer to PA3.

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those areas deliver £3.9million of benefits by: removing 258 tonnes of pollution; intercepting 654 million litres of rainfall; and capturing 6,409 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere. In addition, the tree population stores 222,000 tonnes of carbon.

Building on this, and through working in partnership with planners, local authorities and other key partners, there is an opportunity to improve the environmental quality of the areas in Wales where most people live by adopting a strategic approach to managing urban trees and supporting sustainable urban tree management. Planting new trees as part of Sustainable Urban Drainage schemes has helped to realise multiple benefits. For example, the Stebonheath School, Llanelli SUDs scheme included an extensive element of new trees and associated planting. As well as offering intrinsic environmental benefits, the scheme offers the school children the opportunity to study trees in their immediate local environment. Other local planning authorities are producing supplementary planning guidance to help guide developers and the public in the multiple benefits that adopting a green infrastructure strategy can afford.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

- *No.6: Urban woodland and trees;*
- *No.9: Local benefits of woodlands to local communities;*
- *No.11: Recreation; and*
- *No.23: Heritage and landscape.*

<i>Activity required:</i>	Direction and leadership by lead bodies, including through NRW’s “Good for People” theme <sup>14</sup> ; working together to deliver the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to utilise public land; education, particularly for young people, to raise awareness of the positive benefits of safeguarding and increasing urban tree cover; engaging with communities and voluntary groups to achieve support for sustainable urban tree cover; Coed Cadw promotional campaign to be launched 2015; Partner collaboration; sharing information, evidence and expertise.
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*Progress:* To be reported annually.

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<b>Priority Action 6:</b>	<b><i>Explore the issues associated with enabling and building the capacity of community groups and enterprises to be involved in woodland management in order to help them use woodlands to realise well-being goals.</i></b>
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<sup>14</sup> See NRW’s Business Plan for 2015/2016 and Commitment P3.

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**Lead and Partners:** NRW; Llais y Goedwig; Coed Cadw; Federation of City Farms and Gardens; Community Land Advisory Service; The Green Valleys Community Interest Company; Groundwork Wales; Keep Wales Tidy; Community Voluntary Councils (such as Interlink RCT); Communities First clusters; Archaeological Trusts; WG

**Evidence base:** The GVA and employment in the forest sector that is supported by woodland is noted in the evidence base for PA4. Woodland is also a valuable resource for communities capable of providing a range of potential benefits. Woodland can be used for training opportunities, enterprise ventures and recreational health and well-being initiatives. Through the “*Woodlands and You*”<sup>15</sup> process, NRW provides an opportunity for people and communities to come forward with proposals for activities, events or projects on or involving the WGWE.

There are significant issues to explore in terms of enabling community groups to be involved in woodland management. Community groups have different structures. They have diverse needs, expectations and skills often requiring different levels of support to ensure that their long-term involvement is sustainable. Their expectations may well be different, ranging from involvement in practical woodland management activity through volunteering opportunities to transfer of responsibility for woodland and its management. But community involvement may well be a means of increasing active management of areas of woodland that are currently undermanaged.

Woodlands also have the potential as a resource or asset for communities to help them to meet other objectives key to their on-going well-being. For example, growing locally sourced food has become increasingly popular in recent years. Community growing has links to issues such as food culture, health and well-being, food security and community cohesion<sup>16</sup>. Land availability is a significant limiting factor in promoting community growing. The extent to which community gardens, allotments and orchards can be accommodated on forest land (whether publicly or privately owned) can be evaluated to support the valuable benefits of community growing – there are examples of NRW managed land being used for community allotments in Blaencwm in the Rhondda Fawr valley, a Communities First

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<sup>15</sup> NRW is developing a new scheme, “Mynediad”, to enable access to land which it manages for a range of activities, projects and both social and commercial enterprises.

<sup>16</sup> See the food strategy for Wales, “Food for Wales, Food from Wales 2010-2020”

(<http://www.physicalactivityandnutritionwales.org.uk/Documents/740/Food%20Strategy%202010-2020-eng.pdf>) and the “Community Grown Food Action Plan”

(<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/foodanddrink/foodpolicyandstrategy/comgrownfoodactionplan1/?lang=en>).

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area.

WG and NRW have initiated a review of the role and purpose of the WGWE, which accounts for two-thirds of the conifer woodland in Wales and that review is relevant to the delivery of this Priority Action.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

- *No.10: Community involvement; and*
- *No.13: Local enterprises.*

*Activity required:*

Direction and leadership from lead bodies and Partners to support community groups overcome barriers to involvement in the management of woodland; WG and NRW role and purpose review of the WGWE; partnership collaboration to deliver the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to deliver outcomes for the Action such as advocacy, promoting and supporting volunteering opportunities and community engagement; to contribute to achieving the well-being goals through the work of environmental bodies core funded by WG; Cynefin Programme; Community Land Advisory Service to signpost community groups to opportunities for community allotments and orchards on the WGWE; research to provide evidence; information sharing.

*Progress: To be reported annually.*

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*Relationship to government priorities*

*Priority Actions 3, 4, 5 and 6 contribute towards:*

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11;13;14; 15; 16; 18; 19; and 20.*
- *Well-being goals of: **a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; and a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.***

## PRIORITY ACTION AREA

### ***Enhancing the management and production of Welsh timber and its economic benefits.***

#### Overview

*Woodlands and trees in Wales provide important economic benefits, not least as a source of sustainable material for construction. This is not only a benefit for growers and primary processors of timber, but also for the wider construction sector in terms of skilled future employment opportunities. Economic activity in Welsh woodlands has the potential to stimulate sustainable woodland management that will help to support a thriving forestry sector and deliver green growth, tackle poverty and provide a valuable recreational resource for the people of Wales.*

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<b>Priority Action 7:</b>	<b><i>Promote the uses and utilisation of Welsh timber, including as an essential material for sustainable construction central to the delivery of new housing.</i></b>
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<b>Lead and Partners:</b>	<b><i>WG</i></b> (a cross-departmental working group comprising EST, Housing and Natural Resources); WFBP (and the Timber in Housing Group administered by WFBP); Coed Cymru; NRW; FR; Institute of Chartered Foresters.
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**Evidence base:** *Woodlands for Wales* recognises the vital role of Welsh timber in supporting the growth of Welsh forest industries, especially in rural areas. In turn, economic activity in Welsh woodlands can act as an impetus to long-term sustainable woodland management which not only supports the forestry sector but also delivers wider multiple benefits.

“Grown in Britain” is an example of an initiative designed to promote the role British timber plays today and to encourage a greater understanding of the role of sustainable woodland management. But there are barriers to the use of Welsh home-grown timber. In terms of its use as a sustainable material for construction, the comparative weakness of the supply chain as compared with established, and competing, supply chains for other materials used in construction is a significant barrier to the use of timber in housing. Compliance with procurement requirements, particularly for public authorities engaged in the provision of social housing, is also a barrier.

Locally sourced engineered timber components have the capacity to provide sustainable products and methods of construction. There is therefore a need for increased educational activity at further and higher education levels to raise awareness of and promote the technical capabilities of

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domestic timber amongst students of architecture, civil and structural engineering, construction and so forth, thereby helping to stimulate demand for domestic wood and wood products. An example is promoting the use of timber as a material for building and construction. Promotion includes providing information on the properties of tree species and the quality of timber that they produce, as well as how to obtain them, in order to inform effective business decisions. In addition, there are wider benefits arising from the use of timber as a sustainable natural resource, including long term carbon sequestration from using timber as a building and construction material.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

- *No.13: Local enterprises;*
- *No.14: Use of Welsh wood;*
- *No.15: Value of forestry sector; and*
- *No.16: Demand for wood.*

<i>Activity required:</i>	Leadership by WG to facilitate collaboration by drawing stakeholders together to unlock barriers, encourage co-operation and identify opportunities as a means of contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals; funding from WG to support delivery by Partners.
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*Progress:* To be reported annually.

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<b><i>Priority Action 8:</i></b>	<b><i>Develop models for woodland related enterprises and provide opportunities for employment, education and training across the forestry sector by developing sector relevant skills and providing work experience as pathways to employment.</i></b>
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<i>Lead and Partners:</i>	<u>WG</u> ; <u>NRW</u> ; Coed Cymru; Llais y Goedwig; Coed Lleol; ConFor; UKFPA; WG; Institute of Chartered Foresters; Focus on Forestry First; Lantra; careers advisory services.
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*Evidence base:* Healthy and resilient woodlands and trees provide the foundation for the forestry sector. There are many examples of enterprises that are supported by woodlands, including producers, specialist forestry contractors and primary and secondary processors.

But in order to thrive, the sector needs people with a wide range of skills: practical skills for growing, maintaining, harvesting and processing timber; management skills to achieve good

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environmental stewardship; and agents and entrepreneurs with sound business skills. A buoyant forestry sector and well managed woodlands and forests will provide wider benefits and opportunities that require people with skills related to tourism, specialist recreation activities and community work.

At present there are skill shortages and gaps across most of the forestry sector and a lack of opportunities for new entrants to enter the market. Initiatives like apprenticeships could help by providing training opportunities running concurrently with employment and providing young people with skills that they can use elsewhere in the sector. In addition, there is a need for opportunities for professionals and managers in the forestry sector to develop skills to meet the future needs of the sector.

Volunteering opportunities in woodlands are another means to develop sector relevant skills. By working in partnership with local authorities and third sector organisations, there is opportunity to encourage more use of woodlands for education and training, as well as to meet well-being goals<sup>17</sup>. There is scope to encourage woodland-based small and emerging enterprises, including social enterprises, to access community support elements of the Rural Communities – Rural Development Plan and other services to support their business models.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

- *No.9: Local benefits of woodlands;*
- *No.10: Community involvement;*
- *No.13: Local enterprises; and*
- *No.17: Business health in the forestry sector.*

*Activity required:*

Leadership by WG and NRW, including through its “Good for People” and “Good for Business” themes<sup>18</sup>, to facilitate collaboration by drawing partners together to encourage co-operation and identify opportunities; research to provide evidence and information – for example arising out of the FR research programme 2015-2019 – to inform the provision of vocational training and apprenticeships; social forestry courses under development by Coed Lleol and accredited by Agored/OCN; information for young people to raise awareness of the range of potential careers associated with forestry and woodlands.

*Progress: To be reported annually.*

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<sup>17</sup> Cross refer to PA6.

<sup>18</sup> See NRW’s Business Plan for 2015/2016 and Commitments P4 and B2.

Relationship to government priorities

Priority Actions 7 and 8 contribute towards:

- Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 1; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13 and 15.
- Well-being goals of: **a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; and a globally responsible Wales.**

## PRIORITY ACTION AREA

### ***Improving the condition of woodlands and trees***

#### Overview

*Wales is one of the least wooded countries in Europe, where woodland cover is 14% of the land area compared to the European average of 37%. Most woodland in Wales is either conifer plantation (the main source of home grown timber) or native woodland (although some has been converted to non-native plantation). The latter is mostly on a small scale and fragmented and whilst not all of it is ancient, a significant proportion has been continuously wooded for at least 400 years. Despite the fact that woodland cover is lower than the European average, forests, woodlands and trees have a significant landscape value.*

*Ancient woodlands and other species rich habitats have a vital role in providing ecosystem services. The quality of woodland habitats is determined by the condition of woodland soils, water, biodiversity, landscape and heritage. It is important to protect the structure and functioning of woodland habitat networks and where possible to reverse the fragmentation of woodland. Improving woodland networks provides the opportunity for wildlife populations to reach new habitats and to adapt to threats and changing circumstances, for example as a result of climate change. Improving the condition of woodlands is therefore key to healthy and resilient woodland ecosystems.*

*Ancient and veteran trees can be of high biodiversity value as species rich habitats for some increasingly rare lichens, mosses and fungi; and they can also be a cultural resource linking people and communities to place, environment and culture. Ancient, veteran and heritage trees are particularly important for the range of ecosystem services that they are able to provide. Such trees are a product of biological activity and past human activity and, like archaeological sites, are literally irreplaceable. It is not without foundation that they are often described as “green monuments”.*

*All woodlands, whether coniferous or native, are exposed to risks from invasive non-native species (INNS) – organisms not native to Great Britain and with the potential to have negative effects on Wales’s economy, environment and/or health. INNS are a substantial environmental and economic threat to Wales. Those that are already established represent a significant threat to native fauna and flora and currently cost approximately £125 million per year to tackle. But with growing globalisation in terms of increasing movement of people and in the context of the impact of climate change there are increasing threats from INNS in the coming years and decades.*

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<b>Priority Action 9:</b>	<b><i>Examine the adequacy of and scope to improve existing measures and procedures for the protection of valued trees, particularly ancient, veteran and heritage trees.</i></b>
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<b>Lead and</b>	<b>WG; Task and Finish Group drawn from the public, private and</b>
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**Partners:** voluntary sectors (including Coed Cadw) supports the Welsh Government; Archaeological Trusts.

**Evidence base:** The biodiversity, cultural and landscape value particularly of ancient, veteran and heritage trees is well documented. Mechanisms for the protection of trees are in place (principally via the Tree Preservation Order and Felling Licence regimes). Anecdotal evidence indicates that existing protections are insufficient in terms of the grounds on which protection can be conferred, particularly on ancient, veteran and heritage trees, and the care and maintenance requirements for particular trees that can be put in place.

Woodlands for Wales Indicator 18 “Woodland Habitats and Ancient Trees” indicates that the percentage of both area and number of woodland features in Special Areas of Conservation which are in favourable condition has declined in the 2007-2012 reporting round compared to the 2002-2006 reporting round.

“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators

- No.18: Woodland habitats and ancient trees; and
- No.23: Heritage and landscape.

**Activity required:** WG supported by the Task and Finish Group; examine use of ancient tree inventory to inform State of Natural Resources Reporting.

**Progress:** To be reported annually.

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**Priority Action 10<sup>19</sup>:** **Continue to bring identified special sites, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (“PAWS”), native woodlands and priority habitats into favourable management on WGWE and encourage private landowners to do so.**

**Lead and Partners:** NRW; Coed Cadw; WG; ConFor; Coed Cymru; Wildlife Trusts; Wales Biodiversity Partnership; Bat Conservation Trust; Archaeological Trusts

**Evidence base:** There is a continued need for the gradual restoration of important woodland habitats through appropriate management, and where possible, expansion. Improving their health and resilience in our changing climate will help to ensure they continue to accommodate priority species, provide ecosystem

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<sup>19</sup> Cross refer to PA3 and 4.

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benefits and remain a valuable resource in our landscapes.

