

Agenda – Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 4 – Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: 19 November 2020

Meeting time: 13.30

For further information contact:

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Private pre-meeting (13.30–13.45)

In accordance with Standing Order 34.19, the Chair has determined that the public are excluded from the Committee's meeting in order to protect public health. This meeting will be broadcast live on www.senedd.tv.

Public meeting (13.45–16.10)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(13.45)

2 Introductory briefing by Rewilding Britain

(13.45–14.30)

(Pages 1 – 15)

Prof Alastair Driver, Director – Rewilding Britain

Attached Documents:

Research brief

Break (14.30–14.35)



3 Biodiversity and Rewilding: Evidence session 1 – Environmental Sector

(14.35–15.35)

(Pages 16 – 42)

Clive Faulkner, Chief Executive Officer – Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

Hilary Kehoe, Wales Chair – Nature Friendly Farming Network

Jerry Langford, Public Affairs Manager – Woodland Trust

Siân Stacey, Project Development Officer – Summit to Sea

Arfon Williams, Head of Land and Sea Policy – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Cymru

Attached Documents:

Paper – Wildlife Trusts Wales

Paper – Nature Friendly Farming Network

Paper – Woodland Trust

Paper – Summit to Sea

Paper – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Cymru

Break (15.35–15.40)

4 Biodiversity and Rewilding: Evidence session 2: COPA (Cymunedau Oll Pumlumon a'r Ardal) Committee

(15.40–16.10)

(Pages 43 – 51)

Cllr Elwyn Vaughan – COPA (Cymunedau Oll Pumlumon a'r Ardal) Committee

Attached Documents:

Paper – COPA (Cymunedau Oll Pumlumon a'r Ardal) Committee (Welsh only)

5 Paper(s) to note

5.1 Biodiversity and Rewilding: Evidence paper from Farmers' Union Wales

(Pages 52 – 59)

Attached Documents:

Paper

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

Private meeting (16.10–16.40)

7 Biodiversity and Rewilding: Consideration of evidence received under items 2, 3 and 4

8 National Development Framework for Wales: Consideration of the Committee's draft report

(Pages 60 – 71)

Attached Documents:

Paper by Graeme Purves, Expert Adviser

Draft report

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 3

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a
Materion Gwledig
Bioamrywiaeth ac Ailwyltuo
CCERA(5) BR 04
Ymateb gan Ymddiriedolaethau Natur Cymru

Welsh Parliament
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs
Committee
Biodiversity and Rewilding
CCERA(5) BR 04
Evidence from Wildlife Trusts Wales



1 - Land management policy proposals

- 1 This inquiry comes at a critical time due to the need to recognise both the climate and nature emergencies and needs to examine the urgent need to take action. Welsh Government have stated, "*We face a climate emergency which is actively changing our environment and directly affecting communities; **we have an ecological emergency, where the behaviours and decisions of the human race are causing harm to the resilience of ecosystems and species***"¹.
- 2 Farming needs to play a significant role in helping to tackle the nature and climate crises and help restore the land and natural processes upon which a supply of healthy, nutritious food depends.
- 3 Therefore, we strongly support section 1.4 of the 'Sustainable Farming and Our Land' consultation, which stated that "*Sustainable food production, responding to the climate emergency and reversing the decline of biodiversity are just three of today's most significant challenges.*"
- 4 **The next ten years will be critical to halting climate change and averting an ecological disaster. We, therefore, cannot wait to for the new farm payment scheme, we need to create transformative change now.** However, the Welsh Governments' *Sustainable Farming and Our Land: Proposals to Continue and Simplify Agricultural Support for Farmers, and the Rural Economy*' consultation appears to be a continuation of the current system rather than taking the opportunity to transition to public goods.
- 5 One of its main proposals is to cease payments for the 'greening' aspect (30% of Basic Farm Payment (BPS)) but not replacing it with anything. Welsh Government could ensure that the current money for 'greening' is used as a 'stepping stone' or transition to a new public goods scheme or to pilot payments for public goods.
- 6 We want to see farmers supported to play their role in reversing the dramatic declines of wildlife and the loss of species-rich habitats. But we really must start the transition to a world-leading farming system now. This is important because;
 - **Soil:** is lost at 10x the rate it is created, costing the economy in England & Wales £1.2bn a year²³. Healthy soil supports biodiversity above and below ground, stores carbon, and reduces water pollution. It can also provide private benefits to farmers through increased productivity. Farming activities that go beyond the legal, regulatory baseline,

like agroforestry, agroecological and regenerative such as organic farming, should be incentivised.

- **Pollinators:** One out of every three mouthfuls of our food depend on pollinators. But our pollinators are struggling⁴ with half of our 27 bumblebee species in decline (3 are now extinct), and two-thirds of our moths and butterflies in long-term decline
- **Wildlife:** 41% of UK species are in decline, with 17% of species in Wales at risk of extinction (but 33% of mammals at risk of extinction but 51% needing urgent action⁵ in Wales)
- **Water:** The highest proportion (31%) of pressures causing poor water health can be attributed to agriculture and land management⁶
- **Trees:** Ancient woodlands support many of our rarest wildlife species, yet up to 70% has been lost or damaged due to conifer plantations, overgrazing, and the spread of invasive species⁷
- **Air:** Agriculture accounts for 88% of ammonia emissions in the UK, contributing to wildlife loss and climate change, as well as damaging public health⁸
- Research showed increased **weather volatility**, e.g., flood and drought caused by climate change, was the second most commonly reported problem facing farmers (affecting 40%), second only to increased costs and reduced profit margins (affecting 51%).⁹

Public Support

- 7 The public wants to see our nature and climate crises tackled. Research shows that 76% of the UK public support the view that nature could contribute to economic recovery in the UK (e.g., by reducing the risk of other economic challenges such as flooding, protecting water supplies, promoting local tourism, etc.)¹⁰.

Farming Support

- 8 Recent research¹¹ shows that 50% of farmers agree with the 'public money for public goods' approach (1/3 are neutral, and only 1/5 disagree) but
 - 1/3 of farmers were taking no environmental action to deal with problems on their farms, 44% were undertaking just 1 or 2 environmental activities, 1/5 were undertaking three or more.
 - Farmers cited lack of access to capital and uncertainty as by far the biggest barriers to making environmental and other improvements to their farm business (41% of farmers experienced lack of funds access, and 41% are struggling to make changes due to uncertainty around Brexit)

Greening – an opportunity to transition to public goods

- 9 'Greening' payments should be used as a 'stepping stone' to a new public goods scheme. This could help transition land managers to the new public goods scheme by choosing one or more of the following;
 - a) funding mandatory actions likely required under the new public good scheme (as set out in the 'Sustainable Farming and our Land' consultation¹²) thereby embedding good practice and environmental sustainability now, rather than in 5 years. Examples of mandatory actions in 'Sustainable Farming and our Land' consultation are;
 - managing semi-natural habitat,
 - effective nutrient management planning, if the farm applies inputs or generates slurry,
 - having an animal health and welfare plan if the farm has livestock
 - b) allow farmers to choose one or more of thematic packages (see annexe 1)
 - c) using the 30% greening funding to transition into the new public goods by funding

either public good trials or modulating the 30% into agri-environment schemes.

- d) farmers to choose from a suite of environmental measures (similar to the national certification scheme (NCS) which was an alternative to adopting the EU default greening measures) which could contain nature-based solutions and agroecological and regenerative farming practices such as
- habitat creation options
 - regenerative agriculture techniques
 - cover crops,
 - riparian restoration and buffer zones
 - natural flood management measures such as constructed wetlands,
 - peatland restoration
 - herbal lays
 - Farm Nutrient Management Plans
 - soil health - we chemical (applications of fertilisers and pesticides including herbicides) and physical disturbance (tillage) to the soil is devastating to soil health
 - integrated pest management, including pesticide reduction target and substituting ecologically harmful veterinary products for more benign ones or pesticide-free practices¹³¹⁴¹⁵.

10 The above options provide an opportunity to deliver against a wide range of government objectives if action is sufficiently integrated¹⁶.

30% of habitats in recovery by 2030

11 In addition, using greening as a stepping stone can help achieve the active recovery for wildlife happening across at least 30% of our land and by 2030 (30 by 30). The 30 by 30 target is that set by the EU¹⁷ and the UN¹⁸¹⁹.

12 A 30 by 30 policy could comprise:

- a) Core areas in which the conservation of biodiversity is the prime purpose (e.g., nature reserves, SSSI, Local Wildlife Sites)
- b) The recovery area where habitats are restored and new habitat created, at a range of scales. and may also be protected, or may have another, compatible land use. (e.g., low-intensity grazing on species-rich grassland)
- c) Set in a wildlife-friendly landscape (both rural and urban) containing corridors and stepping-stones of habitat that provide essential ecological or environmental connections (e.g., farmland that supports wildlife).

13 The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030²⁰ aims that at least 30% of EU land and seas will be protected by 2030 to halt the decline of plant and animal species and restore carbon sinks to address climate change, under European Commission plans. **The document lays out measures to transform the agriculture sector – one of the EU's largest drivers of biodiversity loss²¹ – by promoting agroecology practices and making a quarter of all EU agricultural land organic in the next decade.**

14 The EU Commission said the strategy would be a central element of the EU's recovery efforts to Covid-19. The Commission argued that protecting and restoring biodiversity can have a positive economic impact on a number of sectors such as farming, fishing, and tourism and boost job creation at a time when countries are reeling from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

15 The strategy aligns with a 2030 target to protect at least 30% of land and seas proposed in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)²². **The plan also identified agroecology as a key**

principle to increase the production of healthy food while reducing agriculture's environmental impact and increase soil fertility and biodiversity.

- 16 Other proposed measures to promote sustainable farming practices in EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 include
- **halving the use of chemical pesticides in the next 10 years,**
 - **ensuring at least 10% of utilised agriculture land includes diverse landscapes such as hedges, trees, and ponds that enhance carbon sequestration, prevent soil erosion and water depletion.**

Communication

- 17 We also believe that everyone should communicate a positive message about the role of land managers in tackling the climate and nature emergency through this new approach. This is also important for the public to understand how land managers are helping us fight against the climate and nature emergency – a job that runs alongside and underpins food production.
- 18 As we move to a new approach to farming, land management, and environmental expectations, new entrants may be (and hopefully will be) enticed into the sector. Ensuring that messaging reaches the wider public and business communities will give new entrants confidence and understanding. Emphasising the longer-term benefits of investing in public goods, such as building resilience to extreme weather events, is also critical.

2 - Rewilding

- 19 Within the conservation movement, and indeed beyond, there is an ongoing and controversial debate around 'rewilding'. Points of contention arise around the extent to which people are included or excluded, the requirement, or not, for management interventions and the damage to traditional ways of managing land, such as agriculture. **The Wildlife Trusts see the integration of people with nature as a key principle, and therefore, people will be a key part of any 'wilding' project.**
- 20 The Wildlife Trusts in Wales prefer to use the term 'wilding' as 'rewilding' means different things to different people and can suggest a return to ancient landscapes which is not possible. 'Wilding' offers an opportunity to reverse the decline in species and habitats using natural processes to restore our environment.
- 21 Briefly, wilding can be defined as "*a long term, management commitment to maximising biodiversity by enabling natural processes with minimum intervention. Decisions are made within a local community context and are based on the best available evidence ensuring benefits to both ecosystems and society as a whole.*"
- 22 Wilder places provide a wealth of benefits to people, and 'wilding' highlights the importance of connecting people with these benefits. In some cases, where the environment is very sensitive to disturbance, it may be that access by people is controlled to avoid damaging the fragile ecosystem.
- 23 We recognise the importance of engaging with people. We need to inspire a change in behaviour and mindset as well as a connection to natural environments.
- 24 'Wilding' is part of The Wildlife Trust activity and is something we have been working towards for many years, most recently through Living Landscapes and Living Seas projects. Examples

include

- **Pumlumon project**²³ - the restoration of upland peat bogs back to their natural state, reversing the decline in wildlife and delivering ecosystem services such as soaking up and slowing down the flow of water, as well as taking in greenhouse gases.
- **Alun and Chwiler Project** – working with farmers and landowners to connect habitats, restore biodiversity and tackle diffuse pollution.
- **Re-introductions** - our current re-introduction programmes, including water voles²⁴ and beavers²⁵.
- **Working with farmers and working our own farms** – Gwent Wildlife Trusts Springdale Farm²⁶ where they, and their tenant farmers, use traditional, wildlife-friendly farming practices, including cutting the hay meadows late in the summer and using a herd of British White cattle for low-intensity grazing.

- 25** To achieve 'wilding' we are calling for the restoration of natural processes and nature-based solutions within a local context. We recognise that there is no "one size fits all". Each region and habitat type is different, as is each community, and all three will require specific approaches to enable ecological restoration.
- 26** People are critical to achieving nature's recovery. We believe that local community support is essential. We are also sure that the provision of public benefits could see new investment into rural Wales, enabling families and communities to continue to make a living. We also want to increase society's understanding to value the work of farmers and the need to support public good provision to address increasing societal issues such as flooding and carbon capture.
- 27** We also recognise that our wildlife and the natural processes within Wales are in a poor state and that hard practical work is needed on the ground to rectify this. We believe 'wilding' in Wales can be achieved through the following actions:
- controlling invasive non-native species and preventing their arrival,
 - implementing more naturalistic grazing that promotes diverse species of rich swards,
 - bringing back key species like the beaver and ensuring that the habitat is suitable for these species to thrive,
 - ensuring that there are wildlife-friendly buffer zones, stepping stones and linear strips connecting habitats,
 - restoring natural physical processes, such as soil formation and water movement, expanding native, broadleaved woodland across Wales as a natural climax community, ensuring society as a whole benefits from the land management approach,
 - reducing the negative impact people have on the natural environment, through engagement with all sectors of society, providing solutions appropriate to the individual.
- 28** We must always remember that local communities play a vital role in delivering the ecological solutions that 'wilding' can deliver. Wilding activities that engage fully with local communities are always more likely to be more successful and long-lived. This is especially true where the local community is involved in project development, and where that community can see clear benefits of the actions, be that ecological or economic.

3 - Biodiversity targets

- 29** Wales, like many countries, has failed to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2000, 2010, and now 2020. The EU Commission recognised there had been "clear implementation gaps" in the past for translating biodiversity strategies into action. It is committed to strengthening the enforcement of biodiversity objectives among member states with binding nature restoration targets²⁷. Wales must do the same.

30 Welsh Government, and public bodies, must include a commitment to deliver nature's recovery on land and at sea, within a generation as we cannot continue to live outside of our planetary limits.

31 We want to see ambitious, legally binding, and enforceable targets for nature's recovery enshrined in law and enforced by an independent Welsh Office for Environmental Protection. With post-Brexit legislation requirements, there is the opportunity to establish legal targets, sub-targets, and action plans for biodiversity for all government departments and public bodies. **This commitment will ensure a future where nature is recovering – not in decline.**

32 Commitments should include

- a) **restoring all nationally and internationally important designated sites**, Local Wildlife Sites, and nature reserves to favourable conservation status by 2025.
- b) Join the UN and EU²⁸ in committing to managing **30% of land and sea for the benefit of nature by 2030**. The EU strategy asks member states to legally designate **new protected zones and ecological corridors by 2023**. The strategy encourages governments to designate as "strictly protected" ecosystems that store carbon and other greenhouse gases, such as primary and old-growth forests, peatlands and wetlands.
- c) Ban the sale of peat-based compost in Wales by 2021. This would include being globally responsible by banning imports of peat (over two-thirds of peat used in horticulture is imported, either from Ireland or from Eastern Europe). The Committee on Climate Change recommends this²⁹.
- d) creating **20% street tree cover** in our towns and cities by 2025
- e) ensuring **all new commercial buildings include green walls and green roofs by 2025**
- f) putting the equivalent of 1% of the public health budget into preventative health care solutions by 2023³⁰.
- g) Investing in nature-based solutions is a Welsh Government priority³¹; therefore, it needs to be funded as a priority (current nature-based solutions to flooding are under well 1% of the flood prevention budget). Wales should look to spend at least 20% of the flooding budget on nature-based solutions by 2021 and increasing to 50% by 2024.
- h) prioritising new legislation on
 - Sustainable Land Management,
 - a Clean Air Act (a new report highlights that air pollution linked to 14 per cent of UK Covid-19 deaths³²)
 - Environmental governance and principles.
- i) creating a **Welsh Pesticide Action Reduction Plan** (with timetable, targets, milestone, actions) to phase out pesticide usage in Wales as required by the Sustainable Use of Pesticide Directive³³. This should include
 - **eliminating domestic pesticide use** - B&Q is phasing out the sales of the weed killer Roundup due to links to cancer in the US³⁴.
 - **eliminating municipal use of pesticides (with certain exceptions such as control of invasive non-native)** by working with public bodies to commit to phasing out pesticides through Pesticide Action Networks 3 Year Action Plan³⁵.
 - **creating at least a 50% reduction in agricultural use pesticide use (by amount and toxicity) by 2024**. This includes fully adopting Integrated Pest Management (IPM) highlighted above regarding dung beetles.

Annexe 1 - Package Theme Examples of Options

- **Winter Management Package** - Winter bird feeding, winter bird seed mixes, 100% field cover achieved through cover crops, stubble, undersowing, etc. Habitat management options. Wildlife boxes and habitat features (e.g., hibernacula).
- **Flood Risk/Natural Flood Management (NFM)** - PackageMin-till/direct drill, 100% field cover, winter bird feeding, winter bird seed mixes, trees & boundaries package options (see below), soil package (see below). Arable reversion options. It should include incentives for working with natural processes, including allowing space for water, e.g., buffers or streamside wetlands; river restoration, e.g., barrier removal/modification, gravel re-introduction, bank enhancement, INNS control; and Natural Flood Management activity such as attenuation features, in-channel large woody material features, and sustainable drainage features.
- **Water and Wetlands Package** - Habitat creation (such as ponds, in-ditch wetlands, scrapes), NFM package (see above), habitat management, manage existing features, riparian corridor management, 6-12m buffer strips, tree and shrub establishment, fencing off livestock (including troughs, hardcore bases, etc.), resource protection (RP)/CSF items. Arable reversion options.
- **Trees and Boundaries Package** - Fat hedges – 6-12m from hedge centre, single or double-sided (including buffer/hedge management strip), reduced cutting to establish more hedge volume, wildlife corridor creation, broad A shaped hedges, hedgerow gapping-up, enhanced hedge base flora. Trees – trees across slopes, in-hedge trees, in-field tree protection, fruiting tree planting Native species support – removing conifers and replant native, non-native species treatment. Stone Wall preservation. Ditch protection. Watercourses - the establishment of (25 metre) riparian corridors, including grasses, scrub, and trees. tree planting should include natural regeneration and follow the principle of planting the right tree in the right place³⁶
- **Soil Package** - Land restoration rotation 2/5 years as a cover crop or pollinator mix, include farmyard manure (FYM) spreading if increases Organic Matter and compaction alleviation, use subsoiling deep rooting and nitrogen-fixing mixes to enable active long-term build-up of organic matter in soil and prevent exploitive cropping. Integrated Pest Management options above entry criteria. Arable reversion options. Increasing the water table on peat soils.
- **Livestock Package** - Establish and protect in-field trees, low input, reduced stocking rates, FYM management, watercourse protection, animal health plans to include; antibiotic use, anthelmintic use, bonus for cooperating with neighbours to share grazing and forage, native herbal leys in rotation, holistic grazing.
- **Wildlife Package** - Habitat management options. Arable reversion options. Some whole-field options, e.g., long-term fertility building mixes (to enhance food security). Winter bird feeding and seed mixes, skylark and lapwing plots, amphibian and reptile options, habitat creation including bat, raptor, bird boxes management options CRRU stewardship. Insect – not just with a focus on pollinators; dung beetles, deadwood habitat, nest boxes, hedge base flora, fruit trees in hedges, bare earth Predators – raptors, beetle banks, maintaining old farm buildings. Basic INNS control. Wildlife boxes and habitat features (e.g., hibernacula). Beaver re-introductions and ongoing support for managing beavers in the landscape; deer management and grey squirrel management.
- **Habitat creation/restoration/management** (including woodland, wetlands, freshwater, peatland, heathland, species-rich grassland, coastal habitat, urban green space). Instream/river and on-land interventions to mitigate flooding and to manage sediment for water quality
- **Beneficial Insects and Wild Pollinators** - Habitat creation and management – ensure the big four are catered for – see Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Wild Pollinators Farm

- Health Check i.e., forage/food/nectar; nesting habitats; wintering/hibernation; avoidance of stress (e.g., pesticides). Integrated Pest Management options
- **Combinable Crops Package** - Compaction alleviation, soil, and nutrient mapping, minimum tillage, low ground pressure tyres, landscape feature margins – 6m minimum on land, 12m minimum alongside watercourse, nitrogen-fixing break crops.
 - **Agroforestry package** - Silvopastoral - tree planting for livestock, Silvoarable - alley cropping/ tree planting
 - **Carbon habitats**
 - **Peatland Restoration** - Restoring them to prevent these emissions is one of the most cost-effective nature-based solutions to climate change. These vast stores of carbon need positive long-term management. Restored peatlands can capture more carbon, reduce flooding, clean our water, and allow wildlife to thrive.
 - **Saltmarsh** - A hectare of saltmarsh can capture two tonnes of carbon a year and lock it into sediments for centuries, but we are losing nearly 100 hectares of saltmarsh a year. Coastal realignment could restore much of it, as well as reducing flooding and erosion
 - **Wetlands** - Wetlands can accumulate carbon for centuries, but in some areas of the UK, we have lost over 90% of our wetland habitat. Restored wetlands provide rich habitat, clean water naturally, and reduce flood risk downstream. Healthy wetlands store carbon, support wildlife, and hold back floodwater. Reducing drainage and over-abstraction, the return of beavers and naturalising rivers will also lock up more carbon. Paludiculture programmes like the Great Fen Project will be vital in delivering the aims of the Peat Strategies.
 - **Cooperation** - Delivering environmental outcomes across multiple landholdings e.g., through aligning field margins with neighbours or creating insect highways across the landscape. Delivery of public goods through connecting beyond individual landholdings will need to be supported through a strong financial incentive. This could be a bonus to account for the time and effort required to engage with neighbours and agree on environmental practices to link-up the landscape. Bonuses could be proportional to the area of land included in the application that connects with neighbouring land managers and must be sufficient to encourage larger areas, such as whole fields, to be entered into applications as habitat stepping-stones. To enable land managers to identify areas where they can collaborate with others, an accurate habitat map showing their landholding and neighbouring land holdings with opportunities and suggestions for connectivity must be accessible. Suggestions could be as simple as highlighting where watercourse buffers, field margins, and linear features such as hedges could provide wildlife corridors or suggest locations where buffering local nature reserves and SSSI's or extending existing species-rich grassland habitats and woodland might be most beneficial.

In addition to the above – all should include the maintenance of protected sites and areas of semi-natural habitat, including Local Wildlife Sites. Environmental outcomes should be targeted at a local level through local habitat prioritisation via Area Statements.