In Wales, much of the ancient semi-natural woodland and other native woodland is not publically owned.. *Woodlands for Wales* recognises that much of this woodland is fragmented, isolated and that its ecological condition is vulnerable. The WGWE estate comprises around 19,000ha of the 95,000ha of Ancient Woodland Sites identified in the Wales Ancient Woodland Inventory (2011) administered by NRW. All PAWS sites on the WGWE have been assessed and prioritised and work is underway to restore a proportion of these PAWS to a more natural state and to improve their ecological condition. But more needs to be done to encourage more woodlands and trees of special conservation value to begin the journey towards favourable management. There is also concern that PAWS restoration will reduce timber production and PA4 focuses on addressing the shortfall in timber production in Wales.

A Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel Task and Finish group has been set up to review the adequacy of PAWS restoration policy on both the public and private woodland estate in delivering the outcomes of the *Woodlands for Wales* Strategy, and explore options on how this could be improved whilst protecting and enhancing these sites.

WG and NRW have initiated a review of the role and purpose of the WGWE, which accounts for two-thirds of the conifer woodland in Wales and that review is relevant to the delivery of this Priority Action. Economic incentives will facilitate the viability of PAWS restoration, potentially as a payment for ecosystem services. Information, advice and financial incentives to the private sector will be provided through funding mechanisms such as Glastir and the Nature Fund and through the work undertaken by Partners.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

- *No.7: Carbon balance;*
- *No.19: Woodland species; and*
- *No.20: Connectivity.*

*Activity required:*

WG and NRW review of the role and purpose of the WGWE; established programmes such as Environment Strategy for Wales Outcome 21 database of actions and reporting and planning under Article 17 of the EU Habitats Directive; guidance for woodland grant administrators/advisors; training for woodland owners, managers and other professionals; Task and Finish Group established to review PAWS restoration policy.

*Progress:*

*To be reported annually.*

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**Priority Action 11:** *Develop, promote and implement programmes to manage invasive non-native species which damage woodland habitats.*

**Lead and Partners:** NRW; Welsh Government; FR; APHA; Wales Biodiversity Partnership; Non-native Species Forum; GB Non-native Species Secretariat; Wales Squirrel Forum; Deer Initiative Partnership in Wales; ConFor; WFBP; Vincent Wildlife Trust.

**Evidence base:** Forests, woodlands and trees and the wider environment are exposed to the detrimental effects of a number of non-native species that are currently established in Wales and the UK, including rhododendron, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and grey squirrel. Damage caused by native and non-native deer is also increasing. Some of these species were intentionally introduced, and may have a cultural and historical legacy in some circumstances that needs to be considered.

There is also a risk that other non-native species with the potential to impact adversely on woodland habitats will establish themselves in the future<sup>20</sup>.

Present and future risks from invasive non-native species are assessed against the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain, which provides the framework delivery of invasive non-native species policy in Great Britain.

A new European Regulation seeks to address the problems of invasive non-native species in a comprehensive manner so as to protect native biodiversity and ecosystem services across Europe, as well as mitigating the health and economic impact that those species can have. Member States will be required to compile lists of such species that are of concern to the European Union.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

- *No.3: Sustainable woodland management;*
- *No.8: Tree health;*
- *No.18: Woodland habitats and ancient trees;*
- *No.19: Woodland species; and*
- *No.20: Connectivity.*

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**Activity required:** Direction and leadership from WG and NRW, including through its “Good for the Environment” theme<sup>21</sup>, in collaboration with the

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<sup>20</sup> Cross refer to PA1.

GB Non-native Species Secretariat; Partner support to develop and implement programmes; support for the Wales Wild Deer Management Strategy; WG and NRW to take forward a Grey Squirrel Management Action Plan for Wales; encourage citizen science; communication of the reasons for undertaking non native species management.

*Progress: To be reported annually.*

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*Relationship to government priorities*

*Priority Actions 9, 10 and 11 contribute towards:*

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 10; 16; 17; 18; 19; and 20.*
- *Well-being goals of: **a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and a globally responsible Wales.***

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<sup>21</sup> See NRW's Business Plan for 2015/2016 and Commitment E2.

## PRIORITY ACTION AREA

### ***Non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees***

#### Overview

*Delivering the long-term ambition of Woodlands for Wales depends on Welsh forestry, woodlands and trees being actively and sustainably managed for timber production and to provide other goods and services. The Strategy is therefore predicated on the multiple benefits that forestry, woodlands and trees provide. In addition to the “timber value” to the forestry sector (growers and primary and secondary processors), forestry has a significant “non-timber value” beneficial to people, communities and the natural environment in Wales: -*

- *non-timber forest products, produce and resources;*
- *employment in non-timber forest related activities;*
- *ecosystem services of forestry;*
- *recreation and access - a “green prescription” improving the health, well-being and fitness of people.*

*Whilst there is data and information relating to “timber value”, there is scope to explore the “non-timber value” of forestry in order to inform forestry policy and management.*

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<b>Priority Action 12:</b>	<b><i>Gather evidence to measure and evaluate the non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees in Wales.</i></b>
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<b>Lead and Partners:</b>	<b><i>WG; NRW; FC; FR; ConFor; Coed Lleol; Llais y Goedwig; Archaeological Trusts.</i></b>
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**Evidence base:** The UK National Ecosystem Assessment was published in June 2011 and provides the first analysis of the UK’s natural environment in terms of the benefits provided to society and to continuing economic prosperity. It recognises a range of ecosystem services provided by forestry and forms a basis for further understanding of the value of wider benefits provided by woodlands and trees.

There are approximately 306,000 hectares of forests and woodlands in Wales. Although the idea of multi-purpose woodland management is widely accepted, the value of all of the benefits that woodlands and trees can provide for society is often overlooked: the economic, recreational, health, aesthetic and spiritual benefits for people living near or visiting

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woodlands; biodiversity and landscape value; and heritage and cultural value. “Value” therefore encompasses social, health and cultural benefits as well as economic benefits and the potential for new markets related to woodland and timber. Whilst such value is recognised, it is difficult to properly evaluate. The i-Tree Eco studies<sup>22</sup> that have been undertaken to date are examples that demonstrate the value of the multiple benefits that woodlands and trees can provide.

Traditionally, the economic importance of forestry has focused on timber and timber based products. The economic value of non-timber forest products and the potential for developing sustainable economic activity in local communities has not been fully assessed. There are small businesses and individuals in Wales engaged in economic activity relating to non-timber forest products including wildflower honey production, berry collection and moss harvesting. The extent and value of the activity is not well understood and there is a need to fully assess its potential – for example under the umbrella of the European StarTree project – for development at the local community level.

Forestry and ecosystem services relating to forestry, woodlands and trees will be a central tenet to natural resource management and the planning and prioritising framework proposed by the Environment (Wales) Bill. Management of woodland aligned with health, economic and environmental benefits<sup>23</sup> which go beyond the value of timber itself, underpinned by a better understanding of the non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees, could potentially lead to new markets developing in the future.

As part of its research programme for 2015-2019, Forest Research will be undertaking research to value ecosystem services and to examine influences on behaviour and forest governance. The outputs from the research programme together with other research and information about non-timber value of forests woodlands and trees will inform future decision-making about woodland management.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

- *No.9: Local benefits of woodlands;*
- *No.10: Community involvement;*
- *No.11: Recreation;*
- *No.12: Accessibility;*
- *No.15: Value of forestry sector; and*
- *No.17: Business health in the forestry sector.*

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<sup>22</sup> Cross refer to PA 5.

<sup>23</sup> Cross refer to PAs 5 and 6.

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**Activity required:** WG and NRW role and purpose review of the WGWE; NRW “Good for Knowledge” theme<sup>24</sup>; FR research programme 2015-2019; European StarTree project reports; resources for additional studies and surveys; sharing information and evidence and promoting its practical use across public, private and third sector managed woodland; developing new markets as a result of recognising the broad “value” of woodlands and trees.

**Progress:** *To be reported annually.*

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**Priority Action 13:** *Promote and enhance access to forestry and woodlands for more people to participate in and benefit from outdoor recreation experiences more often. Target resources in areas where the health, well-being and economic benefits will have the greatest impact.*

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**Lead and Partners:** NRW; Local Authorities; Visit Wales; Coed Lleol; Public Health Wales; Actif Woods; Llais y Goedwig; Coed Cadw; Ramblers Association; WATO; Community Development Foundation.

**Evidence base:** Healthy and resilient woodlands and trees provide a wide range of community benefits, enabling people to use and enjoy woodlands, lead healthier lives and engage in economic activity related to woodland enterprises. Successful mountain bike trail centres will continue to attract visitors to Wales as well as providing recreational and economic opportunities for local communities. Similarly, a wider audience can also enjoy the access, recreation and economic benefits from experiencing other activities that woodlands can offer, including in and around urban settings.

Plant!, the Welsh Government’s initiative, is a project to plant a tree for every child born or adopted in Wales. The objectives of the project are both woodland creation and health and well-being, encouraging recreational visits by families to areas of woodland.

Spending time and exercising outside can have a positive impact on health and well-being. The “Actif Woods Wales” project, run by Coed Lleol, operates at five sites in Wales and provides activities tailored to meet the needs of participants with chronic health conditions. Coed Lleol intends to expand the number of sites across Wales during this Action Plan. The

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<sup>24</sup> See NRW’s Business Plan for 2015/2016 and Commitment K3.

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“Come Outside” programme engages with communities to encourage use of green space, including woodlands, to deliver health and well-being benefits. They both support the development of a base of evidence surrounding the health and well-being opportunities available in woodlands.

Communities can be supported to identify the benefits that woodlands and trees can provide to them, particularly through good quality local access and recreation opportunities.

Woodlands will play an increasing role in supporting the Welsh Government’s efforts to improve opportunities for people and communities to access the outdoors for recreation. Woodlands are a good means of ensuring that there is easy and affordable access to quality local green space and outdoor recreation activities close to where people live, helping to improve community cohesion and tackle poverty. This is one of the key principles proposed in the Welsh Government’s 2015 Green Paper on outdoor recreation in Wales<sup>25</sup>.

“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:

- No.9: Local benefits of woodlands;
- No.10: Community involvement;
- No.11: Recreation; and
- No.12: Accessibility.

*Activity required:*

WG and NRW<sup>26</sup> support for initiatives to improve access and recreation opportunities, building on the outcomes of the 2015 Green Paper; support from Partners who can provide, enhance or encourage and promote recreation opportunities in woodlands; encouraging participation by communities and groups that are less likely to visit and use woodlands; promoting opportunities for communities and the private sector to manage recreational sites and facilities; Cynefin Programme; WG, NRW and Partner resources for additional studies and surveys about public use of woodland.

*Progress:* To be reported annually.

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### Relationship to government priorities

*Priority Actions 12 and 13 contribute towards:*

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 3; 6; 8; 9; 10; and 11.*

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<sup>25</sup> “Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation”

(<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/consultation/150710-access-outdoor-recreation-consultation-en.pdf>).

<sup>26</sup> See NRW’s Business Plan for 2015/2016 and the four commitments set out in the “Good for People” theme.

- *Well-being goals of: a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; and a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.*

PRIORITY ACTION AREA  
**UK cross-border working**

Overview

The landscape for the delivery of forestry services has changed in recent years and in April 2013, the functions of the Forestry Commissioners in relation to Wales transferred to NRW. Certain forestry functions, for example relating to tree health, remain of critical importance across GB. DEFRA, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Forestry Commission are participating in the Forestry Governance Project to look at the delivery of scientific capabilities and, particularly, long-term arrangements for the delivery of forestry research functions on a pan-GB basis.

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<b>Priority Action 14:</b>	<b><i>Participate in the Forestry Governance Project to shape the future delivery of GB cross-border forestry functions ensuring that the needs of Wales, and of the other GB administrations, are accommodated.</i></b>
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<u>Lead and Partners:</u>	DEFRA; Scottish Government; <u>WG</u> ; <u>Forestry Commission</u> ; <u>Forest Research</u> ; NRW; ConFor.
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*Evidence base:* The Forestry Commissioners' functions in relation to Wales have transferred to NRW and the management of forestry in other parts of GB is subject to review and probable change. As NRW builds its capacity to deliver the wide range of environmental services in Wales, it receives some technical, administrative and professional support from the Forestry Commission under a shared services agreement.

The Forestry Governance Project provides a means to define pan-GB policy and operational requirements of forestry research functions and to assess the critical science capabilities needed to deliver those functions.

In addition to science capabilities, there are other issues requiring consensus across territories, for example the maintenance of the UK Forestry Standard and Guidelines. The Standard defines the UKs approach to sustainable forest management and is the means by which a range of legal, quasi-legal and policy obligations are met to deliver a balance between the economic, environmental and social benefits that forestry can provide.

*“Woodlands for Wales” Indicators:*

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- *No.1: Woodlands and trees;*
  - *No.3: Sustainable woodland management; and*
  - *No.8: Tree health.*

*Activity required:* WG, DEFRA, Scottish Government and Forestry Commission to engage to ensure their respective needs are considered by this process.

*Progress:* To be reported annually.