Annexe 2 – References

- ¹ FUTURE WALES The National Plan 2040 (September 2020) <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-09/working-draft-national-development-framework-document-september-2020.pdf>
- ² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0921800915003171>
- ³ <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/only-10-million-pounds-investment-needed-year-ensure-we-still-have-harvests-end-century#:~:text=The%20agriculture%20sector%2C%20which%20is,year%20in%20England%20and%20Wales.>
- ⁴ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/bugs/featured-insects/pollinators/>
- ⁵ https://www.mammal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MS_RL20_Wales-1.pdf
- ⁶ https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-04/WWF_Saving_The_Earth_Report_HiRes_DPS_0.pdf
- ⁷ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/ancient-woodland/>
- ⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-guide-for-farmers-to-help-reduce-air-pollution-from-ammonia#:~:text=Our%20Clean%20Air%20Strategy%20highlights,is%20harmful%20to%20human%20health.>
- ⁹ https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/WCL_Farmer_Survey_Report_Jun19FINAL.pdf
- ¹⁰ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/rspb-news/news/stories/poll-shows-people-in-england-support-nature-in-covid-recovery/>
- ¹¹ https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/WCL_Farmer_Survey_Report_Jun19FINAL.pdf
- ¹² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-07/brexit-consultation-document.pdf>
- ¹³ Sands, B; Wall, R. (2016) Dung beetles reduce livestock gastrointestinal parasite availability on pasture' Journal of Applied Ecology doi:10.1111/1365-2664.12821
- ¹⁴ Beynon, S; Wainwright, W; Christie, M; (2015) The application of an ecosystem services framework to estimate the economic value of dung beetles to the U.K. cattle industry ecological entymology. Vol 40, (S1), Pp 124–135
- ¹⁵ <http://devonbatproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Parasites.pdf>
- ¹⁶ Defra Science & Research, April 2020: The Enablers and Barriers to the Delivery of Natural Flood Management Projects. Available at: http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=14748_APPENDIXF-CaseStudies.pdf
- ¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index_en.htm
- ¹⁸ UN Zero Draft Report <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/efb0/1f84/a892b98d2982a829962b6371/wg2020-02-03-en.pdf>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/05/20/eu-plans-protect-30-land-seas-2030-biodiversity/>
- ²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index_en.htm
- ²¹ https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/AP19_09/AP_BIODIVERSITY_EN.pdf
- ²² <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/b14d/6af5/a97c4f2c9d58203f5e2e059c/wg2020-02-04-en.pdf>
- ²³ <http://www.montwt.co.uk/what-we-do/living-landscapes/pumlumon-project>
- ²⁴ <http://www.gwentwildlife.org/what-we-do/projects/water-vole-project>
- ²⁵ <http://www.welshbeaverproject.org/home/>
- ²⁶ <https://www.gwentwildlife.org/nature-reserves/springdale-farm>
- ²⁷ <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/05/20/eu-plans-protect-30-land-seas-2030-biodiversity/>
- ²⁸ The European Commission set out a strategy to overhaul farming and strictly protect carbon-rich forests and wetlands, to benefit wildlife <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/05/20/eu-plans-protect-30-land-seas-2030-biodiversity/>
- ²⁹ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/land-use-policies-for-a-net-zero-uk/>
- ³⁰ Response for Nature. Response for Nature. 2015. Available: https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/responsefornature_england_tcm9-407740.pdf
- ³¹ Policy 8 – Flooding of the National Development Framework (Future Nature) states that - *Flood risk management that enables and supports sustainable strategic growth and regeneration in National and Regional Growth Areas will be supported. The Welsh Government will work with Flood Risk Management Authorities and developers to plan and invest in new and improved infrastructure, **promoting nature-based solutions as a priority**. Opportunities for multiple social, economic and environmental benefits must be maximised when investing in flood risk management infrastructure. It must be ensured that projects do not have adverse impacts on international and national statutory designated sites for nature conservation and the features for which they have been designated."*
- ³² <https://academic.oup.com/circovasres/advance-article/doi/10.1093/cvr/cvaa288/5940460>
- ³³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009L0128>
- ³⁴ <https://internewscast.com/bq-will-stop-selling-weedkiller-roundup-after-cancer-link-discovered-in-the-us/>
- ³⁵ <https://www.pan-uk.org/information-for-local-authorities/>
- ³⁶ See Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Tree Planting Guidance. Available at: <https://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-04/CWT-Right-Tree-Right-Place-WEB.pdf>



The Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN) is a farmer led, independent organisation established in November 2017. We are uniting farmers who are committed to managing their land for wildlife and the delivery of public goods, as well as growing and providing healthy and nutritious food. We are an UK wide movement, with an established NFFN Cymru Steering Group.

The NFFN has over 1,800 farmer members (over 250 from Wales) and we also have over 8,000 public members who support our manifesto.¹

The landscape in Wales is shaped by farming. Yet not all change in recent times has been desirable; soils have been depleted, water courses degraded and nature has struggled to cope with the pace of change. The State of Nature 2019 Report highlights that **1 in 6 wildlife species in Wales is threatened with extinction**.

However, many farms are bucking this trend, and many farmers are playing an incredible role in helping wildlife flourish on their farms - we believe that they should be better supported and rewarded for their good work. If more follow this lead, we can reverse these declines.

Summary

- Nature friendly farming has a big role to play in ensuring a Green Recovery following Covid-19
- Central to this is adopting the *Less is More* principle
- Future agriculture policies in Wales should be targeted at mainstreaming nature friendly farming
- Rewilding is one of many conservation management tools, and should be viewed within a broader land use approach, tailored to local contexts.
- Rewilding can be beneficial for biodiversity in some instances, however in some scenarios it may be detrimental to the cause.
- As such, we must avoid a one size fits all/ blanket approach to rewilding.
- The term *rewilding* is somewhat divisive and needs to be better defined.

Biodiversity and the green recovery

Nature friendly farming has a big role to play in ensuring a Green Recovery following Covid-19. It can help improve public health, rural economies and communities as well as underpin food security and tackle the nature and climate crises. We believe that nature friendly farming is not only better for nature, but is also the most productive, sustainable and economically viable way of getting food from our land.

The NFFN endorses the *Less is More* principle², an approach that is centred on farming *with* nature and the environment. This essentially means implementing sustainable livestock levels based on the natural productive capacity of the land i.e. the amount of grass/ crops that can be naturally produced to feed animals (without having to use lots of bought in feed and artificial fertilisers). This is also known as the Maximum

¹ <https://www.nffn.org.uk/>

² <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Hill%20of%20farm%20profitability%20report%20-%20FINAL%20agreed%2015%20Nov%2019.pdf>

Sustainable Output (MSO). Evidence shows this can help achieve a more profitable, resilient business model for farming alongside a thriving natural environment - all of which are central to Green Recovery.

Whilst intensive farming systems can also be financially profitable, this is short term thinking due to its negative impact on our natural resources - the very building blocks of food production. The NFFN recently published a report, titled **Nature Means Business**,³ which showcases real life examples of farmers implementing the *Less is More* approach, and how this has helped biodiversity, the environment and farming businesses.

Nature Means Business

We farm on a low input organic model which avoids using any imported fertilizers or feeds - quite a sustainable way of farming. When it comes to food security, I believe that producing food with a low input model where you are farming within the natural carrying capacity of the land, which can be maintained for decades if not centuries, is food security. And the beauty of this system is that it's profitable.

There is another benefit. This system has created a farmed landscape which appeals to a variety of wildlife. We have regenerated heather on the mountain, which is now full of bees and other insects and is home to golden plover. The hay meadows are alive with moths and butterflies - so I know that it's actually working.

As a farmer I am producing food, but I'm also producing biodiversity, carbon sinks, clean air and water. These environmental goods should be viewed as a product, like we view beef, lamb or dairy. I believe future farming payments should build on the success of existing schemes but also incorporate some of the public goods that we deliver but we aren't actually paid for.

Tony Davies, Henfron Farm, Elan Valley

This shift towards a more nature friendly approach also delivers broader benefits to the public, including flood protection, water and air quality, and access to thriving natural landscapes. Land well managed for nature also stores carbon and helps mitigate climate change. Simple nature-based solutions such as tree and hedgerow planting, improving soil health and encouraging grassland biodiversity, as well as more complex management like peatland restoration can play a big role in tackling climate change. Our report, **Farming for our future: The nature friendly climate solution we urgently need**⁴ demonstrates how nature friendly farming can help tackle the climate emergency.

For more information about Nature Friendly Farming and a Green Recovery, please see **NFFN Cymru's Manifesto**⁵ that outlines our 6 key asks.

- 1. Maintain and redirect payments towards mainstreaming nature friendly farming**
- 2. Commit to zero carbon agriculture by 2040**
- 3. Maintain strong environmental and animal welfare standards**
- 4. Build markets for nature friendly farming products**
- 5. Invest in local food systems**
- 6. Educate on food, farming and nature**

With over 80% of Wales farmed, nature friendly has a huge play to role in achieving a Green Recovery (of which biodiversity restoration is key). Committing to these 6 asks can help set us on this path.

³ <https://www.nffn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20012-NFFN-Report-Nature-means-business-DIGITAL-1.pdf>

⁴ https://www.nffn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/NFFN_report_v7.1.pdf

⁵ <https://www.nffn.org.uk/nffn-cymru-a-green-recovery-how-farming-can-be-the-solution/>

Biodiversity and rewilding (in the context of the future of land management policy proposals)

Rewilding is a somewhat divisive term. We believe this is because it is a poorly defined concept that means different things to different people. As such, we don't think the term should be included as a component of a future *Sustainable Farming Scheme*. In our response to the Sustainable Farming and our Land consultation, we welcomed plans to align future agricultural support with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. These pieces of legislation, particularly the objective of **sustainable management of natural resources**, should guide our approach to farmland nature conservation.

NFFN are open to considering evidence for *rewilding* within a broader land use approach, where nature friendly farms form part of a mosaic of habitats in the landscape. Habitat restoration is a core aspect of nature friendly farming, and farmers play a vital role in ensuring natural habitats and carbon stores are returned to good condition. In some areas, *rewilding* can deliver a host of benefits, such as carbon capture, flood prevention, water quality and soil health improvement, and biodiversity enhancement. For example;

- Fencing off areas of unproductive land and allowing it to regenerate naturally
- Peatland restoration
- Reducing stocking density/ agricultural management to allow regeneration of heather moorland or restoration of hay meadows.
- Encouraging agroforestry farming practices i.e. livestock/ crops and trees. Habitats such as ffridd and pasture woodland are special habitats in the uplands of Wales; these have their own unique biodiversity and can assist in connecting habitats together. They also offer shelter and shade to livestock once established.

On the other hand, *rewilding* or the reduction/ cessation of agricultural management can have a negative impact on biodiversity. For example;

- Vegetation becoming too rank, which stifles other flowering plants. *Molinia Caerula* grassland is a good example of this, because if it is not kept in check, it will dominate and discourage the growth of other plants.
- Furthermore, ground nesting birds such as the golden plover nest on shorter swards, therefore a reduction/ cessation in grazing could threaten their nesting grounds.
- Afforestation near areas utilised by ground nesting birds (such as curlew) can have a negative effect, as they prefer more open habitats.

Afforestation

Rewilding is often synonymous with afforestation. It is without doubt that Wales (and the UK) must significantly increase its tree cover in order to tackle the nature and climate crises. Tree planting can be an effective nature and climate friendly on-farm solution, but needs to be done well to ensure positive benefits. Ensuring the increase in tree cover meets both climate and nature aspirations, as well as working in harmony with farmers and food production, will require a radically different approach than has been taken in the past with inappropriate blanket afforestation. It's vitally important that we plant the **right tree in the right place**, so as to avoid the negative impacts of inappropriate tree planting.

NFFN encourages farmers to create woodier landscapes, alongside and within farmland, with native trees that do not damage other habitats or soils. Woodland grants for farmers should support both the management of existing woodland resources and new tree planting in appropriate locations which can even benefit farm businesses.

Trees can also help reconnect our landscapes. Working together on a landscape-scale farmers can help deliver a corridor for wildlife across Wales via hedgerows, woodland and ffridd.

Silvopasture, silvoarable and agroforestry systems are also positive options which can diversify and spread risk by providing an alternative tree crop in the form of fruit, nuts or timber, and provide shade, shelter and fodder for livestock. Such systems can deliver environmental goods: preventing soil erosion, improving water management and providing habitat for pollinators and beneficial insects. Such systems should be rewarded by future farming schemes and farmers should be supported to implement these. The current Basic Payment Scheme discourages farmers from planting trees (due to a reduction in subsidies) and future policy should rectify this.

Specific reintroductions of species, such as beavers, have the potential to benefit nature friendly farming and the wider landscape by delivering public goods such as natural flood management, but should be context appropriate and considerate of local impact on a case-by-case basis. It is not within the scope of NFFN's current work to comment on more significant reintroductions, such as wolves, but we are open to discussions and evidence on these scenarios and individual nature friendly farmers may have their own independent views to contribute.

Rewilding is one of many conservation management tools, and should be viewed within a broader land use approach, tailored to local contexts. We must avoid a one size fits all/ blanket approach to rewilding. It's got to be locally appropriate, so involving and working with those who know the area is incredibly important.

A future agricultural policy should be centred on a public money for public goods, of which biodiversity is a key component. It should **reward nature friendly farming** and the multiple environmental benefits it provides. Some of our other key asks relating to a future agri policy are listed below;

- There needs to be **sufficient long-term funding** to support farmers in their transition to nature friendly systems and continue to reward public goods production.
- Appropriate **advice and guidance** are essential in order to help farmers during this transition period and beyond.
- Future schemes should be made **accessible to more farmers** with no limits on uptake based on the size of the land holding. All farmers have the potential to provide environmental goods and services and this can be encouraged without prejudice to any one sector.
- We'd also welcome **financial support to invest** in infrastructure, machinery, equipment and technology to help make **food production more sustainable**.

Every farm in Wales can deliver for biodiversity; be it upland or lowland, livestock or mixed, arable or dairy, organic or conventional. Establishing wildflower field margins, planting and appropriately managing hedgerows, tree planting, restoring hay meadows, retaining winter stubbles, planting multi-species leys and bird cover crops are examples of measures that can be adopted on any farm in Wales. As such, we advocate a land sharing approach, where food is produced in harmony with nature. Of course, there is room for *wilder* areas within that farmed landscape - however we need to avoid an extreme land sparing scenario, which promotes the segregation of agricultural land and protected areas for biodiversity or nature conservation.

Conclusion

Thriving biodiversity and a healthy environment is central to a Green Recovery. Nature friendly farming has a big role to play in securing this. The NFFN would welcome the opportunity to work closely on drafting policies and developing initiatives to help mainstream nature friendly farming in Wales. For further information, please contact info@nffn.org.uk



Biodiversity and Re-wilding.

Biodiversity and Green Recovery

- 1.1. The Woodland Trust very much agrees that there can be no “return to normal” and a post pandemic green recovery is needed to create a new normal. Biodiversity and the natural world must be an integral part of this. The pandemic has demonstrated the dependence of individual well-being of access to quality green space. Quality green space is habitat that supports biodiversity, and is needed everywhere, and especially where people live.
- 1.2. The pandemic is one reflection of the disruption that is likely to continue to be driven by the climate and biodiversity crises. This will impact investments, policies, employment priorities and regulations. Decisions in all areas must set us firmly on the path to net-zero and restoration of the natural environment.
- 1.3. Biodiversity quality is an essential measure of the health of the environment that sustains this and the quality of the green spaces that provide our well-being.
- 1.4. Funding and investment allocations must show that nature is recognized a necessity, not a luxury. Funding for nature, for example, in the creation of green jobs, and in the application of nature based solutions to climate change, should be apparent across all Government departments. New legislation and policy should demonstrate this.
- 1.5. Any infrastructure projects aimed at boosting the economy need to work alongside nature, such as ancient woodland, not against it. Investment needs to help us reduce our impact on nature and climate, not threaten it further.
- 1.6. Native trees and woods are tools to aid this recovery. The comprehensive and substantial benefits they provide for all mean that must invest and employ to

protect and restore existing woods and mature tree cover and significantly increase tree cover in Wales.

- 1.7. Our previous submission to the Committee in June on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the environmental sector in Wales contains further details on what we think should be the priorities going forward.

Biodiversity and Rewilding

- 1.8. The Woodland Trust has a [Position Statement on Rewilding](#). Paragraphs 1.9 to 1.14 below quote directly from this statement:-
- 1.9. We believe that ‘rewilding’ is about the restoration of natural processes, working with nature to enhance the natural environment and the species it supports, but also to provide the goods and services we need as a society.
- 1.10. We support the view that re-establishing natural processes can be an important and powerful way to manage land alongside conventional or traditional forms of land management for food production and maintaining valued landscapes.
- 1.11. Whilst wild areas may be separate from farmed landscapes, there are also opportunities for integrating more wild space within farming systems in ways which support both wildlife and production.
- 1.12. Creating a sense of wildness is possible in most places. However, the degree to which natural processes are able to dominate will be affected by both scale and location. Large remote areas are more likely to have a greater degree of self-determination than small sites in urban area
- 1.13. We believe habitats should be extended, enriched and linked in a way that allows both habitats and species to operate and interact over sufficiently large areas to support dynamic natural processes. In many cases re-establishing natural processes will require intervention. This might include the creation of habitat such as woodland, or on occasions the reintroduction of species that have been lost.
- 1.14. Reintroduction of larger animals, including large herbivores and carnivores, is sometimes identified as important to re-establishing natural processes. This should only be undertaken where sufficient suitable habitat exists to ensure the wellbeing of viable populations of the reintroduced species. Any species reintroduction needs to take full consideration of the legitimate concerns of stakeholders and, in particular, local communities whose livelihoods and wellbeing might be affected.

Interpretation in the Welsh context

- 1.15. We don’t like using the term rewilding because of the baggage around unhelpful notions of naturalness and exclusion of people. These are wholly inappropriate

Welsh landscapes which have been created by centuries of extensive and sustained farming, forestry and industrial interventions. Engagement with those who own, manage and live in this landscape is essential.

- 1.16. Our preference is for the language of natural process approaches and nature based solutions, as used in Welsh Government policy documents including Natural Resource Policy and Future Wales 2040.
- 1.17. The application of these approaches needs to be a targeted and managed process, within Welsh landscapes which are the product of centuries of intensive modification. Our landscapes are created and maintained by managed interventions. This is the approach that we support. We hope that Area Statements will provide a framework for prioritisation and targeting.
- 1.18. Definitions and examples of nature based approaches are provided in a [guide produced by CIEEM](#). These approaches are based on working with, rather than against, the natural processes that affect the landscape. Examples include the restoration of natural river channels and floodplains, the restoration of the natural water table on peat lands, and the use of natural regeneration in forestry and for the creation of new woodland.
- 1.19. Where such processes are specifically intended primarily for biodiversity outcomes we suggest they are appropriate for extensive areas of land **already in conservation ownership**. We do not envisage rewilding as an approach applied to farm land.
- 1.20. On such nature reserve land it offers an alternative to highly intensive interventions aimed at closely controlling habitat composition and species populations. It means not being so deterministic on the outcomes.
- 1.21. In the Welsh uplands such approaches might particularly apply to afforested peatland or other failed forestry, or open land under conservation designations, where a targeted natural process based approach to native woodland expansion, would lead to woodland colonisation through assisted natural regeneration. Some management intervention is likely to be needed in the form of tree planting targeted to supplement natural regeneration in tree denuded landscapes, and/ or light grazing to control ground vegetation and engineer habitat diversity.
- 1.22. Managed grazing is an essential vegetation and habitat management tool. This is necessary in some woodland settings, and can be essential for natural regeneration, helping create ground conditions suitable for tree seed survival and helping to contain fire risk – an increasing threat on large areas of unenclosed land.
- 1.23. For woodland there is a place for non-intervention to allow natural processes to run their course as well as a case for more management of some woods. More woodland management too often means more uniformity. It comes down to

“..choosing where it is possible not to intervene but let the outcome be shaped by the prevailing environmental conditions” (Dr Keith Kirby).

- 1.24. In relation specifically to the current interest in beaver re-introduction, the reference in our position paper applies: species introduction “.. *should only be undertaken where sufficient suitable habitat exists to ensure the wellbeing of viable populations of the reintroduced species.*” We need to ensure high levels of tree cover first.
- 1.25. Key to all landscape management is stakeholder engagement, with the owner of the land being the most essential stakeholder. In Wales, where there are few large estates, landscape is the product of the actions of many landowners. Imposing or incentivising top down solutions without the consent of landowners happened in the in the drive for afforestation and destroyed support for forestry for a generation.

Summit to Sea Project

- 1.26. Coed Cadw has sought to be a supportive partner in the Summit to Sea project, particularly seeking innovation in land management for conservation purposes, including on the one site we own ourselves. The need for innovation is even more apparent now than it was 3 years ago.
- 1.27. Over the wider landscape we hope the project can develop ways of supporting multiple land uses side by side, enhancing farming, green tourism, nature conservation and wood based economies in complimentary ways.
- 1.28. We particularly suggest [additional support for agroforestry](#) as a contribution to this approach, because we believe this helps support farming whilst offering a wide range of complementary benefits. This remains a focus for our own work
- 1.29. We believe stakeholder engagement and community participation is key. Ideally this would commence at early project development stage, but early stage investment is often limited by the lack of development funding. Most funders require substantially developed plans to be put forward before bidders have any resource for boots on the ground to engage substantially with communities and stakeholders.

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Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a
Materion Gwledig
Bioamrywiaeth ac Ailwylltio
CCERA(5) BR 02
Ymateb gan O'r Mynydd i'r Môr

Welsh Parliament
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs
Committee
Biodiversity and Rewilding
CCERA(5) BR 02
Evidence from Summit to Sea

Summary of the Summit to Sea projects response:

- The Summit to Sea project is currently in a co-design phase, involving all those with an interest in designing a locally appropriate set of interventions, building on current good practice and developing a collaborative, strategic and integrated approach to nature recovery, ecological integrity and resilience.
- A number of emergent themes from this process are beginning to form
- The Summit to Sea project is starting to develop a much more sophisticated, nuanced rhetoric built through a co-production approach with stakeholders. This conversation is still developing with the community and stakeholders, therefore it is not possible for Summit to Sea itself to give a position.
- The aim is that the response developing in the area will provide a framing of terminology far more appropriate to a human ecological system where production, livelihoods, heritage and culture are all so closely sown together. In short, a framing where humans are clearly seen as part of the ecological system, and in part their actions have helped create diversity and ecological resilience, but also where negative ecological behaviours and actions along with the reasons for them happening, are more clearly recognised.
- Summit to Sea is particularly interested in the economic aspect of changes in natural resource use and what a nature-based economy could look like. The intention is that this will help develop further dialogue in the area with nature-based business, entrepreneurs, purchasers, organisations and others. This is already developing a much wider discussion around nature-based economies than the usual focuses on food, farming, forestry and tourism (though these are obviously clearly a very important part).
- Summit to Sea awaits the outcome of the consultation into future land management to ensure the project can both feed into and be supported by future policy.

About the project

Project Name: O'r Mynydd i'r Môr – Summit to Sea (to be confirmed during co-design process)

Project Hosts: RSPB Cymru

Current project partners: RSPB Cymru, Coed Cadw/Woodland Trust, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, Whale & Dolphin Conservation, MCS, Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau SAC

Funders: Endangered Landscapes Programme (£158,000 for two years, June 2020 – June 2022)

Project Funding Objectives:

1. Local communities and wider public have had meaningful input into the vision and objectives, informing, shaping, and learning about the potential for nature-based activities which align with local culture and values.
2. Habitats are mapped and a strategy is developed to increase connectivity between wildlife rich ecosystems and ecologically positive interventions. Supporting new and existing links between terrestrial and marine towards continued ecological enhancement through engagement of relevant owners/stewards and resource users.
3. Nature-based enterprises are identified, along with opportunities to network and further develop nature based supply chains.
4. The local partnership to deliver the full project is identified / established including agreement on effective governance mechanisms for collaborative decision-making, collective visioning and benefit/revenue sharing.
5. Potential project interventions are locally driven and in support of national policy. Interventions engage public sector bodies where appropriate.
6. A cross sectoral monitoring and evaluation plan developed for the project, with experts from NGOs, government and academic institutions.
7. A funding proposal, if appropriate, for the full project is prepared, along with supporting documentation, and submitted to the ELP.

Project Overview

The Summit to Sea overarching aim is to work towards how the project can co-design with local stakeholders, landowners and sea users a nature-rich area from the top of Pumlumon, down through wooded valleys to the Dyfi Estuary and out into Cardigan Bay. This will build on linking existing habitats by enhancing and restoring these, whilst delivering a co-managed marine area to improve the management for marine habitat restoration and link this, through coastal and transitional habitats, to the land area.

This phase will develop a plan through a co-design process, aiming to expand the restoration of natural and naturalised processes across this area through peat bog, river, marine and woodland restoration. Natural patterns and distributions of species will be encouraged as the habitat changes and native species will expand their range. The project aims to deliver significant ecosystem services across the catchment. Flood risk to downstream communities will be reduced through interventions developed with local

stakeholders and likely to include peat bog restoration and native woodland, riparian copses and scrub creation. Carbon sequestration and water quality will improve significantly, and recreational users (local and visitor alike) will benefit in terms of health and wellbeing.

Brief summary of the Summit to Sea project to date

Having launched officially in August 2018, after a period of early development, the project was led by Rewilding Britain from 2018 until they departed the project in October 2019 following feedback from the community. From October 2019 until June 2020 the project went through a re-setting which resulted in a new planning phase, which started in June 2020. At this point RSPB Cymru became the hosts of the project.

This new development phase of the project is being funded by a new grant from the Endangered Landscapes Programme. The application for this phase was written with consultation from former project partners, Ecodyfi, Coetir Anian and a number of other local stakeholders including the COPA group.

Current Project Team

With RSPB Cymru as project hosts the Summit to Sea team now consists of a full time Project Development Officer, supported by RSPB Cymru staff. The project also works with a number of contractors, including a communications consultant from the project area, strategic advice and guidance from Steve Evison from Nearly Wild based outside Welshpool, Gwenno Edwards who specialises in co-design processes and online facilitation and translators.

The Process – Co-design

This is the process currently being undertaken in the planning phase, involving all those with an interest in designing a locally appropriate set of interventions, building on current good practice and developing a collaborative, strategic and integrated approach to nature recovery, ecological integrity and resilience. This method is being used to ensure we have a wide range of people able to contribute creatively to the designing of solutions which they help form and deliver. We aren't using this term to describe engagement, we're actually using this in the true sense of the word, going beyond consultation, using co-design to build and strengthen equal networks between people who are effected by and who are trying to create solutions. One of the main principles of co-design is that people are experts in their own experience, and therefore are central to the design process.