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*Relationship to government priorities*

*Priority Action 14 contributes towards:*

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 2; 3; 5; 6; 13; 14; 16; and 18.*
- *Well-being goals of: **a prosperous Wales; a healthier Wales; and a more equal Wales.***

## PART 3

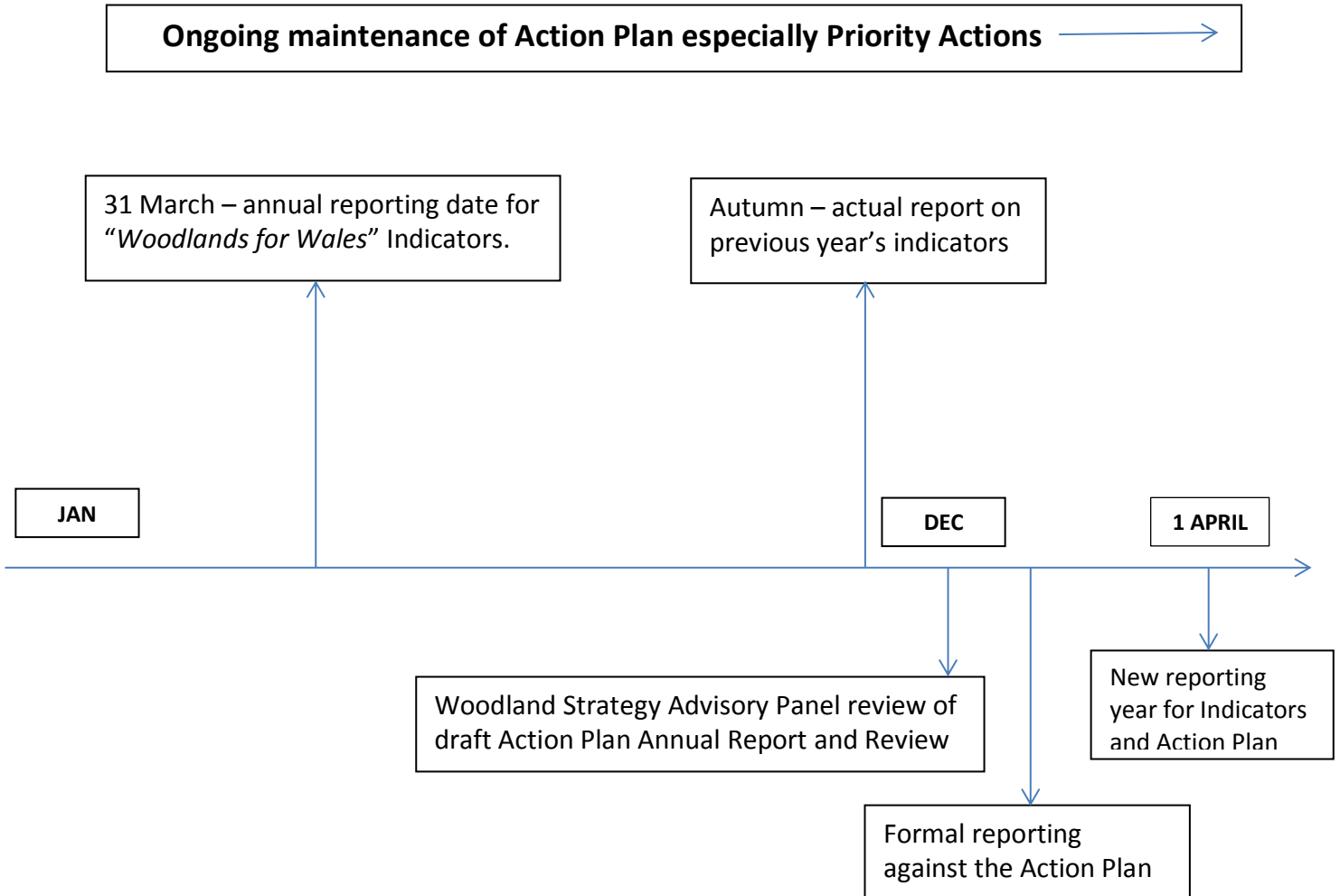
### Reporting and Review

22. “*Woodlands for Wales*” sets out the long-term ambitions for woodlands and trees in Wales and the outcomes required from them to benefit the economy, environment and people of Wales. “*Woodlands for Wales*” is a fifty-year strategy, recognising the long-term nature of managing forests, woodlands and trees and the multiple benefits that they can provide. This *Action Plan* sets out the short-term actions and activities to provide a focus on the long-term ambitions. It is one of a series of five-year action plans and many of the individual actions will contribute to the delivery of more than one of the Strategy’s Outcomes. For this reason, “*Woodlands for Wales*” includes a suite of indicators which will give us confidence to assess progress across the whole breadth of “*Woodlands for Wales*”.
23. The reporting and review cycle comprises of three elements: -
- (i) “*Woodlands for Wales*” sets out the long-term *Vision* and *Outcomes* that we seek to deliver over the life of the strategy;
  - (ii) this *Action Plan*, and subsequent iterations, captures the actions and activities of delivery partners across all sectors of society that are required to implement the strategy; and
  - (iii) the “*Woodlands for Wales*” *Indicators* assess the impact of all of the actions and activities undertaken and monitor the success of all of our efforts to deliver the long-term *Vision* and *Outcomes*.
24. “*Woodlands for Wales*” *Indicators* are published each autumn for the past year ending 31 March<sup>27</sup>. Progress against the **priority actions** in the *Action Plan* will be up-dated on an ad hoc basis. In each calendar year, the Welsh Government will prepare and publish an annual report of overall progress against the **priority actions** set out in this *Plan*. Each annual report will be an opportunity to review and to update actions in response to the “*Woodlands for Wales*” performance indicators and other evidence from the past year. The diagram below illustrates how the reporting and review cycle will operate.

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<sup>27</sup> The Indicators can be accessed at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/woodlands-wales-indicators/?lang=en>

## Action Plan – Annual Reporting and Review Cycle



**“Woodland for Wales” Vision, Themes and Outcomes**

**Our Vision:**

“Wales will be known for its high-quality woodlands that enhance the landscape, are appropriate to local conditions and have a diverse mixture of species and habitats.”

**Themes and Outcomes:**

*Welsh Woodlands & Trees*

1. More woodlands and trees are managed sustainably
2. Woodland ecosystems are healthy and resilient
3. Woodlands are better adapted to deliver a full range of benefits
4. Woodland cover in Wales increases
5. The management of woodland and trees is more closely related to other land uses
6. Urban woodlands and trees deliver a full range of benefits

*Responding to Climate Change*

7. Welsh woodlands contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of Wales Many of the outcomes in the other sections also relate to climate change, which can be thought of as cross cutting

*Woodlands for People*

8. More communities benefit from woodlands and trees
9. More people enjoy the life long learning benefits of woodlands and their products
10. More people live healthier lives as a result of their use and enjoyment of woodlands
11. More people benefit from woodland related enterprises

*A Competitive & Integrated Forest Sector*

12. More welsh-grown timber is used in Wales
13. The forest sector is better integrated and more competitive, supporting the welsh economy
14. Increased use of timber as a key renewable resource
15. A thriving, skilled workforce in the forestry sector

*Environmental Quality*

16. Woodland management achieves high standards of environmental stewardship
17. Woodlands and trees of special conservation value are in favourable management
18. Woodland biodiversity is supported & native Woodland is in favourable management
19. Woodlands and trees make a positive contribution to the special landscape character of Wales and to sites of heritage and cultural importance
20. New and existing woodlands and trees contribute to water and soil management

**Well-being Goals**

**A prosperous Wales** *An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.*

**A resilient Wales** *A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).*

**A healthier Wales** *A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.*

**A more equal Wales** *A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).*

**A Wales of cohesive communities** *Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.*

**A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** *A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts and sports and recreation.*

**A globally responsible Wales** *A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.*

**Glossary**

**Ancient woodland/trees:** sites that have been continuously wooded since before 1600AD. Ancient trees are old or aged in comparison with trees of the same species.

**Biodiversity:** the variety of ecosystems and species, including genetic variation within species.

**Carbon sequestration:** the flow of carbon into terrestrial or marine reservoirs, including direct removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through, inter alia, land-use change, afforestation, reforestation and forestry practices that enhance soil carbon.

**Climate change:** natural and human induced changes in the “average weather” of a region.

**Community:** people holding something in common: place; or common interest.

**Continuous cover forestry:** silvicultural systems whereby the forest canopy is maintained without clear felling.

**Ecosystem:** the interaction of plants and animals with each other and the non-living environment.

**Ecosystem services:** the benefits from the natural resources and processes supplied by natural ecosystems, distinct from ecosystem products and functions because there is

**FCGB/FC/FR:** Forestry Commission Great Britain, Forestry Commission and or Forest Research.

**Gross Value Added:** method of assessing the economy and the proportion which different industries contribute towards it.

**Low impact silvicultural systems:** silvicultural systems which are alternatives to clear felling and minimise the environmental impacts.

**Native species:** one that arrived in Wales without the assistance of humans during post-glacial colonisation. *Native woodland* is woodland mainly or entirely composed of locally native species.

**Natural resources:** resources provided by ecosystems including: animals, plants and other organisms; air, water and soil; minerals; geological features and processes; physiographical features; and climatic features and processes.

**NRW:** Natural Resources Body for Wales.

**PA:** Priority Action.

**PAWS:** Ancient Woodland or semi-Ancient Woodland sites that have been more or less replanted and the ecological value of the site has been degraded.

**Plantation:** woodland where the current trees have been planted. Often includes naturally regenerating tree as well. Includes former semi-natural woodlands

human demand for the natural resources.

**Priority open habitats:** habitats identified as threatened and subject to a UK Biodiversity Action Plan, including: upland heathland; blanket bog; and lowland meadows.

**Productive potential:** the volume of timber that could potentially be harvested sustainably from a woodland area, determined by factors such as growth rate of the trees, the practicality of harvesting the timber and issues such as biodiversity, conservation and recreation.

**Semi-natural woodland:** in the UK, no truly “natural” woodland remains. Semi-natural woodlands have current stands predominantly composed of trees and shrubs native to the site and not obviously planted. They have arisen mainly from natural regeneration or from coppice/pollard growth from naturally regenerated individuals.

**Short rotation forestry:** cultivation of fast growing trees for 8-20 years, often for coppice where harvesting may take place every three years or so.

**Silviculture:** the techniques of tending and regenerating woodlands, and harvesting their physical products.

**Special sites:** Internationally protected sites (including: Natura 2000 sites protected under the EC Habitats and Birds Directives; and sites protected under the RAMSAR Convention) and nationally protected sites (including: National Nature Reserves; and Sites of Special Scientific Interest).

**UKFS:** UK Forestry Standard is the approach to sustainable forestry adopted by the government of the UK’s constituent territories. Establishes the standard for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK.

restocked by planting.

**UKWAS:** UK Woodland Assurance Standard is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable woodland management in the UK.

**Veteran tree:** a tree that shows signs of ancientness, irrespective of age. Like ancient trees, they are trees of biological, aesthetic or cultural interest.

**Well-being goals:** the goals set out in section 4 to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

**Welsh National Forest:** all woodlands in Wales, in both public and private ownership.

**WFPB:** Wales Forest Business Partnership.

**WG:** Welsh Government.

**WGWE:** Welsh Government Woodland Estate. The land owned by the Welsh Ministers and placed at the disposal of NRW under the Forestry Act 1967.

WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

Action No	Priority	Update
1	Develop and maintain a risk register of pests and diseases and their threat to tree health in Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Ministers are responsible for tree health matters in Wales. This responsibility is delivered through a three-way arrangement between NRW, the Welsh Government and the Forestry Commission and its agency, Forest Research.</li> <li>• The Wales Tree and Plant Health Steering Group draws together Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), representatives from the forestry sector and environment groups to manage delivery of the Wales Tree Health Strategy.</li> <li>• The newly formed Wales Tree and Plant Health Surveillance Group comprises of representatives of Welsh Government, NRW, Forest Research and the Animal and Plant Health Agency. It monitors emerging plant health risks and undertakes contingency planning for response to plant health outbreaks.</li> <li>• The Group also undertakes horizon scanning and pest risk assessment through the collaboration of the agencies which inform the priority list of potential pests and disease threats that are likely to arrive in Wales.</li> <li>• High profile tree and plant pests for Wales are monitored and reviewed by the Surveillance Group and an updated list is maintained for review by the Steering Group.</li> <li>• Farming Connect are working with Forest Research to offer three “Tree Health” days for stakeholders to be briefed on tree and plant health issues.</li> <li>• NRW carry out regular surveillance for quarantined organism and key pests and diseases. This includes <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> and Chalara dieback of ash. NRW produces a monthly Welsh specific</li> </ul>

WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>report on <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> and maintains a Welsh specific map showing the spread of Chalara.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chalara Dieback of Ash – Response for Wales (2016) is available on the Welsh Government’s tree health web pages.</li> <li>• Chalara dieback of ash is likely to be more evident across Wales this year, especially in younger trees. The effect of the disease in older trees may take many years to show. Disease progression is being monitored.</li> <li>• A Chalara Operational Response Team (CORT) is being convened by Welsh Government and this will represent a range of appropriate stakeholders to provide operational and policy guidance.</li> <li>• Staff from Welsh Government, NRW, Forest Research and APHA will be present at the Royal Welsh Show 2017 to provide information and guidance. A simple animation is being produced and there will be printed advice for visitors.</li> <li>• NRW has promoted awareness of key pests through 2 joint seminars with Forest Research (attended by approximately 100 people).</li> <li>• NRW has provided awareness training to external groups such as the wildlife trusts.</li> <li>• NRW supports Welsh Government on a number of GB groups such as DEFRA’s Risk Register Group (Forestry) and the GB and NI Steering Group.</li> </ul>
2	Implement the Phytophthora ramorum recovery programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Disease Management Strategy, made under the umbrella of the Wales Tree Health Strategy has established two zones in Wales: the core disease zone (principally in South Wales) where there are high levels of infection in contiguous larch stands; and the disease limitation zone (the remainder of Wales) where there is light infection. Felling is targeted on new infections in the disease limitation zone to combat the rate of spread of the infection.</li> <li>• The Welsh Government is assisting NRW to replant areas of felled</li> </ul>

		<p>larch on the Welsh Government woodland estate. The area NRW has replanted in the last six years (both as a result of <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> and scheduled clear felling) is: 2011/12 986 hectares; 2012/13 1,012 hectares; 2013/14 1,350 hectares; 2014/15 1,107 hectares; 2015/16 1,237 hectares; and 2016/17 is 1222 hectares.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Government is supporting restocking of infected larch in private woodlands via the Rural Communities Rural Development Plan (RCRDP) and the Glastir Woodland Restoration Scheme.</li> <li>• Whilst <i>P ramorum</i> is a disaster for larch in Wales, restocking felled areas is enabling greater ecological resilience to be built in to Wales' woodland ensuring that the natural resource can deliver a range of ecosystem services from climate change adaptation to timber production to access and recreation for the benefit of current and future generations.</li> <li>• In their role as the terrestrial tree health delivery body for Wales NRW carry out regular surveillance for quarantined organism and key pests and diseases, including <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>. NRW produces a monthly Welsh specific report on <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>.</li> <li>• Evidence from the most recent aerial survey of larch suggests that there is an increased incidence of <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> when compared with the last 2 years. If this preliminary finding is confirmed by laboratory analysis, the number of new cases is almost certainly due to winter weather conditions which have favoured the organism.</li> <li>• The Welsh Government's <i>Phytophthora</i> Operational Response Team (PORT) will be reconvened in June to assess the latest observational and scientific evidence in order to recommend action to limit the further spread of this disease within Wales. The PORT will respond</li> </ul>
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WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>directly to the Wales Tree and Plant Health Steering Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW guidance is being developed for local staff to help them prioritise sites for restocking, with the dual aim of reducing restocking costs and maintaining input into future productive sites.</li> <li>• A biosecurity media awareness campaign “Keep it Clean” undertaken by NRW Plant Health team.</li> <li>• The Welsh Government, through the Rural Communities Rural Development Plan, provides funding via Glastir Woodland Restoration to support the restoration of larch woodland affected by <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>.</li> </ul>
3	<p>Use the statutory and policy framework in Wales to deliver woodland creation to optimise the benefits provided by forestry, woodland and trees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 provides the framework by which the wider contribution of forests, woodlands and trees can be recognised.</li> <li>• The Act puts in place a target to reduce emissions by at least 80% by 2050 and a series of interim targets and carbon budgets. The Act also requires Welsh Ministers to put in place a Delivery Plan by March 2019 to meet our first carbon budget. Woodland creation will not only provide opportunities to store carbon but also wider long term benefits.</li> <li>• There has been uneven progress towards the goal of creating more woodland in Wales. In the year to 31 March 2016 141 hectares of new woodland was created. Indicative figures for the year to 31 March 2017 are over 390 hectares of new planting and over 1,400 hectares of restocking and natural regeneration. New woodland planting and restocking continues to be supported via the Glastir Woodland schemes under the RCRDP.</li> <li>• NRW Glastir Woodlands team verify GWC scheme applications against the UK Forestry Standard, GWC rules and value for money criteria. In 2016, they verified 134 GWC plans equating to 852.9ha of</li> </ul>

		<p>potential new planting.. There is guidance to support the Glastir Woodlands scheme on the NRW website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodland creation is best facilitated through collaboration. The Welsh Government launched the Co-operative Forest Planning Scheme with an initial allocation of £180,000 to encourage and facilitate co-operation for woodland creation and management. They have received 2 Expressions of Interest which are in the process of being assessed, and they will be launching a second round of the scheme in the Autumn with a further £300,000 available. NRW is supporting Welsh Government with this scheme.</li> <li>• The “Carbon Positive” Project is evaluating NRW’s net carbon status, accounting for both greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration across the whole of NRW's owned or managed estate. It is identifying mitigation opportunities to reduce NRW’s carbon impact as an organisation and delivering projects to demonstrate these measures. Woodland and peatland habitats make up approximately 84% of the Welsh Government woodland estate, and make significant contributions to the estate’s carbon status. NRW is working with Forest Research and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology to better model their carbon stock and sequestration, which will help NRW to plan how best to manage them to protect existing carbon stocks and enhance sequestration e.g. by expanding woodland.</li> <li>• In SoNaRR (September 2016), <i>“Increasing woodland cover, and bringing more of our existing woodlands into appropriate management”</i> was identified by NRW as one of the seven key opportunities to deal with the challenges and risks identified, and contribute to the well-being goals. However, five of the seven opportunities in SoNaRR are relevant to wider land management decisions, and woodlands / trees play a part in delivery of these.</li> </ul>
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WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>Building on the SoNaRR 2016 report, NRW are working on improved spatial analysis to inform land use and land management policy development and decision-making including the identification of ‘opportunity spaces’ for new woodland creation to support Welsh Government policy delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with forestry stakeholders has taken place to seek views on opportunities and challenges to forestry and woodland management resulting from EU Exit, including in relation to woodland creation.</li> <li>• Farming Connect has recruited a technical forestry officer to promote the support available through this mechanism to the forestry sector. Support includes individual and group advice, demonstration events, training and technical news bulletins.</li> </ul>
4	<p>Manage woodland planting and current and future harvesting programmes to ensure long-term continuity of timber production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following consultation with the sector, NRW published in January 2017 a <u>Timber Marketing Plan</u> for the period 2017-22 which explains their approach to the harvesting and marketing of timber from the Welsh Government woodland estate. NRW has to produce this Plan to help to maintain their certification to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and to ensure that they deliver against the relevant policy objectives set out in <i>Woodlands for Wales</i>.</li> <li>• NRW submitted a discussion paper on “<i>Future timber availability - implications for the forest sector and woodland resource in Wales</i>” for consideration by the Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel (WSAP) at their meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016. This discussion paper addressed a range of issues including: forecasts of future wood fibre availability and demand in Wales; current management of the Welsh Government woodland estate (restocking levels, harvesting and marketing volumes, silvicultural management systems); current</li> </ul>

		<p>management of woodland in other ownership; and factors affecting woodland area (woodland creation, permanent woodland removal and competing land uses), from a policy, regulatory and management perspective. At the request of WSAP, NRW are now leading a Task and Finish Group looking at practical actions linked to future timber availability that will report to their Forest Sector Business Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response to an inquiry by the National Assembly for Wales into the public forest estate in Wales in 2014, NRW, Welsh Government and sector representatives produced a '10 Areas for Action' plan in order to improve support for and communications with the private forestry sector.</li> <li>• The 10 Areas for Action was first published in December 2014 and then updated in Dec 2015. The 2016 update will be published on the NRW website shortly. NRW has been working with ConFor to review the document to ensure that successes are recognised and actions remain relevant and are up to date.</li> <li>• NRW published in March 2017 three Forest Resilience Good Practice Guides on <u>structural diversity</u>, <u>tree species diversity</u> and <u>genetic diversity</u> for use by all forest and woodland managers in Wales. Training will be provided to NRW staff on how to implement the Guides in relation to management of the Welsh Government woodland estate.</li> <li>• Compensatory planting is a key objective of NRW's Energy Delivery Programme (EDP) to protect the Welsh Government woodland estate in relation to woodland removal and energy developments. There is a ring-fenced fund that is currently £500,000 and will increase annually, to compensate for woodland loss that occurs on the Estate due to energy developments.</li> <li>• NRW recruited a Woodland Creation Advisor in March 2017 with a</li> </ul>
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WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>remit to manage this fund, and deliver compensatory planting for this programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW responded to the joint public consultation by the UK and Devolved Governments on environmental impact assessment and transposition of Directive 2014/52/EU. The consultation included the EIA regulations on forestry and NRW supported the proposals where they took a more enabling approach whilst safeguarding the environment and made a number of recommendations for process improvement in line with their Future Regulation programme. The Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) (amendment) Regulations 2017 will come into force on 17 May. We are in the process of updating our website to reflect the changes.</li> <li>• NRW are developing a 10 year sustainable woodland management plan template for use by the forestry sector. This can be 80% funded through Farming Connect up to a maximum of 1500 Euros for eligible businesses. This will encourage longer term management planning in the private sector.</li> </ul>
5	<p>Deliver increased and safeguard existing tree cover in towns and cities and support sustainable urban tree management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW's study 'Tree Cover in Towns and Cities' presented the world's first country-wide survey of urban tree canopy cover. In 2016 with Welsh Government funding, NRW updated the report using recent aerial photography to complete analysis of images from 2006, 2009 and 2013 for 220 urban areas.</li> <li>• The assessment mapped every tree and wood in all 220 urban areas in Wales. NRW are using this survey when working with others to feed important Green Infrastructure messages into plans, policies and strategies and to inform the development of well-being plans.</li> <li>• Wales' mean urban tree canopy was estimated at 16.3% in 2013, which is mid-range when compared to other towns and cities</li> </ul>

		<p>around the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three iTree Eco Studies have been completed in Wales. iTree Eco is a tool for quantifying the functions of urban trees in relation to air quality improvement, carbon dioxide reduction and flood control. By assessing the values of each function the methodology provides robust basis for management of urban tree populations and the benefits they provide.</li> <li>• Evidence about tree cover in towns and cities and the benefits that trees can provide is a resource for Public Service Boards in taking forward their local well-being plans.</li> <li>• The iTree methodology provides a means of appraising appropriate nature-based solutions to air quality and flood issues. Welsh Government guidance to local authorities includes reference to iTree Eco as an example for inclusion in environmental revenue bids for 2017/18.</li> <li>• Good urban tree management practice on the ground is critical to their sustainability and provision of multiple benefits. NRW have supported and contributed to leading technical good practice guidance for urban trees. Produced by the Trees and Design Action Group, the 2 recent publications “Trees in the Townscape” and “Trees in Hard Landscapes” are becoming a benchmark having just won the Landscape Institute Award 2016 for Policy and Research. They are currently in discussion regarding a further publication in this series “Trees in Development and Planning”.</li> <li>• NRW has provided support and advice to Cardiff City Council and Dwr Cymru on tree suitability for the innovative Greener Grangetown project which is retro fitting green infrastructure into Victorian streets to reduce rainfall entering local sewers.</li> </ul>
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WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

<p>6</p>	<p>Explore the issues associated with enabling and building the capacity of community groups and enterprises to be involved in woodland management in order to help them use woodlands to realise well-being goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Government directly funds Llais y Goedwig, a national network of community woodland groups. As a result two capacity building officers were appointed by Llais y Goedwig in 2016 to broker new agreements between community woodland groups and woodland owners. The officers provide advice and guidance to public and private woodland owners and to community groups in order to establish agreements for activities which can include woodland management, conservation, enhanced access and activities to improve physical and mental health.</li> <li>• Llais y Goedwig have facilitated workshops with NRW on the benefits of enabling community woodland groups to activity manage suitable sites on the Welsh Government woodland estate, particularly sites which are not economically viable to manage intensively for timber but which provide a setting for community involvement and associated wellbeing and social cohesion benefits.</li> <li>• The statistics for community woodland groups affiliated to Llais y Goedwig for 2016 show that there are 78 active woodland community groups involved with the management of approximately 1850 hectares of woodland.</li> <li>• NRW is currently reviewing the process and systems used to issue permissions for activities on the Welsh Government woodland estate. The NRW remit letter for 2017/18 describes an action to ‘identify opportunities to support community development and enterprise through volunteering and continuing support for the Lift programme and continue to support community energy projects and community forests on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate, where appropriate.’</li> <li>• NRW is undertaking a position statement review of all recreation and access activities on NRW managed land. The position</li> </ul>
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WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>statements are subject to internal and external consultation and the drafts of the first seven in the suite (there are approx. 60 in total) will go out for consultation after June 8<sup>th</sup> 2017. The external consultation is ‘closed’ in as much as NRW intends to target organisations representing user groups in Wales, such as those represented on the National Access Forum Wales. NRW’s Timber Marketing Plan (2017-22) provides more scope for communities to use timber.</p>
7	<p>Promote the uses and utilisation of Welsh timber, including as an essential material for sustainable construction central to the delivery of new housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In March 2016 Welsh Government (with Wood Knowledge Wales) organised a conference called ‘Wood Build Wales’ and this was well attended by representatives from across the timber and forestry sector. During summer 2017 Woodknowledge Wales have gone on to hold a further conference and workshops with representatives of timber and housing sectors to explore how to further promote the use of timber in construction.</li> <li>• The Welsh Government’s £20 million Innovative Housing Fund to assist in delivering 1,000 of the 20,000 new affordable homes target during this Assembly term provides an opportunity for partners to collaborate and innovate in terms of materials and methods of construction, including the further use of timber in construction. Technical issues regarding quality of domestically grown timber for construction have been largely overcome and the increased use of timber will help to develop the domestic supply chain to meet demands of the construction sector for a sustainable supply of raw material.</li> <li>• Welsh Government is looking at ways in which to promote innovation and added value across the timber supply chain</li> <li>• The NRW Timber Marketing Plan (2017-22) has a commitment to adopt a “carbon hierarchy” of use as a way of comparing the contribution of different wood products to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our marketing. This means that for roadside sales, they</li> </ul>

WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>will continue to sell and grade out products to suit different markets and encourage the greatest degree of added value in the supply chain e.g. maximise the availability of timber for use in construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW has completed an innovations programme (supported by Welsh Government) with two Welsh companies to develop new products that enhance the longevity of wooden fence posts.</li> <li>• NRW are progressing an innovations programme (supported by Welsh Government) with a Welsh company to develop a biochar product which assists regeneration of native species to soils previously inhabited by rhododendron. Results have been positive where traditional approaches have failed.</li> </ul>
8	<p>Develop models for woodland related enterprises and provide opportunities for employment, education and training across the forestry sector by developing sector relevant skills and providing work experience as pathways to employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Timber Business Investment Scheme has been developed to support investment to bring woodland into management. Round 1 of the Scheme, which was open for expressions of interest in May 2016, made available £2 million and it attracted 49 applications, 21 of which have progressed to the detailed assessment stage.</li> <li>• Round 2 opened in February 2017 with a further budget of £2 million. This Round has now closed and a total of 46 expressions of interest have been received which are currently being assessed.</li> <li>• A further £4 million has been allocated to run further rounds of the Scheme.</li> <li>• We expect the demand for woodland products generated by this Scheme to lead to new woodland areas coming into management to provide the benefits set out in the Welsh Government’s strategy for woodlands and trees.</li> <li>• ‘Cyfle’ has been established as NRW’s national scheme for the recruitment, co-ordination, support and management of work experience placements (including those on the Welsh Government “Lift” programme), volunteers, under- and post-graduate</li> </ul>

WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>placements and apprenticeships. It builds on legacy body schemes to offer a single, user-focussed, easy to access entry point for people interested in spending time working and learning alongside NRW staff in a range of settings – with progression opportunities where possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Cyfle Placement Scheme, NRW had 4 Trees and Timber apprentices. One has moved out of the organisation, two have been successful in securing permanent positions within NRW. These two and the remaining apprentice are progressing with their qualification.</li> </ul>
9	Examine the adequacy of and scope to improve existing measures and procedures for the protection of valued trees, particularly ancient, veteran and heritage trees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The framework now put in place by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 provides the means to plan the use of Wales’s natural resources, including trees, in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way. The new framework, through SoNaRR and the Natural Resources Policy will provide data and evidence to inform the management of valued trees and the protections afforded to them.</li> <li>• A strategic analysis of Plantations on Ancient Woodlands (PAWS) threatened sites has being carried by NRW on the Welsh Government woodland estate and a revised prioritisation methodology has been developed which supports the findings of the Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel (WSAP) Task &amp; Finish Group review of Wales’ PAWS restoration policy (see Action 10).</li> <li>• NRW continues to maintain the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), assessing new evidence provided by owners and managers and reviewing the AWI as necessary in light of this evidence. This information is available publically on the Lle portal.</li> </ul>

WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 2012 and 2019, the UK government will have invested a total of more than <b>£37m</b> into <b>research</b> on tree health and plant biosecurity. This includes evidence on specific pests and diseases such as Ash Dieback, as well strategic, cross cutting research aimed at improving the resilience of our treescape and our ability to prevent, model, detect and control threats. In 2014, the Forestry Commission also published its ‘Science and Innovation Strategy for Forestry in GB’, which sets the framework for forestry research over the next 4-5 years and is designed to deliver the policy and operational evidence needs of government and other stakeholders.</li> </ul>
10	Continue to bring identified special sites, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (“PAWS”), native woodlands and priority habitats into favourable management on Welsh Government woodland estate and encourage private landowners to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of the Welsh Government PAWS restoration policy was undertaken by a Task and Finish Group of representatives from the Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel (WSAP) which advises Welsh Government on forestry policy.</li> <li>• The review found that while there was no need to change existing PAWS restoration policy, there was a need to be more flexible in the approach to restoration. This was needed to encourage PAWS restoration particularly in the private sector. While it was recognised that all PAWS require a level of restoration and protection, a flexible approach would help to focus limited resources on sites where restoration was more likely to be successful and benefits maximised.</li> <li>• WSAP endorsed the recommendations and this is now the Welsh Government’s approach to PAWS restoration.</li> <li>• A best practice guidance on PAWS restoration has been developed and has been incorporated into the scheme rules of the next round of Glastir Woodland Restoration (GWR) Additional support is being introduced as part of GWR for the production of a forest management plan for restoration of PAWS where there is larch and</li> </ul>

WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>up to 50% non-larch. This is in recognition of the additional costs of ensuring the identification of the most appropriate management for each PAWS in line with the guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommendations of the review has been applied by NRW to PAWS on the Welsh Government woodland estate and will inform forthcoming grant support mechanisms.</li> <li>• Peatland habitat restoration - NRW are undertaking a programme of tree removal from afforested deep peatland sites where there is a clear ecosystem benefit and it is appropriate and viable to do so.</li> <li>• NRW monitor surveys are taking place to provide data on the condition of the ancient woodland resource on the Welsh Government woodland estate.</li> <li>• Thematic plans have been embedded by NRW into the Welsh Government woodland estate GIS system in order that it is within management programmes and accessible for future reporting.</li> </ul>
11	Develop, promote and implement programmes to manage invasive non-native species which damage woodland habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional funding has been provided for NRW to develop a Wales Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Programme in 2017. The Programme will contribute to the delivery and commitments of the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation 1143/2014 and the GB Non-Native Species Strategy as well as the Water Strategy for Wales, Woodlands for Wales Strategy, Nature Recovery Action Plan, the Environment (Wales) Act and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Marine Plan.</li> <li>• The Programme addresses issues related to invasive non-native species as recommended by the National Assembly Wales Environment Scrutiny Committee in 2013.</li> <li>• The Programme will ensure Wales is better protected and more resilient against the potential impact of INNS.</li> <li>• Welsh Government officials and NRW participate in the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat Board, and contributed to the update of</li> </ul>

		<p>the GB strategy in 2015.</p> <p>Species specific action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both Muntjac deer and grey squirrel are on the list of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern (IASoUC) which forms part of the EU regulation 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species (IAS). This requires management measures to be put in place for IASoUC which Member States have found to be widely spread in their territory, so their impact on biodiversity, the related ecosystem services, and, where applicable, on human health or the economy are minimised. Work to review and update the draft species action plan for Muntjac is ongoing.</li> <li>• Management of the Welsh deer population is important to ensure that a balance is maintained between the positive and negative impacts that deer can have on the environment.</li> <li>• The Strategy for Wild Deer Management in Wales was published by the Welsh Government in February 2011. Officials have been working with stakeholders to finalise an updated Action Plan for Wild Deer Management in Wales which is planned to be published by the end of July 2017. This will continue to include actions to raise awareness of, manage and monitor non-native deer populations.</li> <li>• Both Muntjac deer and grey squirrel are on the list of species of Union concern which forms part of the EU regulation 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species (IAS). This requires that a species action plan is put in place to set out effective and proportionate management measures. Work to review and update the draft species action plan for Muntjac is ongoing.</li> <li>• A draft Grey Squirrel Management Action Plan has been co-produced by Welsh Government and NRW with input from a working group of stakeholders. It seeks to address the WG policy for</li> </ul>
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WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>the management of grey squirrels as set out in the Woodlands for Wales Forestry Strategy as well as meeting the requirements of EU Regulation No. 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Alien Species. It supports the delivery of the Conservation Plan for Red Squirrels in Wales as drawn up by the Wales Squirrel Forum, which is being updated. It will also contribute to the aims of the UK Squirrel Accord, to which Welsh Government is a signatory and which focuses on the management of grey squirrel for the benefit of protecting red squirrels and woodland. The draft plan will be developed with further stakeholder input, before a full public consultation is undertaken in the Autumn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW is supporting Welsh Government in developing the Management Action Plan for grey squirrels and they continue to work in partnership in all three red squirrel conservation areas to reduce the impact of grey squirrel on red squirrel.</li> <li>• NRW has provided advice to the Welsh Government on the Code of Conduct for species control provisions of the Infrastructure Act.</li> <li>• NRW works in partnership with the Wales Squirrel Forum and they sit on the UK Squirrel Accord.</li> <li>• NRW participate in the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat board, and contributed to the update of the GB strategy in 2015.</li> <li>• NRW's Board has approved a Position Statement on Conservation Translocations. It will be published in 2017.</li> </ul>
12	Gather evidence to measure and evaluate the non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees in Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An independent study initiated by the Forestry Commission on valuing the social and environmental benefits of forestry was completed during 2016. Overseen by a steering group including representation of the Welsh Government, the report highlights</li> </ul>

		<p>social and environmental outputs of woodlands as having a much broader role in the economy than is often recognised. While much valuable work has been done to develop the evidence base, further research is needed in certain areas (flood alleviation, water quality, physical and mental health) to better understand the social and economic values woodlands play in these areas. The full report is available here:  <a href="https://www.forestry.gov.uk/PDF/FCRP027.pdf/\$FILE/FCRP027.pdf">https://www.forestry.gov.uk/PDF/FCRP027.pdf/\$FILE/FCRP027.pdf</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Government has collaborated with Forest Research and the Office of National Statistics to explore approaches to improving the evidence base for the economic role of woodlands in Wales including in relation to recreation, air quality improvement and timber supply. The resulting report illustrates the importance of non-timber outputs from woodlands with substantial valuations for values provided by trees in Wales in relation to air quality improvement (£285 million), recreation (£84 million) and carbon sequestration (£108 million) annually. Comparison to the annual value of timber extraction in Wales (£28 million) illustrates the wider public importance of trees and woodlands, beyond timber.</li> <li>• NRW has produced two case studies (Coed Newydd and Llynfi) which explain how woodland contributes to the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 goals and how the ecosystem services generated may be assessed using natural capital valuation techniques. NRW is working with the Welsh Government on a natural benefit accounting framework based on those studies which will help demonstrate the flow of well-being benefits alongside the economic value of wood fibre from the Welsh Government woodland estate, with the aim of including this in their 2017/18 annual report and accounts. This work will also contribute to the review of the “Role and Purpose” of the Welsh Government</li> </ul>
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WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		<p>woodland estate, as per NRW's remit letter for 2017/18.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is ongoing on a review of recreational shooting on the Welsh Government woodland estate. A Call for Evidence was launched on 6 February 2017, and closed on 30 April 2017. NRW will consider the evidence to develop proposals for the use of firearms on land it manages, and then consult further on draft proposals, before making a final decision.</li> </ul>
13	<p>Promote and enhance access to forestry and woodlands for more people to participate in and benefit from outdoor recreation experiences more often. Target resources in areas where the health, well-being and economic benefits will have the greatest impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Government's Natural Resource Policy will take into account the range of ecosystem services of forests, woodlands and trees.</li> <li>• NRW-managed woodlands contain 790km of world class mountain bike trails, 955km of our waymarked permissive paths and 3,702km of forest roads which are well used for walking, cycling, horse riding and running. NRW continue to maintain these to provide a high quality visitor experience, and duty of care to the public.</li> <li>• There is extensive access provision for horse riders across the NRW managed estate. The latest figures from NRW suggest that horse riders have access to over 3700km of forest roads and over 1000km of bridleway across the estate. NRW have mapped 415km of trails for horse riders via bridleway and forest roads, with provision of soft trails for example in the Crychan and Dyfnant forests developed for equestrian use.</li> <li>• During 2016 NRW undertook an internal Business Area Review of recreation and access. The purpose was to provide a rationalised recreation offer for the NRW estate that is focussed on delivering the Recreation and Access Enabling Plan and develop opportunities to maximise commercial income in line with NRW's purpose to further the sustainable management of natural resources.</li> <li>• Welsh Government core funding support for Llais y Goedwig has</li> </ul>

		<p>targeted action for communities to access woodlands in innovative ways and to be involved where appropriate in management activities and decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Labour Party Manifesto made a commitment to continue with the Plant! A Tree for Every Child Project. A new phase of delivery (2016-2020) is being taken forward by NRW in partnership with Coed Cadw (the Woodland Trust in Wales). Current planting stands at just over 300,000 native broadleaved trees (143 hectares). An official celebration of the 300,000<sup>th</sup> tree will be held in September which will kick start a sequence of events throughout 2018 celebrating 10 years of the project.</li> <li>• Following their Recreation and Education Business Area Review (BAR), NRW has changed its approach to education and skills but will continue to offer advice and guidance, training for education professionals and resources to enable others to use NRW-managed woodlands.</li> <li>• NRW has developed (with stakeholders) a “Trail Users Code” as part of the Countryside Code series. This is currently in publication. NRW continues to implement the recommendations of their Visitor Centre Review.</li> <li>• NRW will be updating and realigning their Enabling Plan over the next year to ensure and strengthen the contribution the Well-being goals and objectives</li> <li>• NRW contributed to the Wales Year of Adventure through their web and social media outlets. They will do the same this year for the Year of Legends.</li> <li>• NRW hosted the Welsh Rally in October 2016.</li> <li>• NRW are improving the user experience of their website including the “Out and About” sections which relate to recreation and access</li> </ul>
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WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT JUNE 2017

		opportunities.
14	Participate in the Forestry Governance Project to shape the future delivery of GB cross-border forestry functions ensuring that the needs of Wales, and of the other GB administrations, are accommodated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government is considering the future role of the Forestry Commission in Scotland, with the corollary that cross-border functions are under review.</li> <li>• The Welsh Government is a member of the Forestry Governance Project Board together with the Scottish Government and Defra to ensure that the needs of Wales are accommodated in future arrangements for the delivery of cross-border functions.</li> <li>• NRW provides ongoing support to Welsh Government in relation to the Forestry Governance Project they and maintain their membership of cross-border groups such as the Strategic Publications Group, IFOS Steering Group, Forest Management Officers liaison meeting, <i>Hylobius</i> working group, Science and Innovation Strategy for forestry programme groups.</li> <li>• NRW has worked with the Welsh Government to identify future requirements and options for Wales for cross-border functions currently delivered by the Forestry Commissioners, and exit strategy arrangements from Forestry Commission services. This has included consideration of issues relating to legislation, plant health, the UK Forestry Standard, science and research commissioning, forestry statistics, the UK Woodland Carbon Code, international matters, and strategic publications.</li> </ul>

Mike Hedges AM  
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs  
Committee

26 June 2017

Dear Mike

One day inquiry into fire safety in high rise blocks in Wales

I am writing to let you know that we have agreed to hold a day one session looking at fire safety in high rise blocks in Wales on 13 July.

We are hoping to take oral evidence from local government, housing associations, fire and rescue services and residents. Due to the short notice we are not issuing a written consultation at this stage. We will be considering the following areas:

- What fire safety requirements/measures are currently in place in Welsh high rise blocks
- Are there any obvious gaps or weaknesses in the current system of regulation in Wales of fire safety in high rise blocks?
- Is guidance to residents of high rise blocks in Wales, in the event of a fire, appropriate?
- How are residents in Wales being informed about recent developments and reassured about fire safety measures in their block? More broadly, to what extent are resident's views about fire safety being listened to and addressed.

If you, or any members of your Committee want further information on this work, please let me know.



Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John". The letter 'J' is large and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke that extends to the right and then loops back down to form the letter 'o'. The 'h' is simple and follows the 'o'.

John Griffiths AM  
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



# Agenda Item 4.2

**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**  
Y Pwyllgor Cyllid

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Finance Committee

Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

15 June 2017

Dear Chair

## Scrutiny of the draft Budget

I am writing following the Business Committee's consideration of their draft report on changes to Standing Orders in relation to scrutiny of the draft Budget, prior to the Standing Order changes and the Budget Process Protocol being considered in Plenary next week.

The changes to the Budget process are the culmination of a piece of work started by the Finance Committee in the Fourth Assembly; the devolution of fiscal powers in the Wales Act 2014 have meant that the Assembly's scrutiny now has to consider not just Welsh Government spending plans, but how these plans will be financed, through taxation and borrowing.

The main changes which are being proposed are that the budget scrutiny becomes a two stage process, whereby the higher level information which would be scrutinised by the Finance Committee is published prior to the detail needed by the policy committees, and more time is allowed for scrutiny. Specifically, it is hoped this additional time will allow the policy committees to undertake more detailed scrutiny of the spending in your portfolios, and you will no longer be required to report to the Finance Committee, you are able to report in your own right should you so wish.



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I have requested a discussion on these changes at the next Chairs' forum, to enable us to talk through the changes in more detail and we can consider how:

- the Committee scrutiny will work in practice,
- the Finance Committee can maintain an oversight role,
- we can work together to maximise public engagement,
- any training and development needs for committees can be met

Prior to consideration in Plenary the [proposed changes to Standing Orders have been tabled](#), as has the [revised protocol](#).

Should you have any queries on this please do not hesitate to let me know, and I look forward to discussing these changes further at the Chairs' Forum meeting on 12 July 2017.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Thomas'.

Simon Thomas AM

**Chair of the Finance Committee**



Mike Hedges  
Committee Chair  
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs  
Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

27 June 2017

Dear Mike,

## Natural Resources Wales

As you know, the Public Accounts Committee has been scrutinising Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on its Annual Report and Accounts 2015–16 and published a report on 15 June. The Committee undertook this scrutiny following the qualification of the Auditor General for Wales (AGW) regularity opinion on NRW's financial statements in respect of its award of timber sales contracts to a sawmill operator in May 2014.

Although the focus of the report was on the awarding of the timber sales contracts, the Committee also took the opportunity to consider a number of issues relating to the governance and management at NRW. This work took into account the Auditor General's Report – The Development of Natural Resources Wales – which was published in February 2016. The previous Public Accounts Committee had not been able to schedule any evidence sessions on this report due to the dissolution of the Assembly in April 2016. The Committee's views on the governance and management issues are contained in the annex.