Progress to date

- The project held online talks in September (one in Welsh, one in English) now available on the project's website (www.summit2sea.wales/about) to ensure stakeholders informed of the progress and process
- A questionnaire on natural resource use in mid Wales has already completed by over 100 people, 75% of whom are based in the area.
- First project workshop focusing on vision asking the question: **How Can This Land And Seascape Do More For Us And Nature In The Future**. This workshop was supported by 15 volunteer facilitators, many of whom were from the area. Over 50

took part in this event and the emerging themes are outlined below. This workshop was held in Welsh with simultaneous translation. It also built on the example of previous local People's Assemblies, (e.g. Land and food production co-hosted by Extinction Rebellion, Ben Lake MP, and Elin Jones MS in June, which the Project Development Officer was involved with as one of the breakout room facilitators).

- Emergent themes (from workshop, questionnaire and 1:1 meetings:
 - Connecting people to nature
 - Developing the nature-based economy: e.g. offering more support and opportunities for nature based business creation and development, economic opportunities around food production, improving local supply chains, introduce aquaculture
 - Improving accessibility and inclusion
 - Biodiversity enhancement: e.g. mixed woodland expansion, connectivity across land holdings
 - Supporting nature friendly farming and fishing
 - Reducing pollution
 - Exploring the impact of the land on marine environments

Next Steps...

To build on the workshop held on 30th September, through further workshops with key stakeholders, including discussing with the COPA membership a specific workshop to explore ideas. Working with other local organisations to reach out to a wider range of the local community.

Once a clear vision and criteria for delivery of this vision are in place, the process will then begin exploring specific 'interventions' with stakeholders which can be developed to form a large strategic landscape scale approach to tackling biodiversity loss.

Independent Evaluation

An independent evaluation of the earlier stages of the project (up to June 2020), looking at governance, management and partnership working has been undertaken and will be published in late November. This review will be publicly available through the projects website. It is hoped that by making this report public the lessons this project has learnt, can be shared with other organisations and projects, for the wider benefit of the se

Response to Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Wilding is a very broad term which has gained public interest, engaging those in urban areas. However, the complexities and nuances are often lost. The Summit to Sea project started using the 'wilding' language, but this is now being reframed and has now started to develop a much more sophisticated, nuanced rhetoric built through a co-production approach with stakeholders. This conversation is still developing with the community and stakeholders, therefore it is not possible for Summit to Sea itself to give a position. In fact, the aim is that the response developing in the area will provide a framing of terminology far more appropriate to a human ecological system where production, livelihoods, heritage and culture are all so closely sown together. In short, a framing where humans are clearly seen as part of the ecological system, and in part their actions have helped create diversity and ecological resilience, but also where negative ecological behaviours and actions along with the reasons for them happening, are more clearly recognised.

This project is particularly interested in the economic aspect of changes in natural resource use and what a nature-based economy could look like. There is a lot of talk about green economics and nature-based business, however, **practical** understanding of who those businesses are, how they are defined and how that element of the economy can practically be strengthened is weak.

There are a lot of strategic studies but very little which works and can be easily applied and understood at the business level. We have started conversations with many organisations who work with different parts of this grouping of business (it is much broader than a sector) and important local initiatives such as the Cambrian Mountains Initiative. We have also been working closely with Nearly Wild who have been developing very a practical categorisation approach to nature based business and business relationships with nature, as well as a lot of work with individual businesses (mainly in Powys to date supported by Arwain funding), to better understand practical opportunities which build on what exists. The intention is that this will help develop further dialogue in the area with nature-based business, entrepreneurs, purchasers, organisations and others. This is already developing a much wider discussion around nature-based economies than the usual focuses on food, farming, forestry and tourism (though these are obviously clearly a very important part).

Summit to Sea awaits the outcome of the consultation into future land management to ensure the project can both feed into and be supported by future policy. Innovation and new ways of working emerging from the co-design process, will be key to this.

Rewilding is a term that is emotive but means something to many people (even if it is something different to each of them), and has captured public interest. A discussion needs to take place about the meaning of rewilding and its nuances, building in social culture, the relationship of past, present and future, and properly involving local communities. This forms part of the conversation the Summit to Sea project is currently holding as part of the co-design process.

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Evidence from RSPB Cymru



RSPB Cymru is part of RSPB, the UK's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with our partners, we protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. We play a leading role in BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.

RSPB Cymru has played a key role in supporting the development of the Summit to Sea Project, and is now hosting this project for the current phase of its development.

Summary

- The recovery of nature and the restoration of the resources and services that nature provides, including nature-based solutions, must be central to Wales' Green Recovery.
- In the absence of a domestic framework of nature recovery targets, Wales is failing to deliver against international biodiversity commitments. The outlook – in Wales and globally – is stark. Securing the transformational change we need to restore nature requires a framework of legally binding targets and accountability, building on our existing Welsh laws.
- Future land management policy must focus on the sustainable management of natural resources, to restore healthy ecosystems and biodiversity and secure climate change mitigation and adaptation through nature-based solutions.
- RSPB Cymru is currently hosting the Summit to Sea project. At present this project is in a co-design phase, working alongside communities and a range of stakeholders to explore a vision for a land- and sea- scape where nature and people thrive.

Biodiversity and the green recovery, including current progress against biodiversity targets

Green Recovery

In 2019, the [IPBES Report](#) found that around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, and called for a “fundamental, system-wide

reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values". Over the last year, the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of our current economic systems and had provoked a re-thinking of 'business as usual' to rebuild a system more resilient to the expected shocks of the climate and biodiversity crisis.

In Wales, the pandemic has shown the Welsh Government's willingness to fundamentally rethink existing economic systems under a 'Green Recovery', and ahead of elections next year there has been a collective call for continued commitments to a green – and just – recovery¹. There is clear evidence that a Green Recovery can deliver economic recovery while setting the framework for a fairer and healthier society.²

A healthy natural environment is a critical foundation for long-term societal and economic benefits. Ecosystems can and do provide essential 'services', such as holding flood water, storing carbon, supplying clean air and water. The connection between access to nature and public health has long been recognised. An investment in our natural environment, supported by employment opportunities in large scale nature restoration, provides a unique opportunity to respond to the economic impacts of the current public health crisis and help Wales transition to a new, sustainable, economy.

Crucially, Wales' Green Recovery must drive meaningful actions to prepare for and respond to the climate and nature emergency, and build back the carbon-zero, nature-rich, resilient Wales that was envisaged under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Nature-based Solutions

Nature-based solutions are a priority of the Natural Resources Policy (NRP) to address the climate crisis and the catastrophic loss of biodiversity. Nature-based solutions have a crucial role both in the mitigation of climate change (i.e. taking Carbon out of the atmosphere) and in helping people and nature adapt to change (e.g. through improved retention of water in landscapes). An investment in nature-based solutions as part of a Green Recovery therefore remains crucial in securing our social, environmental, and economic well-being. Examples include:

Peatland restoration: This includes blocking and reprofiling drainage ditches, felling and removing inappropriately located forestry (also provides an income from removed timber. Post restoration sustainable grazing of peatlands can provide income through food production of high quality naturally fed meat. There is also potential to explore other methods of sustainable production from peatlands that could provide income without damaging the underlying habitat.

Woodlands: Bringing the large area of unmanaged woodland in Wales back into active sustainable management can, as well as providing income from harvested wood products, make habitats better connected and more resilient to climate change impacts. There is also the potential for sustainable grazing of woodlands to provide additional income; establishing what sustainable grazing of woodlands looks like is something RSPB Cymru is working on at the moment through the Celtic Rainforests LIFE Project. Led by Snowdonia National Park Authority the project is focussed on restoration of some of our most important woodlands, but is also looking at the potential to establish 'payment for ecosystem services' (PES)

¹ See RSPB Green Recovery Manifesto:

<https://community.rspb.org.uk/getinvolved/wales/b/wales-blog/posts/the-future-is-green>

² Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change? Hepburn C et al, 4th May 2020. Oxford Uni

opportunities and how sustainable grazing could be part of the management toolkit for woodland sites.

Focusing woodland expansion, through the National Forest Programme and grant funded woodland expansion through Glastir Woodland Creation schemes, on buffering and connecting existing woodlands can both improve the resilience of woodland habitats through greater connectivity and protect them from the impact of external factors such as airborne pollution and encroachment of INNS. Ensuring these woodlands are well designed and managed to provide the maximum range of possible benefits/services including biodiversity benefits, carbon capture and storage, flood alleviation where appropriate and access and recreation opportunities is critical. This must be done in a way that avoids placing further pressure on already struggling nature. If well designed and managed sustainably these woodlands can also provide an income through harvested wood products, payments for carbon capture and storage such as the Woodland Carbon Code and potentially through post Brexit land management support where the focus is on delivery of public goods.

As with peatlands and woodlands there is the potential for restoration of other habitats including coastal saltmarsh, heathland, meadows and wetlands to support climate mitigation and adaptation, help biodiversity recover and also provide income. Whether through contract work for restoration and the ongoing management of the habitats through sustainable livestock grazing, future support through public goods delivery and the potential for the increased access and recreation opportunities to attract additional income to the local economy.

Biodiversity targets

We have welcomed the Welsh Government's support of the Edinburgh Declaration³, under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The Declaration emphasises the critical role of sub-national governments under the CBD and calls for transformative change to turn around biodiversity decline.

The [Global Biodiversity Outlook Report](#)⁴ published last month concluded that the UK – and the rest of the world - has failed to take sufficient action to reverse nature's decline. The [UK's Sixth National Report](#)⁵ to the CBD (prepared by JNCC on behalf of the four administrations) showed the UK will miss 14 out of the 20 Aichi Targets. The RSPB's [Lost Decade Report](#)⁶ found an even worse picture. The [State of Nature 2019](#)⁷ Report highlights that 1 in 6 species in Wales are threatened with extinction, and the 2016 State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) concluded that none of our ecosystems are resilient.

Decades of international targets under the CBD have not been able to drive the action needed to stop the loss of biodiversity in Wales. The international framework of the UNIPCC has led to decarbonisation targets being set, and reviewed, in domestic law. The international recognition of the nature crisis and calls for transformative change must similarly be met with improvements in domestic ambition and accountability – i.e. **legally binding nature recovery targets.**

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/edinburgh-declaration-on-post-2020-biodiversity-framework/>

⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo5/publication/gbo-5-spm-en.pdf>

⁵ <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/527ff89f-5f6b-4e06-bde6-b823e0ddcb9a/UK-CBD-6NR-v2-web.pdf>

⁶ http://ww2.rspb.org.uk/Images/A%20LOST%20DECADE%20FOR%20NATURE_tcm9-481563.pdf

⁷ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/state-of-nature-report/#:~:text=The%202019%20State%20of%20Nature,Arctic%20skuas%20and%20Scottish%20wildcats.>

The Environment (Wales) Act requires an integrated approach to managing natural resources in order to improve the resilience of our ecosystems and the benefits they provide us. The framework for the sustainable management of natural resources set out in the Act involves an iterative approach – evidence (the State of Natural Resources Report/ SoNaRR) informs policy (the Natural Resources Policy) which should drive delivery (including via Area Statements). However, the framework does not set out what success looks like – what progress must be made, in the longer term and in a five year cycle, to assess whether we are on track to turn around nature’s decline before it is too late?

As we have for decarbonisation, we need both long-term targets and five-yearly milestones against which the Welsh Government can be held to account for nature’s recovery. If a milestone is not met, Government will need to analyse and explain why, and effect the necessary policy and regulatory changes to address this.

Natural resources (including biodiversity) and the aspects of resilience of ecosystems set out in the Environment (Wales) Act provide a framing to identify the appropriate targets.

The UK Government’s Environment Bill, currently on its passage through Westminster, places duties on the Secretary of State to set targets for England, including biodiversity targets, in secondary legislation. We want to see a similar approach in Wales – a time-bound duty on the Welsh Minister to set targets via secondary legislation to enhance the framework that already exists under the Environment (Wales) Act. The opportunity of promised legislation on post-Brexit environmental principles and governance should be used to bring forward a target setting framework, securing greater Welsh Government accountability for turning around biodiversity decline in line with international commitments.

Nature targets will be key to monitoring whether a green recovery is being successfully delivered, and public investment is securing the right results. For example, the CCERA Committee has recognised the importance of specific targets for biodiversity restoration in relation to monitoring the effectiveness and value for money of the future Sustainable Farming Scheme⁸ in its 2019 report on the role of the scheme in restoring biodiversity. Targets set in law will provide stability across successive governments, giving clear context for public delivery and innovation by business.

Biodiversity and rewilding in the context of the future of land management policy proposals

‘Rewilding’ is a term that is diversely described and understood, and has proved divisive in Wales. Our understanding is that the objective of rewilding is to restore nature and natural processes. This is an objective we support, and which we consider can be achieved through a range of approaches e.g. restoring peatlands, connecting and buffering woodlands, targeted conservation actions and high nature value farming aimed at restoring and maintaining habitats.

Being a potentially confusing term, rewilding should not in itself be an objective for Wales’ future land use policy. Instead, future policy should be firmly grounded in Wales existing legislative framework, as established in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, and focus on securing the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) – the objective of which is to maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide. It should be an effective means of delivering the priorities of Welsh Government’s Natural

⁸ <https://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld12831/cr-ld12831%20-e.pdf>

Resources Policy (NRP) to restore nature and tackle climate change, in particular through nature-based solutions.

Future land management policy should also promote sustainable production by (a) driving supply chain efficiencies and (b) by restoring the nature and natural resources essential to maintain production (including of food) for this and future generations.

Farm businesses should be encouraged to work *with* nature and operate within the natural carrying capacity of the land. The [Less is More Report](#) shows that many farms can be more profitable by reducing stock, which can also lead to environmental benefits, from boosting soil health and the ability of land to hold back floodwaters, to locking in carbon and increasing biodiversity. Since the advent of the CAP sheep numbers in Wales increased from 5 to 12 million before dropping to 9.6 million today. Despite sheep numbers being at historically high levels hill farming in Wales is largely unprofitable with many farm businesses running at a loss when subsidies are not taken into account. Applying the Less is More approach to upland farming in Wales has the potential to deliver benefits to nature and farming.⁹

To ensure future farming and land management policy delivers maximum benefit to the public it should be based on the principle of public money for public goods, principally environmental public goods. As such all future payments for land management should be based on the value the public derives from it.

Ongoing biodiversity loss and the continued fall in the number of Welsh farms¹⁰ indicate a failure of existing land management policy (i.e. the CAP) to protect nature and the communities depending on it. Leaving the EU presents a unique opportunity to develop integrated policies and practises that help restore and maintain farming (and land management), rural communities and nature, and delivers value for public money.

Summit to Sea

Our work as partners in, and now hosts of, the Summit to Sea project in mid Wales offer RSPB Cymru the opportunity to explore the potential of sustainable farming and broader land management practises which create a future in which a resilient ecosystem and local economy can help both nature and communities recover and thrive. At present this project is in a co-design phase, working alongside communities and a range of stakeholders to explore a vision for a land- and sea- scape where nature and people thrive. This process will last until at least June 2022, and is about holding an open conversation with those whose futures depend on the resilience of the ecosystems and economy to thrive. By co-designing solutions to challenges together this project hopes to create an inspiring vision embedded in the locality and culture. The RSPB's involvement in this project is to ensure this co-design phase succeeds, and we're looking forward to the vision, emerging themes and potential interventions that develop from this process.

⁹ RSPB Report; [Farming, the environment and the Welsh Uplands](#)

¹⁰ e.g. the total number of active farm holdings in Wales has reduced by 830 since 2013 (*Ref Agriculture in Wales, 2019, Welsh Government*)

Agenda Item 4

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a
Materion Gwledig
Ymateb Llywodraeth Cymru i lifogydd
CCERA(5) BR 01
Ymateb gan Pwyllgor COPA

Welsh Parliament
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs
Committee
Biodiversity and Rewilding
CCERA(5) BR 01
Evidence from COPA Committee

Cyflwyniad

Ffurfiwyd pwyllgor COPA o bleidlais yng nghyfarfod Talybont, Ceredigion ar 31ain Gorffennaf 2019. Pwrpas y cyfarfod oedd i'r gymuned leisio barn am y tro cyntaf ar brosiect 'Llong Fanner' Rewilding Britain, a dderbyniodd £3.4 miliwn gan yr Endangered Landscapes Program (menter a ariennir yn gyfan-gwbl gan yr Arcadia Fund [<https://www.arcadiafund.org.uk/our-team>]) yn 2018. Mynychodd dros 150 o bobl lleol y cyfarfod, a datganwyd yn unfrydol nad oedd yna unrhyw ffydd yn Rewilding Britain na'u prosiect. Ffurfiwyd COPA i geisio eglurder ar ran y gymuned ac i sicrhau na fyddai llais y gymuned yn cael ei anwybyddu a'i hepgor yn yr un modd mewn trafodaethau tirwedd yn y dyfodol. Yn yr un cyfarfod, pleidleisiwyd yn unfrydol y dylai Rewilding Britain adael y prosiect yn syth, a mynegwyd syndod a siom bod y prosiect wedi cyrraedd y pwynt hwn, a derbyn cyllideb, heb unrhyw ymwneud ystyrlon gyda'r gymuned oedd yn ganolog i'r ardal amlinellwyd ganddynt.

O ganlyniad i anniddigrwydd cyhoeddus y gymuned a phartneriaid eraill prosiect Summit to Sea, bu Rewilding Britain adael y prosiect rhwng Tachwedd 2019 a Mehefin 2020, a deallwn nad ydyw rhagor yn brosiect 'ailwylltio'. Hoffem nodi bod y prosiect ar ei newydd wedd, dan arweiniad RSPB Cymru, yn sylweddol fwy tryloyw na phan oedd Rewilding Britain wrth y llyw (rhyddhawyd manylion y cais prosiect gwreiddiol dim ond wedi iddynt adael, er bod gofyn amdano wedi bodoli ers 18 mis), a bod y berthynas newydd gyda'r gymuned leol yn dechrau trwsio'r niwed a'r rhwygau a ddaeth o'r prosiect cynnar – nid yw hyn yn gyfystyr â chefnogaeth diamau, ond mae'n sefyllfa'n sylweddol well na 2019.

Mae canolbarth Cymru wedi bod yn ffocws 'ailwylltio' ers amser, gyda'r chwyddwydr yn cael ei osod yn gadarn arnom yn llyfr 'Feral' George Monbiot. O ganlyniad i hyn, natur prynu a llogi safle fferm Llechwedd Einion gan Coed Cadw i'r Wales Wild Land Foundation, ac ymddangosiad Rewilding Britain a'u prosiect, mae aelodau'r gymuned wedi bod yn ystyried oblygiadau ailwylltio ar ein tirwedd dros nifer o flynyddoedd. Mae llawer yn astudio'r testun, yn mynychu a chyflwyno mewn cynadleddau ar 'ailwylltio' ac yn ymweld â safleoedd prosiectau 'ailwylltio' dros y DG. Mae'r pwyntiau bwled a ganlyn yn grynhoed o farn COPA ar ailwylltio yn gyffredinol. Bydd yr ail adran yn canolbwyntio yn fwy manwl ar Summit to Sea a'r gwersi a ddysgwyd yn ei sgil, yn enwedig y cyfnod pan fu Rewilding Britain yn creu ac arwain y prosiect:

Prif Bwyntiau ar 'ailwylltio'

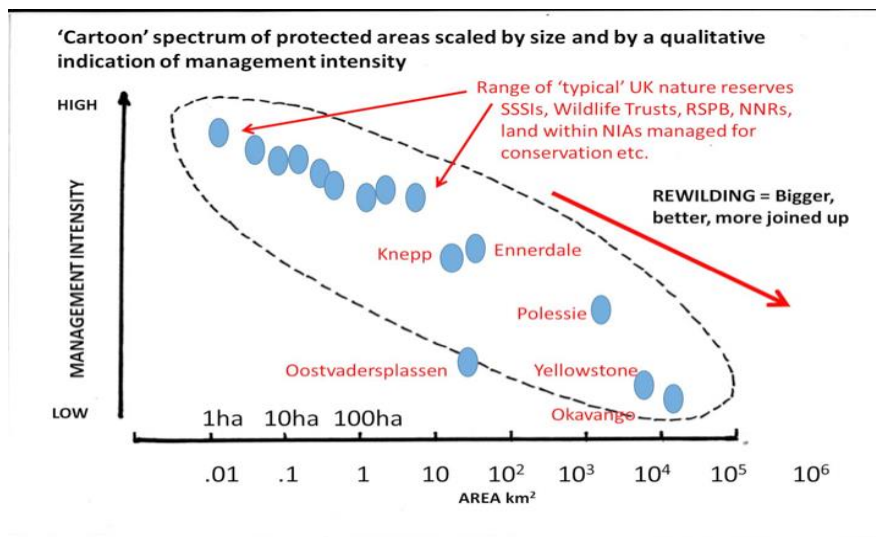
1. Rydym yn cytuno gyda chanfyddiadau Hayward et al (2019):

“While the term has been broadly applied in the public domain, we find that within the scientific literature rewilding is the subject of a dozen different definitions (Jørgensen, 2015)... fuzzy definitions are more open to broad interpretation and can therefore be easily manipulated, allowing poor conservation decisions to sit under the umbrella of a popular, but ill conceived term”

[<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006320719301351>]

2. Nid ydym yn teimlo bod 'ailwylltio' yn strategaeth angenrheidiol i hybu twf ac adferiad bioamrywiaeth. Mae'n derm mor eang bod yna strategaethau a phrosesau sydd wedi eu mabwysiadu i'w fethodoleg sydd yn fuddiol, ond maent yn strategaethau sydd yn bodoli eisoes fel rhan o brosesau cadwraethol ac amaethyddol, heb yr angen i'w cyflyru yn niwl cysyniadol 'ailwylltio'
3. Teimlwn bod gosod tirweddau ar 'gontinwfm' ailwylltio yn eithriadol o beryglus i gymunedau gwledig sydd yn ddibynnol ar weithgarwch ar y tir am eu bodolaeth. Diben pob continwfm yw hybu symudiad tuag at ei bwynt eithaf – yng nghydestun ailwylltio y pwynt hwn yw tirwedd eang gyda dim gweithgarwch gan ddyn.

Defnyddiwyd y ffigur isod i amlinellu continwfm ailwylltio gan Helen Meech, cyn Prif-Weithredwr Rewilding Britain [<https://iale.uk/rewilding-how-protect-gains-past-and-kick>], sylwer bod echel 'y' y graff yn nodi 'dwysedd rheolaeth' – h.y. 'gwaith' ar y tir, un o ddibenion craidd 'ailwylltio' ac un o'i fesuriadau canolog yw'r lleihad mewn 'gwaith'



(Lawton 2016)

Bydd pob cam ar y continwfm hwn yn lleihau gweithgarwch yn y tymor hir, gan beryglu swyddi, yr economi wledig, ffermydd teuluol a chymunedau hyfyw. Mae gosod tir ar y continwfm hwn yn dad-rymuso cymunedau lleol rhag gosod blaenoriaethau ar gyfer eu tirweddau eu hunain, yn eu caethiwo i weithredu oddi-fewn i fframwaith sydd yn gosod natur 'wyllt' uwchben pob dim arall [<https://play.acast.com/s/bbccountryfilemagazine/rewildingwiththreatenwelshculture-saysfarmerdafyddmorrisjones>]

4. Amlinella adroddiad 'laith y Pridd'

[<https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/sites/farmingconnect/files/documents/Adroddiad%20laith%20Y%20Pridd.pdf>] bod perthynas gynhyrchiol, weithgar gyda thirwedd yn hanfodol i sicrhau parhad a ffyniant yr laith.

Derbyniodd yr adroddiad hwn glod gan Gomisiynydd yr laith. Mae adran 5.3 yn ymateb yn uniongyrchol i 'ailwylltio' yn y cyd-destun Cymreig:

“Mynegodd nifer o’r cyfranwyr eu pryder am effeithiau ymyraethau ‘ail-wylltio’ yn benodol. Tanlinellwyd bod diboblogi gwledig yn medru digwydd o ganlyniad i droi tir amaethyddol o gynhyrchu bwyd i ddarparu ‘nwyddau’ amgylcheddol yn unig, gyda ‘phrosesau naturiol’ a dulliau anweithredol o reoli tir yn cynnig llai o weithgarwch yn yr economi wledig sydd yn ddibynnol ar sector amaeth gynhyrchiol (megis contractwyr, darparwyr nwyddau a gwasanaethau, llafurwyr, milfeddygon ayyb), ac yn y pen draw byddai hyn yn achosi i’r iaith gilio yn y sector ehangach wrth i’r sector amaethyddol grebachu. Mynegwyd hefyd na fyddai twf mewn sectorau eraill, yn enwedig y sector dwristiaeth, yn darparu’r un cymhelliad i ddefnyddio’r Gymraeg, ac o ganlyniad ni fyddai’n llenwi’r bwlch a ddeuai o ganlyniad i leihad unrhyw weithgarwch yn y sector amaethyddol.”