During the evidence session on 22 May, NRW offered to send an update on their performance indicators together with a year-on-year comparison to show trends in performance for information. I have attached a copy of the letter for information



I am aware that the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee undertakes an annual scrutiny of NRW during the autumn term and I hope my Committee's comments on the development of NRW can be raised during CCERA's annual scrutiny of NRW in the autumn term.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Ramsay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

**Nick Ramsay AM**  
**Chair**



## **Natural Resources Wales annual report and financial statements for the 2015/2016 financial year.**

1.This is the first year that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) accounts have been scrutinised by the Committee. The accounts are subject to audit by the Auditor General for Wales and the audit opinion was signed on 2 March 2017. As with most audits, the introductory narrative was not subject to audit although the auditor does consider whether there are material inconsistencies with the accounts.

### **Use of Financial Information**

2.We asked NRW to explain their approach to making financial information more accessible and integrated with Welsh Government strategy and specifically how they will balance the implementation of your long-term strategic plan for 2017–22 with the priorities set for NRW in the Welsh Government’s annual remit letter.

3.Dr Emyr Roberts, NRW Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, told us that they have an ongoing relationship with the Welsh Government and are aware of policy developments working closely to ensure priorities set out in the remit letter are implemented.<sup>1</sup>

### **Governance and strategy**

4.We questioned NRW on their internal governance frameworks and how this provides the Accounting Officer with the necessary assurance to approve the annual accounts.

5.The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services of NRW, Kevin Ingram, explained that NRW had a well-developed governance framework including an audit and risk committee and remuneration committee set up to scrutinise parts of the business, senior management structures and clear lines of delegation within the organisation.<sup>2</sup> We were also told that there is an in house internal audit team alongside coming under the scrutiny of the Wales Audit Office.

6.We were interested in determining whether NRW's internal audit work programme had identified any significant control issues during the previous

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<sup>1</sup> PAC, RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 158

<sup>2</sup> RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 162



financial year. We were told that one area was identified as requiring strengthening and that was the management of risk. Mr Ingram stated:

'We already have a corporate risk register and different directorate risk registers, but we had a process there of sort of refreshing that and just checking those risks and corporate risks are clearly aligned with the outcomes that we're achieving'.<sup>3</sup>

### **Key risks**

7.The Annual Report notes the key risks facing NRW a key one of which is responding to the short-term reduction in our grant in aid and planning for continued financial challenges. We asked NRW what impact they believed budget cuts would have on NRW's ability to deliver its objectives.

8.Dr Roberts highlighted that NRW had around a 15 percent real-terms cut in their grant-in-aid over the last two years, which inevitably posed risks to their services.<sup>4</sup> To address these NRW have:

'...set up a review throughout the organisation of the activities that we carry out. So we call it 'the business area reviews'. We've got eight different projects, looking across the board at all the services that we offer, including enabling services as well. So, we're getting a picture of what we're doing, what our priorities are. In some areas, yes there will be an increase in risk, but we are managing those, we're putting mitigating actions in to actually manage those risks properly'.<sup>5</sup>

9.We wished to determine the practical effect of budget reductions on NRW's day to day business specifically with regard to the organisations ability to provide specialist advice. For example, we referred to the Swansea tidal lagoon, an area upon which NRW has been drawn into public debate on. We understand that it had taken nearly 3 years since the tidal lagoon submitted an application to NRW for a fishing licence and there has been a delay in reaching judgement, which potentially put the project at risk. We sought clarity on why this judgement had taken so long and there was still no prospect of judgement and whether this delay was related to resources.

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<sup>3</sup> RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 164

<sup>4</sup> RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 178

<sup>5</sup> RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 178



10. We are told by Dr Roberts that the delay was not related to resources and that discussions with the Swansea bay tidal lagoon company around evidence for their proposal was a 'fairly rigorous process', which was determined by European regulation. Furthermore, given that no one has built a tidal lagoon like this before, decisions would be effected by modelling on what might happen particularly with regard to fish migration. Dr Roberts added that discussions remained ongoing, involving experts from the company and NRW, and until those discussions are concluded NRW are not able to continue with the marine licensing process. We raised concerns that any delays in progressing these matters could be prohibitive.<sup>6</sup>

### **New legislation**

11. NRW's annual report refers to:

“Some examples of our changing context will see us working to implement the requirements of new legislation, particularly the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016; addressing environmental challenges such as water quality, biodiversity, invasive species, air quality and climate change as well as managing our own operations to ensure we work within our means and work with our stakeholders – Welsh Government, other public service organisations, business and industry, citizens and communities to develop alternative public service delivery models”.<sup>7</sup>

12. We queried what NRW was doing to ensure assurance that appropriate steps are being taken to comply with new legislation and how the relationship between the executive team and board facilitate that.

13. Dr Roberts explained that the Board has a high degree of involvement and interest in this area and are kept informed of developments on a regular basis. He added that there was a programme of work ongoing to implement the requirements of the Acts, for example, making sure that the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 is embedded into the corporate plan.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 180

<sup>7</sup> [Natural Resources Wales Annual Report and Accounts 2015–16](#), page 7 (March 2017)

<sup>8</sup> RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 209



## Key Performance Indicators

14. As reported on page 7 of the Annual Report, as part of NRW's Performance Framework, there is a dashboard for tracking longer term trends through indicators that their work contributes to, as well as annual operational measures that they control delivery of. This year, of 41 indicators and measures, 28 met the target set, nine were within 10% of the target set, and four were not where NRW planned to be. NRW's progress is monitored by its Board and Welsh Government and published on its website three times each year.

15. We were keen to understand more about NRW's performance with regard to sickness absence. We noted that the annual report shows an average sickness absence of 5.2 days per employee, which exceeds the target and compares favourably to a number of organisations we've had before us to look at their accounts.<sup>9</sup> Given the difficulties arising from the merger of three individual organisations to form NRW and the poor results arising from staff surveys, we regard this to be an impressive achievement. We asked Dr Roberts what lessons could be learned from their approach and shared with other organisations.

16. Dr Roberts welcomed the feedback and commented that the organisation was managing well particularly against a backdrop of change. He added:

'We are particularly strong, I think, in our well-being. So we run a lot of support for members of staff who may be ill or suffering from stress or something like that. So, there's a very high degree of awareness within the organisation. I think that's really important for an organisation that's going through change, that we do invest in that'.<sup>10</sup>

17. In further correspondence, we were informed that NRW has developed and implemented a number of policies and procedures to manage staff sickness absence including access for staff to an effective occupational health and employee assistance service provision.<sup>11</sup> We were also told that NRW has

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<sup>9</sup> RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 231

<sup>10</sup> RoP, 28 March 2017, paragraph 232

<sup>11</sup> Written evidence, PAC(5)-15-17 Paper 4, 22 May 2017



committed to managing the risk of mental health absence through delivery of mental health first aid training and emotional resilience training, focussed attention on improving the quality and quantity of absence data to develop the way they monitor and manage sickness absence and have used multiple internal communication channels to raise awareness of the policies and procedures, a new recording system and support provisions to all staff in NRW.





Leader of the Welsh Conservatives

National Assembly for Wales  
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

Mike Hedges AM  
Chair, Environment, Climate Change and Rural Affairs  
Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Our ref: ARTD/GC

28<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Dear Mike

**Re: Rural Development Programme Wales**

I have recently met with several constituents in relation to the delivery of the above. As you will be aware, this is an economic development plan for rural areas that seeks to deliver over £900million of Welsh Government and European Union money for rural economic development over the 7 year life of the plan for the years 2014-21.

My constituents, and indeed the farming unions, have pointed out deep concerns as to the running of the Rural Development Programme and importantly in relation to the delivery of monies out of it to Welsh rural-based businesses. Given we are fast approaching the half-way point of this current Rural Development Programme's life I would be most grateful, as would my constituents, if in your role as chair, along with the other committee members, you would take the view that an inquiry into the delivery and support at this half way point of the Rural Development Programme would be one that your committee would consider undertaking.

Thank you for your assistance with this issue, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

**Andrew RT Davies AM**

Leader of the Welsh Conservatives  
South Wales Central Regional AM

# Agenda Item 4.5

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig  
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P-LG/2226/17

The Chair  
Climate Change, Environment & Rural Affairs Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

27 June 2017

Dear Mike,

## Action points from the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee meeting, 14 June 2017

At the meeting on 14 June I agreed to a number of action points to provide the Committee with further information regarding:

- a copy of the letter and supporting information I sent to management authorities on marine protected areas in May.
- the date for the meeting with my counterparts in the other UK administrations once it has been agreed.
- the availability of resources for Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to carry out its statutory and non-statutory functions following my meeting with NRW on 14 June 2017.

## Letter and supporting information provided to management authorities

Copies of the letter and supporting information I issued to management authorities on 8 May regarding their statutory responsibilities to marine protected area management are attached as annexes to this letter. The letter and supporting information has also been published on the Welsh Government's website.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
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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.

Pack Page 172

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.

## **Rescheduling of meeting with counterparts from other UK administrations**

I will write again with confirmation once a suitable date for an inter-ministerial meeting has been agreed.

### **Meeting with Natural Resources Wales, 14 June 2017**

Following our meeting on 14 June 2017 I met with the Chair and Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales. At the meeting I raised the issue about whether NRW has sufficient resource to carry out their statutory functions in relation to monitoring and management of marine protected areas. NRW agreed to look again at this and will write to me in the next few weeks with an update.

I will write to the Committee again once I am able to provide you with an update.

Regards  
Lesley

**Lesley Griffiths AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig  
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P-LG/1093/17

Local Authority Leaders and Directors of the Environment  
Chief Executives of Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia National Park Authorities  
Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales  
Chief Executive of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water  
Chief Executive of Milford Haven Port Authority  
Managing Director, Port of Mostyn Ltd

8 May 2017

Dear all

### **Managing our Marine Protected Areas**

This letter sets out how the Welsh Government has been working as part of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Steering Group (MPAMSG) with organisations who are also marine protected area managing authorities. The MPAMSG has been looking at ways to further ensure our MPAs are effectively managed so they achieve and remain in favourable condition and meet our organisation's statutory obligations.

Effectively managed MPAs contribute to the conservation and improvement of the marine area. A well-designed and well-managed network of MPAs, alongside wider marine management measures such as marine planning, is integral to achieving clean healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas. This provides the resilience and long term sustainability of our seas which is important to our coastal communities, the well-being of the people of Wales and to those who visit our shores.

No single organisation is responsible for managing our MPAs. MPAs are managed by placing duties and responsibilities on organisations such as yours. Such organisations, referred to as management authorities, therefore either have statutory responsibilities in relation to the marine area or are significant seabed or coastal land owners. We are required, collectively and individually, to take steps which will help achieve and/or maintain the ecological interest of a MPA to a favourable condition. Management authorities principally manage sites through the regulatory consenting process and by introducing measures to achieve a site's conservation objectives. This may include measures to modify or restrict human activity if necessary.

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[Correspondence.Lesley.Griffiths@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Lesley.Griffiths@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.

My officials have been facilitating the work of the MPAMSG to look at the ways in which we can enhance the management of the network of MPAs in Wales. The MPAMSG was set up in March 2014 and meets at least twice a year. Members represent the main management authorities in Wales, including yours. The MPAMSG decided an important step is to remind ourselves of our statutory obligations towards managing MPAs. **You are receiving this letter as a managing authority and a key contributor to the statutory management of Marine Protected Areas in Wales.**

The MPAMSG has agreed a vision for a well managed network, and has also considered options for an area based approach to management across Wales. However, following a period of stakeholder engagement, the MPAMSG concluded replicating the preferred option was unaffordable for the management authorities concerned. The work of the MPAMSG has now moved to focus on providing strategic support and guidance to management authorities to facilitate activity which has greatest impact on the condition of MPAs, their features and network as a whole.

I attach supporting information to help clarify the roles and responsibilities of the management authorities across Wales in achieving favourable site condition, should you require it. Attached is an overview of:

- the network of MPAs in Welsh waters, including protected features;
- the organisations responsible for managing our MPAs and their duties;
- the work to date in considering an area based approach to managing the network of MPAs; and
- the legislation and guidance underpinning MPA management.

If you have any questions regarding the content of this letter please contact Richard Lowcock James at the Welsh Government's Marine Conservation and Biodiversity Branch on 03000 253241.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Lesley Griffiths AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig  
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

## **MPA MANAGEMENT IN WALES - SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **MPAs in Wales**

There are 132 MPAs in Wales made up of:

- Special Protection Areas (SPAs);
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs);
- Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs);
- Ramsar sites; and
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

The table below sets out the types of MPAs in Welsh waters, what they protect and the legislation used to designate them.