5. Nodwn bod llawer o amcangyfrifon gwerth ychwanegol 'ailwylltio' i'r economi wledig yn seiliedig ar dyfu gwerth yr 'economy natur' ac yn enwedig 'twristiaeth bywyd gwyllt'. Amlinella adroddiad 'Wildlife Economy Wales: An Economic Scoping Study' (2007) gwerth y sectorau gwahanol yn yr 'economy bywyd gwyllt' i Gymru yn y tabl isod (tt. 21 & 22) – mae gwerth y sectorau cynhyrchiol yn llawer uwch na'r gweddill, gyda thwristiaeth bywyd gwyllt yn isel iawn (8%), ni deimlwn bod peryglu'r sectorau cynhyrchiol er mwyn tyfu'r sector bychan hwn yn mynd i ddarparu dyfodol llewyrchus i'r Gymru wledig.

Activity Type [all Wales] (millions)	Direct	Direct as %	Indirect	Indirect as %	Total	Output as % of total
Public & voluntary sector conservation	£401	28%	£119	23%	£520	27%
Hotels, bars and restaurants, Recreation, culture and welfare, Retail (including 'wildlife tourism')	£124	9%	£36	7%	£159	8%
Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry	£765	54%	£308	60%	£1,074	55%
Electricity, Gas, Water & Sanitary services	£125	9%	£43	8%	£168	9%
Education	£7	1%	£3	1%	£10	1%
Other professional business, community and retail services	£4	0%	£2	0%	£6	0%
Total	£1,426	100%	£510	100%	£1,936	100%

6. Dyfynnwyd cyfrannwr yn adroddiad laith y Pridd, sydd hefyd yn atseinio pryderon a nodwyd yn lleol parthed effaith prosiectau 'ailwylltio' ar ffermwyr tenant a phorwyr tir comin:

“Os ydy’r taliadau yn mynd i... gael ffocws ar unrhyw beth ond cynhyrchu, os ydi’r ffocws yn mynd i fod yn gwbl amgylcheddol, wel mae ‘na beryg [er enghraifft] bydd ‘na rhai ffermwyr tenant, a ‘dyn ni’n gweld e’n digwydd yn barod, yn cael marching orders... am bod y landlord yn gweld ffordd... i gymryd taliadau am y gwaith amgylcheddol [ei hunain]”

7. Nodwn bod 'ailwylltio' yn dechrau tyfu yn ei boblogeiddrwydd ymysg tîrfeddianwyr mawrion ac pryderwn am sgil-efeithiau hyn, gan glywed yn barod gan ffermwyr a chominwyr mewn mannau eraill yn y DG bod hawliau pori a thenantiaethau wedi eu tynnu yn ôl er mwyn canlyn amcanion 'ailwylltio' gan dirfeddianwyr mawr. Nodwn bod prosiect ailwylltio Knepp (sydd yn aml yn cael ei glodfori fel patrwm ar gyfer mannau eraill) wedi ymddiswyddo'r gweithwyr amaethyddol, gwagio'r tai a aeth gyda'r swyddi a'u defnyddio i ddarparu lletyau gwyliau yn hytrach na chartrefi i aelodau o'r gymuned leol.
8. Parthed cyfleoedd i storio Carbon yn y tir, rydym yn argyhoeddedig bod modd i uchafu gallu'r tir i amsugno carbon oddi-fewn i reolaeth weithredol, a pryderwn bod rheolaeth anweithredol dan fesurau 'ailwylltio' yn mynd i fethu cyflawni hyn yn sylweddol well, neu o gwbl, tra hefyd yn peryglu'r cynefinoedd prin sydd yn ganlyniad o'r cyd-esblygiad rhwng amaeth a phrosesau naturiol dros filoedd o flynyddoedd. e.e. Ar fawndiroedd a phriddoedd asidig, mae yna dystiolaeth bod caniatáu tyfiant coed yn mynd i gynyddu allyriadau nwyon tŷ gwydr yn y tymor byr / canolig, yn hytrach na'u lleddfu [<https://www.stir.ac.uk/news/2020/july-2020/tree-planting-does-not-always-boost-ecosystem-carbon-stocks-study-finds/>]. Mae profiad aelodau'r gymuned ac ysgolheigion lleol yn dangos nad ydyw 'aildyfiant naturiol' yn strategaeth sydd yn cynhyrchu coetiroedd dwys o fiomas uchel, ac o ystyried agosrwydd llawer o ucheldir Cymru i blanhigfeydd conwydd CNC, rydym wedi gweld prawf ar diroedd lleol mae coed conwydd an-frodorol fydd yn lledu pan lleiheur dwysedd pori a rheolaeth weithredol.
9. Parthed twf yn yr arwynebedd tir sydd dan goed yng Nghymru, wedi trafod gyda sefydliadau megis Coed Cymru a Choed Cadw, credwn bod llawer o botensial sydd dal heb ei wireddu (yn rhannol o ganlyniad i rwystrau grantiau megis Grant Coetir Glastir, ac o ganlyniad i anhyblygrwydd y Mapiau Cyfle Coetiroedd) fel rhan o systemau amaethyddol ac amaeth-goetirool. Nid ydym yn credu bod 'ailwylltio' yn ychwanegu i hyn. Byddai'r coetiroedd hyn yn gweithio oddi-fewn i systemau cynhyrchiol, yn ychwanegu at drosiant a chyfranogiad economaidd y tir, ac yn cydbwyso'r angen i sicrhau dyfodol cynhyrchiol y daliadau – yn annhebyg i amcanion anweithredol 'ailwylltio'.
10. Gobeithiwn am ddyfodol gynaliadwy ar gyfer ucheldir Cymru, yn darparu tirwedd poblog, gweithgar a chynhyrchiol gan gynnal adfywiad naturiol a chymdeithasol, a chynnal ac atgyfnerthu ein diwylliant a'n hiaith. Hwn ddylai fod yn flaenoriaeth i ni, yn uchelgais ar gyfer cenedlaethau'r dyfodol, hwn ddylai fod yn begwn i unrhyw gontinwmm ar gyfer y Gymru wledig – nid gweithredu er mwyn gadael y tir. Pryderwn yn fawr bod yr ymgais i greu arian am reoli tir yn anweithredol yn gweithio o fantais fawr i fuddsoddwyr rhyngwladol – yn creu esgus i wagio tir o'i

boblogaeth weithredol a derbyn taliadau am wneud dim ond ei adael yn segur, gan agor cefn gwlad a'i chymunedau yn llwyr i rymoedd cyfalafiaeth rhyngwladol a'r farchnad arian.

11. Mae ein tirwedd yn enghraifft wirioneddol o 'dirwedd diwylliannol', yn gynnwys cyd-esblygiad rhwng gweithgarwch dynol a grymoedd natur. O ganlyniad yn bennaf i ysgogiadau ariannol trwy gynlluniau amaeth-amgylcheddol a phwysau'r farchnad, mae gweithgarwch amaethyddol ar y bryniau wedi crebachu yn ddiweddar, ac mae yna bryder mae'r crebachiad hwn sydd yn gyrru'r colledion bioamrywiaeth dwysaf a mwyaf arswydus. Trwy ddadansoddiadau o gyfraddau stocio anifeiliaid ar ein tir uchel (sydd nawr yn eithriadol isel o gymharu a chyfraddau hanesyddol), rydym yn argyhoeddedig bod y naratif wrth-amaethyddol sydd wrth wraidd damcaniaethau 'ailwylltio' yn anghywir, yn ymateb i sefyllfa amaethyddol y 1980au, ac yn methu ymateb i'r heriau tirwedd sydd nawr o'n blaenau, o effeithiau tanbori a thwf glaswelltydd cras (e.e. molinia) sydd yn tagu cynefinoedd a rhywogaethau ucheldirol bregus, i golled ein caeau gwair traddodiadol (nid oes angen gwneud gwair os nad oes yna gymaint o anifeiliaid) a lleihad yr adar sydd yn dibynnu gymaint ar glytwaith brith o gynefinoedd lled-naturiol ac amaethyddol [<https://fuw.org.uk/images/pdf/cambrian-mountains-report-may-2013.pdf>]
12. Nodwn bod gosod naratif 'ailwylltio' ar brosiectau ac ymyraethau cadwraethol yn cynyddu'r lefel o wrthdaro rhwng rhanddalwyr, ac yn tanseilio ffydd. Wrth wynebu argyfwng bioamrywiaeth a hinsawdd, mae hyn yn niweidio gallu rhanddeiliaid o safbwyntiau gwahanol i gydweithio yn gadarnhaol. Pryderwn bod mudiadau ac elusennau cadwraethol nawr yn 'ail-frandio' eu gweithgarwch fel 'ailwylltio' er mwyn denu cyllidebau amgen, nid oherwydd eu bod yn llwyr gefnogol o'r amcanion. Gwelwyd ffaeledd hyn wrth i 'bartneriaid' Summit to Sea ddatgan eu ddiffiniadau gwahanol o 'ailwylltio' wrth i'r prosiect ddadfeilio yn 2019, gan ddangos nad oedd yna gytundeb o gwbl ar ddiffiniad nac amcanion y rhai oedd yn 'cefnogi'r' fenter.

Sumit to Sea

Mae'r adran hon yn canolbwyntio ar brosiect Summit to Sea dan arweiniad Rewilding Britain. Mae rhai o'r pwyntiau yn perthyn yn enwedig i ardal Pumlumon a'r Canolbarth, ac eraill yn enghreifftio patrymau o ofid ar lefel cenedlaethol. Teimlwn bod Summit to Sea yn enghraifft bwysig iawn o ymyraethau arfaethedig 'ailwylltio' mewn tirweddau go-iawn, a bod ei ffaeleddau o arwyddocâd sylweddol am y rhesymau canlynol:

- Hwn oedd prosiect 'llog faner' Rewilding Britain – yr unig elusen sydd ag amcanion ar gyfer y DG gyfan i weithredu ymyraethau 'ailwylltio' ar raddfa eang.
- Mae Rewilding Britain yn ffrwyth dychymig a gwaith unigolion mwyaf blaenllaw 'ailwylltio' yn y DG, ac yn adlewyrchiad o'u hagwedd a'u dulliau hwythau.
- Roedd y gyllideb ar gyfer y prosiect o un o arianwyr haelionaf prosiectau ailwylltio rhyngwladol (Arcadia – Lisbet Rausing, trwy law yr Endangered Landscapes

Program).

- Hwn oedd y prosiect ailwylltio mwyaf (arwynebedd tir) yng Nghymru a Lloegr (10,000ha)
- Roedd y 'bartneriaeth' yn cynnwys nifer o fudiadau cadwraethol cenedlaethol a rhyngwladol, ac yn honni cefnogaeth gan Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru.
- Ariannwyd y prosiect gan gyllideb preifat sylweddol, yn ddefnyddio prosesau awdurdodi ac archwilio sydd yn unol â gofynion y Comisiwn Elusennau.
- Derbyniodd y prosiect glod sylweddol yn y cyfryngau, ac mewn manau eraill, wedi ei lansio – er nad oedd yna unrhyw gefnogaeth iddo ar lawr gwlad ac nad oedd yr amcanion manwl wedi eu cyfathrebu yn gyhoeddus.

Dyma amlinelliad bras o wrthwynebiad nifer yn y gymuned, ac aelodau COPA, tuag at y prosiect ar ei ffurf wreiddiol:

- a) Ni fu yna unrhyw ymgynghori na chyfathrebu lleol ystyrlon cyn ariannu'r prosiect. Nid oedd yna gefnogaeth am ei amcanion. Defnyddiwyd contractwyr taledig mewnol y prosiect (Conservation Capital & Eden Project) yn y ddogfennaeth cais i 'brofi' cefnogaeth. Nodwyd y contractwyr hyn yn 'bartneriaid', 'ymgynghorwyr' a 'rhanddeiliaid' mewn manau gwahanol yn y ddogfen.
- b) Nid oedd y 'partneriaid' yn adlewyrchu natur cymuned nac ardal y prosiect. Wedi i Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru eglurhau eu safbwynt (nid oeddent yn bartneriaid er i wefan y prosiect eu cynnwys), ni gynrychiolwyd mwy na 20% o'r tir a fynwyd gan y prosiect fyddai'n cael ei gynnwys i'w 'ailwylltio' (10,000ha yn y 5 mlynedd gyntaf, gyda'r bwriad o chwyddo i 60,000ha dros amser). Nid oedd un o'r mudiadau yn cynrychioli'r gymuned leol ar unrhyw raddfa nac yn atebol i boblogaeth ardal y prosiect. Ni wnaed unrhyw ymgais i gynnwys cynrychiolwyr etholedig y gymuned, ond gwnaed pob ymdrech i hyrwyddo'r prosiect i gefnogwyr Rewilding Britain
- c) Anwybyddwyd a diystyrwyd pryderon y gymuned leol, gan gynnwys y busnesau, tîrfeddianwyr a defnyddwyr tir a môr oddi-fewn i ffiniau'r prosiect, gan fynnu eu bod wedi 'camdeall'. Pan ofynwyd am dystiolaeth i gefnogi hyn, gwrthodwyd rhannu'r cais gwreiddiol, na chwrdd â mwy na 5 person ar yr un waith (mewn ardal oedd yn cynnwys 250 o ffermydd, 11 tref/pentref a degau o filoedd o bobl!)
- d) Nid oedd yna fodd i'r gymuned leisio barn na chodi pryderon gyda'r arianwyr (Endangered Landscapes Program) yn uniongyrchol.
- e) Nid oedd yna strwythurau i'r ariannwr ddilysu gwirionedd y 'dystiolaeth' a ddarparwyd gan yr ymgeiswyr (Rewilding Britain). Roedd y cais gwreiddiol [<http://www.summit2sea.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Summit-to-Sea-Final-Bid-Document-August-2017-1-1.pdf>] yn wallus a chamarweiniol parthed dulliau defnydd/rheoli tir cyfredol yn yr ardal, cefnogaeth, partneriaid, y gymuned a'r economi wledig, mwy yn gampwaith o ffuglen nac adlewyrchiad o wirionedd. Roedd y ffaith bod bwrdd dethol yr arianwyr yn cynnwys aelodau o fwrdd cyfarwyddwyr Rewilding Britain yn ychwanegu at y pryder nad oedd y prosiect yn cael ei ddilysu mewn modd di-duedd.