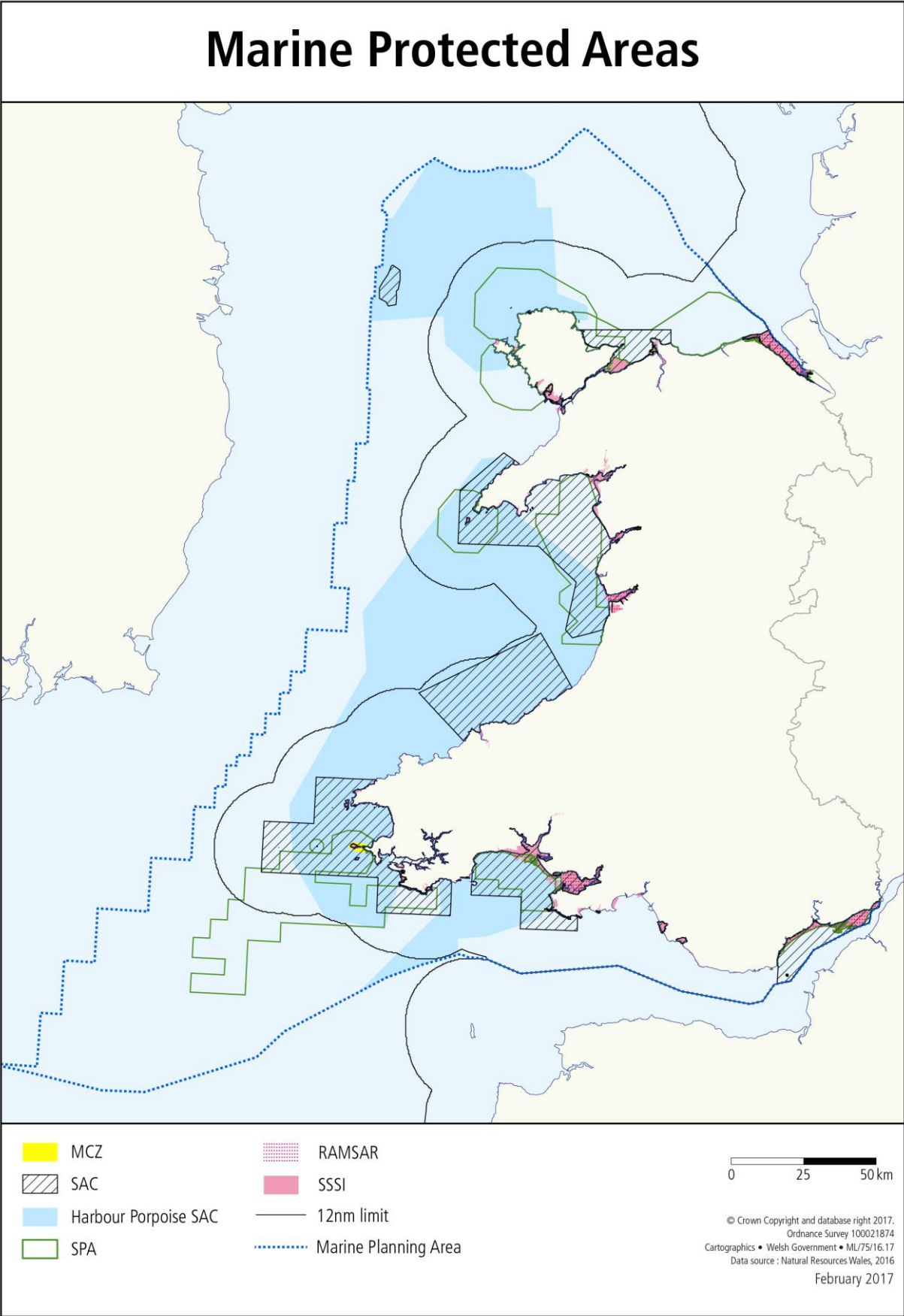
**Table 1: Types of MPA in Wales, species/habitats protected and relevant legislation**

<b>Type of MPA</b>	<b>What is the legislative driver?</b>	<b>What is protected?</b>
<b>Special Protection Area (SPA)</b>	EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Council Directive 2009/147/EC)	These sites protect wild birds as listed in Annex I of the Directive, plus regularly occurring migratory species, and the habitats they rely on for essential behaviours such as feeding and breeding.
<b>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</b>	EU Habitats and Species Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) <sup>1</sup>	These sites protect a range and variety of habitats and (non-bird) species of European importance as listed in Annex I and II of the Directive.
<b>Marine Conservation Zone</b>	Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009)	These sites protect a range of habitats, species, geological and geomorphology features which are considered nationally important.
<b>Ramsar Site</b>	Convention of Wetlands of International Importance (1971)	These sites protect wetlands which are considered to be internationally important.
<b>Site of Special Scientific Interest (with marine components)</b>	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	These sites protect the best examples of Wales's flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features.

Map 1 shows the location of our MPAs<sup>2</sup>. Tables 2 and 3 list the species and habitats which are protected at each site designated under European legislation.

<sup>1</sup> Both EU directives are transposed into UK law through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). SPAs and SACs are European Marine Sites and contribute to the EU's Natura 2000 Network of sites.

Map 1: Map of Marine Protected Areas in Wales



<sup>2</sup> Management of offshore SACs is currently the responsibility of Defra.

**Table 2: List of species protected at each marine SPA in Wales**

Special Protection Area	Marine Feature
<b>Aber Dyfrdwy / Dee Estuary</b>	Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> Eurasian widgeon <i>Anas penelope</i> Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i> Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i> Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> Common oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> Bar-tailed godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> Eurasian curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> Great cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> Little tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> Sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvichensis</i> Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> Common redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
<b>Bae Caerfyrddin / Carmarthen Bay</b>	Common scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>
<b>Burry Inlet</b>	Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> Eurasian widgeon <i>Anas penelope</i> Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i> Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> Common oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> Eurasian curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> Common redshank <i>Tringa tetanus</i> Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>
<b>Liverpool Bay / Bae Lerpwl<sup>3</sup></b>	Red-throated diver <i>Gavia stellata</i> Common scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>
<b>Môr Hafren / Severn Estuary</b>	Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> Greater white-fronted goose <i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i> Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i> Common shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> Common redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> Bewick's swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i> Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i> Tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i> Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>

<sup>3</sup> Proposals to extend Liverpool Bay SPA were consulted on in late 2016 and early 2017; a decision whether or not to reclassify the site will be taken in due course.

	Eurasian widgeon <i>Anas Penelope</i> Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> Ring plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> Common oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> Eurasian curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
<b>Traeth Lafan / Lavan Sands</b>	Common oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> Eurasian curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> Great crested grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
<b>Grassholm</b>	Gannet <i>Morus Bassanus</i>
<b>Skomer, Skokholm and the seas off Pembrokeshire / Sgomer, Sgogwm a Moroedd Benfro</b>	Short-eared owl <i>Asio flammeus</i> Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i> Storm petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i> Lesser black-backed gull <i>Larus fuscus</i> Manx shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i> Chough <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
<b>Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli / Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island</b>	Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i> Chough <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
<b>Northern Cardigan Bay / Gogledd Bae Ceredigion</b>	Red throated diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>
<b>Anglesey Terns / Morwenoliaid Ynys Môn</b>	Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> Arctic tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i> Roseate tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i> Sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>

**Table 3: List of species and habitats protected at each marine SAC in Wales**

<b>Special Area of Conservation</b>	<b>Marine Feature</b>
<b>Y Fenai a Bae Conwy / Menai Strait and Conwy Bay</b>	Reefs
	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time
	Large shallow inlets and bays
	Submerged or partially submerged sea caves
<b>Dee Estuary / Aber Dyfrdwy</b>	Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>
	<i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand
	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
	Annual vegetation of drift lines
	Estuaries
	Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>
	River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>
<b>Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau / Llyn Peninsula and the Sarnau</b>	Coastal lagoons
	Estuaries
	Large shallow inlets and bays
	Reefs

Special Area of Conservation	Marine Feature
	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide Submerged or partially submerged sea caves <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand Grey seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> Bottlenose dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
<b>Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries / Bae Caerfyrddin ac Aberoedd</b>	Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> Estuaries <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i> Large shallow inlets and bays Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> Allis shad <i>Alosa alosa</i> Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>
<b>Pembrokeshire Marine / Sir Benfro Forol</b>	Reefs Estuaries Large shallow inlets and bays Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> Coastal lagoons Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time Submerged or partially submerged sea caves Grey seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i> Allis shad <i>Alosa alosa</i> Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> Shore dock <i>Rumex rupestris</i> Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>
<b>Cardigan Bay / Bae Ceredigion</b>	Reefs Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time Submerged or partially submerged sea caves Bottlenose dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> Grey seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>
<b>Severn Estuary / Môr Hafren</b>	Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> Estuaries

Special Area of Conservation	Marine Feature
	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time
	Reefs
	Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i>
	Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>
North Anglesey Marine / Gogledd Môn Forol	River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>
West Wales Marine / Gorllewin Cymru Forol	Harbour porpoise <i>Phocoena phocoena</i>
Bristol Channel Approaches / Dynesfeydd Môr Hafren	Harbour porpoise <i>Phocoena phocoena</i>

## Who is responsible for MPA Management?

Our largest sites have been designated under the EU Directives and are generally known as **European Marine Sites** – Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Management of these is the responsibility of what are termed Competent Authorities and Relevant Authorities under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended); both are more generally known as Management Authorities. Competent Authorities include any public or statutory body or person holding a public office which exercises legislative powers, whether on land or at sea (see Annex 2). Relevant Authorities are Competent Authorities with powers or functions which have, or could have, an impact on the marine area within or adjacent to a European Marine Site. Types of Relevant Authority are identified in Regulation 6 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Management of **Marine Conservation Zones** is the responsibility of those with management duties under Section 125 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. This includes Ministers of the crown, public bodies and persons holding a public office.

**Ramsar sites** are designated under the Ramsar Convention (1971) to protect significant wetlands and maintain their ecological character. It is the Welsh Government's policy to treat these sites in the same way as European Marine Sites<sup>4</sup>.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) sets out a range of duties and powers for Natural Resources Wales to ensure the protection and management of **Sites of Special Scientific Interest** by providing advice to SSSI owners, including the issuing of consents for activities. The responsibilities of all management authorities as they relate to SSSIs are set out in Section 28 of the Act.

The table below identifies some of the management authorities in Wales and sets out their main roles and responsibilities<sup>5</sup>.

### **The Welsh Government:**

1. Overall responsibility for Wales' compliance with EU and international obligations towards MPAs in the Welsh inshore region (0-12 nautical miles);
2. Designation of MPAs (excluding SSSIs);
3. Provides the overall MPA management policy framework, which is to secure effective management of MPAs in Wales that ultimately improves condition of our MPAs by assisting with the delivery of MPA management actions, safeguarding marine biodiversity, the wider ecosystem and the socio-economic benefits for Wales;
4. Management and regulation of sea fisheries in Welsh waters (inshore and offshore), including in conjunction with the European Commission under the Common Fisheries Policy;
5. Powers to make orders to control activities to protect MPAs (including fisheries and recreation);
6. Marine plan authority (development of marine plan) to manage marine activities in a sustainable way, taking into account economic, social and environmental priorities;
7. The achievement of the Good Environmental Status characteristics and targets under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in Welsh waters.

<sup>4</sup> [http://ramsar.rgjs.ch/cda/en/ramsar-documents-list-ramsar-sites-in-wales/main/ramsar/1-31-218%5E21170\\_4000\\_0](http://ramsar.rgjs.ch/cda/en/ramsar-documents-list-ramsar-sites-in-wales/main/ramsar/1-31-218%5E21170_4000_0)

<sup>5</sup> This is not a complete list of management authorities who have responsibilities within the marine environment.

**Natural Resources Wales:**

1. Designation, management and regulation of SSSIs;
2. Statutory nature conservation advisor to the Welsh Government for the Welsh inshore region (0-12 nautical miles);
3. Development of advice on conservation objectives and operations/activities (EMS and MCZs);
4. Regulator of activities that require a marine licence (delegated from the Welsh Government);
5. Management of migratory fisheries out to 6 nautical miles;
6. Management of some inshore shellfisheries at the Burry Inlet and Dee Estuary;
7. Under the Water Framework Directive, the competent authority for estuarine and coastal waters to 1 nautical mile for ecological status and to 12 nautical miles for chemical status;
8. Environment Permitting Regulations activities e.g. radioactive materials/ship breaking in the Welsh inshore region (0-12 nautical miles) and regulating land based discharges and pollution incidents out to 3 nautical miles;
9. Management of flood risk, including Shoreline Management Planning and provision/maintenance of some sea defences;
10. Range of environmental monitoring and reporting functions;
11. Preparation of Area Statements to support the sustainable management of natural resources.

**Joint Nature Conservation Committee:**

1. Statutory conservation advisor to governments for the offshore marine area (beyond 12 nautical miles); carries out a number of similar functions to those exercised by NRW in relation to Wales and Welsh territorial waters, including the writing of conservation objectives for off-shore sites.

**Local Authorities:**

1. Landowner (some areas of foreshore);
2. Management of (non-permissible) development (down to the Low Water Mark);
3. Management of recreation activities (within their area of geographical and organisational responsibility);
4. Planning authority (interface between marine and terrestrial);
5. Provision of coastal defence and strategic planning;
6. Provision and management of public access (coastal paths);
7. Beach management and maintenance;
8. Waste management.

**National Park Authorities:**

1. Management of recreation activities (within area of responsibility);
2. Planning authority (interface between marine and terrestrial);
3. Provision of coastal defence and strategic planning;
4. Beach management and maintenance.

**Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (UK government Department):**

1. Regulator of the licensing of exploration and development of offshore oil and gas resources (via the Oil and Gas Authority) and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), including major marine renewable energy schemes.

**The Crown Estate:**

1. Management of the majority of the foreshore and seabed around Wales;
2. Management of the sovereign's rights to natural resources (excluding fossil

fuels); to generate electricity from wind, waves and the tides and to the transportation and storage of natural gas and carbon dioxide all on the continental shelf;

3. Lease of/licence of rights for development and operation on the sea bed for purposes including; various coastal dealings such as moorings and marinas, fixed shellfish cultivation, aggregate extraction, port/harbour development, renewable energy development.

## **What are the powers and duties of management authorities?**

### **European Marine Sites (Special Protection Areas & Special Areas of Conservation)**

- Management authorities with marine powers and duties must exercise them to secure compliance with the requirements of the Directives,<sup>6</sup> regardless of whether they were originally intended for nature conservation purposes. Furthermore, they have a duty to have regard to the requirements of the Directives in the exercise of any of their functions. They can use their powers and duties to meet the requirements of the Directives and the conservation objectives of each European Marine Site.
- Natural Resources Wales provides conservation advice to relevant authorities which contain the conservation objectives for EMSs and a list of activities likely to cause damage.
- Management authorities that are considering whether to authorise a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on an EMS, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, must undertake an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that EMS in view of the site's conservation objectives. This applies to SACs, SPAs and, as a matter of Welsh Government policy, Ramsar sites.
- Management authorities may produce a management scheme for an EMS setting out how their powers and duties will be exercised to secure compliance with the Directives.

### **Marine Conservation Zones**

- Section 125 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) makes the conservation of MCZs an important consideration for all management authorities. They have a duty to exercise their functions in a way to further (or, where this is not possible, least hinder) the conservation objectives for MCZs<sup>7</sup>.
- Section 126 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) places a duty on management authorities to consider the effect of proposed activities on MCZs before authorising them. If the management authority believes that there is or may be a significant risk of the act hindering the achievement of the conservation objectives stated for the MCZ, the authority must notify the appropriate statutory conservation body of that fact and manage the activity to meet its obligations under section 126 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009).

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<sup>6</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012, No 1927) sought to give the Birds Directive comparable status to the Habitats Directive and the word "Directives" is used to denote both Habitats and Birds Directives (Regulation 9a).

<sup>7</sup> At present there is one MCZ in Welsh territorial waters (Skomer MCZ) which, following its transition from a Marine Nature Reserve in 2014, does not yet have any conservation objectives.

## **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**

- Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Natural Resources Wales has a range of duties and powers to ensure the protection and management of SSSIs. This includes providing advice to SSSI owners and managers, to ensure active management, and advising landowners and other regulatory bodies on potential impacts of any development or other activities.
- Natural Resources Wales directly regulates activities carried out by land owners and occupiers which could impact on SSSIs through the requirement on owners/occupiers to obtain Natural Resources Wales consent for potentially damaging operations.
- All public and statutory authorities have duties to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the SSSI. They must in particular consult and have regard to the advice of Natural Resources Wales before carrying out or authorising operations which may damage the features for which SSSIs are notified.

## **Other relevant biodiversity duties**

- The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 builds on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 duties and requires all public authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity, make biodiversity an integral part of decision making and report on the actions they are taking to improve biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience. There are also duties under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act that will need to be considered as they relate to MPA management.

## **MPA management in Wales**

In March 2014 the Welsh Government established the MPA Management Steering Group to develop and guide the implementation of a new management framework in Wales. The Steering Group's Terms of Reference are available on the Welsh Government's website at:

<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/marineandfisheries/marine-conservation-and-biodiversity/marine-protected-areas/?lang=en>

## **Options for managing the network of MPAs in Wales**

In 2015 the MPA Management Steering Group consulted with stakeholders over four options for site management and introducing a level of consistency across sites by taking an area-based approach to managing our sites as a network. The three key reasons for considering an area based approach to management presented were:

- A number of issues were identified with the existing individual site based system of management, including lack of funding and commitment from all management authorities.
- A need to manage sites as a network, which requires consideration of a variety of sites and features across a wider area
- A need for a system of management that accommodates both current sites and any future development of the network.

The options presented for area-based MPA management were:

- Option 1 – No change to the current management arrangements.
- Option 2 – A local approach with seven management areas.
- Option 3 – A regional approach with two management areas.
- Option 4 – An area approach with four management areas.

## **Stakeholder feedback**

Stakeholder feedback from management authorities and others showed a clear preference for Option 2. Some responses suggested two further options: an amended option 2 using part time staff if there were funding constraints, and a new Option 5 which would see four areas with more than one officer in each area (depending on the area's needs).

## **Assessing the feedback**

Steering group members considered the feedback and agreed two options should be taken forward for further assessment, including an assessment of the likely costs. The two options progressed were:

- Option 2 - a local approach with seven management areas, and
- Option 5 - four management areas with more than one officer, depending on the area's needs.

Indicative costs for each option were provided to steering group members based on the core funding used to support the sole full-time European Marine Site Officer 2014-15. Projected costs included on-costs and a small T&S budget.

## **The Steering Group's conclusions**

While a number of steering group members stated that Option 2 was their preferred option, there was no consensus on a preferred option.

All steering group members accepted that the indicative costs for both option 2 and option 5, amounting to £14,000 for each of the 21 relevant authorities per annum (£1.47m over 5 years) under option 2, and £12,800 for each relevant authority per annum (£1.34m over 5 years) under option 5, would be an unachievable financial commitment for all authorities. Furthermore, as not all authorities contribute to local management arrangements at present, the actual figure for contributing authorities might be even higher.

The steering group concluded neither option would be feasible to implement at this time due to lack of resources. The steering group has agreed to focus its efforts on providing support and guidance to management authorities to facilitate improvements in the condition of species and habitats across the MPA network in Wales, including identifying opportunities to work together to achieve better outcomes.

## Legislation and guidance relating to MPA management

For comprehensive information on the legal responsibilities of management authorities please refer to the specific legislation:

- Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 - [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/pdfs/ukpga\\_20090023\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/pdfs/ukpga_20090023_en.pdf)
- EU Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31992L0043&from=EN>
- EU Directive on the conservation of wild birds - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009L0147&from=EN>
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/pdfs/uksi\\_20100490\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/pdfs/uksi_20100490_en.pdf)
- Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2011 [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/625/pdfs/uksi\\_20110625\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/625/pdfs/uksi_20110625_en.pdf)
- Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulation 2012. [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1927/pdfs/uksi\\_20121927\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1927/pdfs/uksi_20121927_en.pdf)
- Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 (as amended) - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/1842/contents/made>
- Ramsar Convention - [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=15398&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15398&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)
- Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016 [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/pdfs/anaw\\_20160003\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/pdfs/anaw_20160003_en.pdf)
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/natura\\_2000\\_assess\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/natura_2000_assess_en.pdf)
- Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC: clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence, opinion of the commission. [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/new\\_guidance\\_art6\\_4\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/new_guidance_art6_4_en.pdf)
- Guidance to Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) land owners and occupiers: <https://naturalresources.wales/conservation-biodiversity-and-wildlife/find-protected-areas-of-land-and-seas/guidance-to-site-of-special-scientific-interest-sssi-land-owners-and-occupiers/?lang=en>

# Agenda Item 4.6

## Climate change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee Inquiry into forestry and woodlands in Wales

### Correspondence from Confor addressing additional questions from the evidence session held on 14 June 2017

Following their oral evidence session on 14 June 2017 Confor were asked to address some remaining questions as part of the inquiry.

- **Can you expand on the view put forward by Confor that a lack of scope to increase commercial forestry elsewhere is a barrier to restoring Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites? The Committee has heard evidence that this is not a concern for landowners, and if a woodland has been managed properly the landowner will make money as expected.**

Our landowners and their agents tell us very firmly that losing a financial income in the long term is a very big issue in their decision to restore PWAS or not. The reality is that in the majority of Wales native broadleaves do not provide anywhere near the income that commercial softwood forestry does, sometimes no income at all. There are a few lower lying areas of Wales that will produce good quality hardwoods but it is simply not possible to grow broadleaved trees for a commercial crop above 400m due to lack of soil and high rainfall which are not good for native broadleaved trees.

We also have a huge problem with grey squirrel decimating much of our broadleaved resource making it unmarketable with the exception of the woodfuel market so we have to be realistic about what we grow and where.

Even if we could grow the broadleaved crop it would take three times as long to grow (which means we would need three times the area of forests), and be substantially more expensive, which would serve to make timber products the preserve of the wealthy.

Restoring PAWS will give an income in the short term but that diminishes as the softwood is replaced by broadleaved trees, so owners, who at present derive an income from their commercial woodlands and forests, are naturally reluctant to give that up. There is evidence, which is contained in our

submission, on the impact PAWS restoration will have on the softwood availability forecast (and thus on the income of landowners), this shows that PAWS restoration will reduce the availability of softwood timber and we must address that impact, firstly to comply with UKFS, WFS and the new WB&FGA in Wales and secondly to encourage owners to restore PAWS.

Owners accept that native broadleaved forests provide other functions and benefits and most would wish to assist expanding these, however owners still have to stand the cost of long term forest management and if there is little or no income to support that they are understandably reluctant to commit to a long term strategy that is, at present, unfunded.

Historically, broadleaved management has been supported by public funds for many reasons. With the huge pressure on public funding for all sectors in Wales and the UK we see little prospect that funding will be made available to support woodland management of any kind, it surely makes no sense to create woodlands that cannot fund their own management, we simply say that there is an opportunity to embrace commercial forestry and use the income from that to support other types of forest management, it is a compromise which we know will work and we invite all stakeholders to acknowledge that.

We believe that if owners could easily and quickly replace the commercial asset they currently have on PAWS, somewhere else on other non-forested ground, then they would be much more likely to engage with PAWS restoration. Thus we firmly believe that the present woodland and forestry creation process, which is hugely complicated and uncertain, is a barrier to PAWS restoration.

• **Do you think that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Welsh Government are doing enough to manage tree health issues, such as Larch Disease and Ash Dieback?**

Tree disease is sadly inevitable, anything that stands in the same place for many years is always going to be susceptible to any disease that comes along so we have to accept that we cannot prevent disease all we can hope to do is to minimise the impacts.

We do believe that NRW has dragged its feet on the clearance of diseased larch, whilst recognising their difficulties in the early years of the disease we continue to call for them to push forward with the disease management.

On Ash dieback, (Chalara), we believe WG has been proactive, we recognise that the ability to react to it is very limited by any organisation, public or private and the response needs to be very different to that for P Ramorum. Chalara is found in most areas of Wales now so the ability to control the disease is sadly long gone. However if we look at this as a case for how we could prevent disease in the first place we can learn lessons.

Imports are an obvious pathway for any disease to enter Wales so this could be a first area WG should be proactive in. Plants for the forestry sector and for the horticultural sector are often imported, contracts that are in control of WG to plant anything could stipulate that they must use home grown stock, we note that the new tenders for trees to restock on the WGWE by NRW do indeed contain this clause. Perhaps a condition on the Sell 2 Wales website could also contain this advice or clause which would start in address this issue in the horticultural sector.

Publicity is also a key function of WG in regard to plant health and again prevention is better than cure, a simple search on WG website for plant health reveals plenty of legislation, strategy and references to organisations but very little advice that would be useful to the general public. I note that on the WG website page for their flagship "Plant" scheme there is no mention of using only UK grown stock, leaflets on biodiversity are available on NRW and Confor websites and are printable to enable anyone to use them on their sites. As the owner of Cardiff airport perhaps WG might like to increase publicity there to help spread the message by creating signage telling the public not to bring back plants from their holidays and to clean boots and clothing, as happens in other countries.

What we also believe is imperative is that we should design forests that enable us to react to disease or change. Having a forest that is economically viable will enable the sector to react to disease or change, if the forest can pay for its own management then it can react and change, making the forest

reliant on public subsidy will not enable them to react or change, a lesson we should learn from the agricultural sector.

Larch is an interesting case in point, it was a minor species with small markets, and this did create additional problems in managing the disease. Trying to fit a large volume into a small market was difficult, it was resolved but the market simply took time to react. We will never know, but if the disease had been in spruce I believe it would have been harvested without delay and marketed with ease, both would have contributed to managing the disease better.

The standard thinking that diversification of species in forests is the answer to combatting diseases, the argument goes that if you have a variety of species then some may die but others will not, whilst that may be true it removes the forest's ability to pay for its own management as it is almost impossible to harvest products from a diverse woodland economically. If farmers had to plant carrots, cabbages, tomatoes and a few other crops in the same patch they could not produce food economically.

We believe diversification should be at a forest scale where you have blocks of forest types, some of mostly single species, others with a mix of species, when viewed from above this forest would consist of a mosaic of different species and age classes over a wider area, areas designated for commercial crops would be large enough to harvest economically and native broadleaved areas would be large enough to provide biodiversity, both acting as corridors to enable anything to move between them. This incidentally is perfectly in line with UKFS in which a percentage of single species is perfectly acceptable for woodland and forestry creation.

- **Can you comment on NRW's evidence that the Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel should be "revitalised and more dynamic in its approach"? The Committee has heard evidence that the group should be opened up to a broader range of stakeholders including environmental and recreation interests.**

We are puzzled by comments on WSAP by NRW and others, there seems to be a misunderstanding on the role and purpose of WSAP and presuppose the role of WSAP as being much wider than it actually is. WSAP is an advisory

panel to WG, it is not an advisory panel to NRW nor is it expected to comment on forestry or any other matters to a wider audience. The functions are to advise WG and to act as an arbiter in the case of disputes between the private sector and WG or the regulator, a specific requirement contained in the Forestry Act 1967 and subsequent legislation.

I attach the ToR for WSAP which clearly state its role and purpose.

As an advisor to WG, WSAP is not outward facing nor should it be, or it could not properly advise WG, hence it is understandable that some perhaps do not know what it does.

On the membership of WSAP, it is made up of a very wide membership drawn from many parts of the woodland, forestry, environmental, water and other sectors and does indeed include environmental and recreation interests, even some of the respondents to this consultation, and I attach the current membership. These are all volunteers participating at their own expense of money and time and as it meets only quarterly the workload has to reflect that.

As a member of WSAP I think it has indeed been very effective, some of the work is to comment on proposals from WG and some is to horizon scan and report back to WG, recent work streams include revitalising the PAWS guidance, timber supply and security, Brexit, forestry statistics, 10 point action plan and grey squirrel management plans, WSAP was also very active supplying advice in the early days of P Ramorum.

It is perfectly proper to suggest that we need a group to speak to a wider audience and maybe the role and purpose of WSAP could include that function. It could also advise NRW, interestingly NRW stated at their formation that they did not want an advisory panel, perhaps now they are losing expertise and have no forestry expertise on their board it would indeed be appropriate for them to take advice from WSAP?

However should the CC,E&RA committee think that the role and purpose of WSAP should be much wider then they should bear in mind the voluntary nature of WSAP and recommend that WG may need to commit to funding that

will enable WSAP and its members to meet more frequently to reflect a much greater workload.

There is no obligation to comment on all of the points and I have copied everyone in in case you would like to give us a joint response.

Other comments;

It was clear to us by the questions asked at the evidence session that the CC,E&RA committee members had little knowledge of the woodland and forestry creation process, it is a very complicated, difficult, slow, ponderous process, there is much of it that has good reason, and we acknowledge this, but it does hold back woodland and forestry creation projects and forest management. This is in our opinion the most important topic the committee and this inquiry should look at and we urge you to do so in depth.

Perhaps the committee would be willing to look at the process? We would willing facilitate this, perhaps by taking a few committee members to a woodland planners office or maybe I could arrange for a woodland planner to come to Cardiff with a laptop and show the committee just what is involved.

Your response to oral evidence from the Woodland Trust and RSPB, and academics. I do not accept the premise that there is a lack of advice on woodland management and forestry creation as suggested, if anyone is thinking about it they need to ask, that is what happens in any walk of life, if you do not know you ask.

There is plenty of advice available through NGO's, WG and the private sector, many individuals and companies exist to do just that. WG hold a Glastir planners list, these are professional woodland planners, ICF is a professional organisation for the sector with chartered status. This advice is open to all, commercial and charitable alike, our members and others would provide advice both in a commercial setting and I am sure in a charitable setting and I know this is happening,

Llais y Goedwig is a community woodland group, funded by WG which has a wide membership and disseminates information and advice to community woodland organisations. I ensure they have access to any information that comes through me as I do for members and other organisations.

There was mention of the figure of 80000ha of woodlands not managed, I would urge caution with that figure as we have no reliable means to measure that, it is a very old figure anyway. Our only method of assessing if woodland is managed is if it is in a formal scheme and we have not had one for some years, landowners may also manage their woodlands without being in a scheme. We do know that most, 95% I think, of commercial softwood is managed so it is the broadleaved resource that is not managed. Much of this is small scale farm woodlands and this small scale is probably the reason for non-management.

Right tree in the right place was a much used phrase that we believe is unhelpful. It is largely a meaningless phrase as it is open to interpretation, just what is the right tree for any place is not defined anywhere. There are some who think that we do not want to expand the woodland or forestry area at all, many others would have differing views about which was the right tree, all would depend on the individuals or organisations aspirations for the woodland or place.