- f) Nodwyd bod elusen Rewilding Britain wedi ei chreu gan George Monbiot (ei bartner yw'r prif-weithredwraig, cyfeiriad cartref Monbiot oedd cyfeiriad cyswllt cais gwreiddiol Summit to Sea) a'r buddsoddwr Ben Goldsmith, o ganlyniad i 'ysbrydolaeth' y llyfr Feral [<https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/blog/plotting-hope-how-one-rewilding-journey-began>], gan gynnwys y disgrifiadau camarweiniol o ardal ac amaeth canolbarth Cymru. Nid yw gweledigaeth Monbiot ar gyfer dyfodol yr ardal fel 'a community of former farmers' (Monbiot 2013) yn darparu ysbrydolaeth i'r gymuned sydd yma. Mae ei ymosodiadau cyson ar amaeth a chymunedau gwledig Cymru ac ymosodiadau Goldsmith (wedi galw'r gymuned yn "trolls who go whingeing to their MPs" am godi pryderon ynghylch Summit to Sea) yn golygu nad oedd yna ffydd yn yr elusen i greu prosiect nac ymddwyn mewn modd cytbwys, gwybodus a di-duedd.
- g) Roedd yna wrthwynebiad clir i'r elfen o 'brynu tir strategol'. Nodwyd yn y cais bod hyn hefyd yn cynnwys strategaeth i berswadio mudiadau/unigolion cyfoethog i brynu tir i'w 'ailwylltio' ar ran y prosiect, heb o reidrwydd ddatgan hynny yn agored. *"Core...and buffer areas will be established by connecting up existing restoration initiatives...and acquiring additional strategic parcels of land where appropriate."* *"the project may try to identify sympathetic private third parties to purchase land parcels"*
- h) Nid oedd yna gefnogaeth am 'frandio' yr ardal fel llong faner 'ailwylltio', a teimlwyd byddai'r atyniad o'r fath 'frandio' yn denu eraill i brynu tir yn gyfagos, gan brisio unigolion lleol allan o'r farchnad – gwelwyd bod hyn yn fygythiad mwy ar ffermydd bychain (sydd yn angenrheidiol i'r to ifanc gael mynediad i'r diwydiant). Gwelwyd esiampl prynnu fferm Llechwedd Einion gan Coed Cadw (am bris uwch na'i werth masnachol) a natur prydles y Cambrian Wildwood ar y safle (150 mlynedd yn ddi-dal) yn enghraifft o'r hyn a allai ledu yn sgil y fath ddatblygiad.
- i) Gwelwyd rhagrith amlwg rhwng fusnes masnachol y prif ariannwr (Rausing - Ingleby Farms and Forests [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisbet_Rausing]) a naratif y prosiect. Teimlwyd bod busnesau ffermio o faint Ingleby (53,000 dafad, 61,000 o wyn a 300-400 tunell o wla'n y flwyddyn o Seland Newydd & Awstralia [<https://inglebyfarms.com/products/lamb-wool>]) yn tanseilio gallu ffermwyr Cymru i gystadlu tra'n defnyddio dulliau cynaliadwy. O ganlyniad nid oeddent yn ariannwr priodol ar gyfer prosiect oedd yn ceisio 'trawsffurfio' natur amaethyddol tirweddau Cymru.
- j) Roedd y prosiect yn anwybyddu'r gwaith da sydd yn digwydd ar diroedd yr ardal, gan bardduo'r sefyllfa er mwyn dilysu eu hamcanion. Doedd fawr o dystiolaeth i gefnogi eu damcaniaethau, ac roedd eu disgrifiadau o'u dymuniadau yn newid yn ddibynnol ar eu cynulleidfa (neges wahanol yn yr ardal i'r un i'w cefnogwyr/arianwyr allanol)
- k) Roedd pryder dwys bod effaith defnydd tir anweithredol dros y 30 mlynedd diwethaf wedi niweidio bioamrywiaeth yr ucheldir yn fawr, a bod diffyg stocio a gweithgarwch amaethyddol yn rhannol gyfrifol am hyn, ynghyd â'r twf mewn pwysau gan

ysglyfaethwyr canol a ddaw o diroedd heb reolaeth (e.e. planhigfeydd CNC ar hyn o bryd)

- l) Nodwyd nad oedd yna fawr o ddata craidd nac ymchwil i gefnogi barn y prosiect, a teimlwyd y byddai'n well pe buasai sefydliadau di-duedd academiaidd lleol yn derbyn cyllideb i lenwi'r bwlch gwybodaeth hyn, yn hytrach nag ariannu prosiect byrfyfyr.
- m) Nid oedd yna unrhyw gefnogaeth gan sefydliadau academiaidd lleol (roedd nifer o'u ysgolheigion yn bryderus am y prosiect), ac nid oedd yna bwyslais ar gasglu data ystyrion a gwrthrychol.
- n) Roedd yna bryder dwys y byddai'r prosiect, wrth 'drawsffurfio'r' economi leol yn tansilio'r economi gynhyrchiol (sydd yn darparu 27% o'r gyflogaeth uniongyrchol a llawer mwy yn y sectorau eilradd, mwy fyth os ystyrir y nifer o gartrefi sydd yn derbyn cyflog o'r sectorau hyn), ac yn darparu dim ond "*some nature friendly farming in buffer areas and opportunities for low-impact ecotourism and nature friendly business*" yn ei le – nid dyma'r dyfodol sydd ei angen na'i eisiau. Profwyd effaith diflaniad tir ac amaeth gan y gymuned hon yn y 1950au pan blannwyd coed y Comisiwn Coedwigaeth, nid ydym eisiau ei brofi eto.

Mae yna bryderon helaethach, a gobeithiwn drafod y rhain a chael cyfle i roddi cig ar yr asgwrn yn ystod ein cyfarfod.

Diolch am y cyfle i gyfrannu i'r drafodaeth. Gobeithiwn yn fawr y bydd hyn yn gyfle i Gymru droi cefn ar naratif or-symbl ailwylltio a thynnu'r drafodaeth i dir mwy ystyrion, gwybodus ac aeddfed. Atebion Cymreig i diroedd Cymru, ac esiampl i weddill y byd ei hefelychu.

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 5.1

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a
Materion Gwledig
Bioamrywiaeth ac Ailwyltuo
CCERA(5) BR 07
Ymateb gan Undeb Amaethwyr Cymru

Welsh Parliament
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs
Committee
Biodiversity and Rewilding
CCERA(5) BR 07
Evidence from Farmers' Union Wales

About the Farmers' Union of Wales

1. The Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) was established in 1955 to exclusively represent the interests of farmers in Wales, and since 1978 has been formally recognised by the UK Government, and subsequently by the Welsh Government, as independently representing those interests.
2. The FUW's Vision is *thriving, sustainable, family farms in Wales*, while the Mission of the Union is *To advance and protect Wales' family farms, both nationally and individually, in order to fulfil the Union's vision.*
3. In addition to its Head Office, which has thirty full-time members of staff, the FUW Group has around 80 members of staff based in twelve regional offices around Wales providing a broad range of services for members.
4. The FUW is a democratic organisation, with policies being formulated following consultation with its twelve County Executive Committees and eleven Standing Committees.

Biodiversity and the green recovery, including current progress against biodiversity targets

5. Whilst the FUW appreciates the scope of this short inquiry, given the remit of the Committee we would emphasise the degree to which the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the impact of transport in Wales on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and local environments, and the degree to which bodies such as the Welsh Government can, when given no alternative, help reduce transport derived emissions by making alternative arrangements for meetings etc. - something which is essential given the nature of Wales' public transport infrastructure.
6. We would also draw to the Committee's attention the positive impact on nature as a result of reductions in visitor numbers to certain areas of Wales, as highlighted in the *Wildlife in Lockdown*¹ report which considered the impact of an absence of visitors

¹ <https://www.benporterwildlife.co.uk/Wildlife-in-lockdown>

(due to the 'lockdown') on wildlife on Snowdon, Cader Idris and the Carneddau, and in Cwm Idwal, Coed y Brenin, Ceunant Llennyrch and Niwbwrch/Llanddwyn.

7. The study found that that wildlife flourished during the lockdown due to fewer disturbances and less litter, with birds such as meadow pipit and wheatear in far greater abundance around paths and common sandpiper and ring ouzel nesting close to what are usually busy areas they choose to avoid.
8. The study also suggests that less litter and picnic leftovers led to fewer predator species such as herring gulls and foxes being attracted to potential nesting areas, giving breeding birds an additional helping hand during their most important time of year.shows.
9. Notwithstanding this, the FUW fully recognises the need to improve biodiversity and to reduce GHG emissions, as do other industries, while ensuring this is done with minimum economic effects and in a way which ensures impacts are not simply 'off-shored'.
10. In terms of the Welsh Government's green recovery, the FUW notes that the Welsh Government has tasked Natural Resources Wales with leading a taskforce set to accelerate a green recovery in Wales.
11. Whilst one member of the taskforce represents the Royal Society for Arts (RSA) Farming & Countryside Commission, the FUW believes it is a major oversight not to have included the representatives of those who farm and manage 90% or more of Wales' land.
12. Given this omission, the FUW is uncertain as to what plans and policies relating to a green recovery are being discussed and developed by the taskforce, and has significant concerns regarding the nature of discussions taking place in the absence of representatives of large numbers who could be affected by future policies.
13. As members of the Welsh Government's Nature Recovery Action Plan Implementation Group, the FUW remains committed to meeting biodiversity targets, and would draw the Committee's attention to the The Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales 2020 - 21 report.
14. We would also emphasise the degree to which, while trends and indicators suggest improvements in terms of some species, and a deterioration as regards others, an accurate assessment of progress against biodiversity targets can only be undertaken when longer term trends are assessed.

Biodiversity and rewilding in the context of the future of land management policy proposals

15. Whilst the concept of 'rewilding' has been found to have as many as twelve definitions², it can in broad terms be described as the restoration of ecosystems to a point in time where human influence was not present or was negligible. As such, in the longer term rewilded areas would have no human-based ecological management and large 'keystone' species - most notably predators - would be introduced where they no longer exist.
16. The charity Rewilding Europe defines the concept as "...*letting nature take care of itself, enabling natural processes to shape land and sea, repair damaged ecosystems and restore degraded landscapes.*"
17. The concept of restoring environments to the state they were in prior to the arrival of humans raises a number of concerns and questions from an ecological point of view, for example:
 - a. Humans are, by definition, a species of animal which invariably plays the role of a keystone species in ecosystems, in one form or another
 - b. In many, if not most habitats around the globe this role has been played by humans for thousands of years, whether through hunting and gathering, pastoralism or agriculture
 - c. The notion of restoring habitats to their pre-human-arrival states oftentimes no account of changing climate
18. For example, Steven Corry, Director of charity Survival International, which works with tribal and indigenous peoples around the globe to protect them against racism, land theft, forced development and genocidal violence, stated in a recent webinar³ that:

"The concept of wilderness simply doesn't exist. Areas like the Amazon rainforest are managed landscapes [which have] been managed for thousands of years... There is no landscape 'untrammelled by man'⁴ except possibly glacial terrain. The whole idea of wilderness and the way it's taken this great spurt with the idea of rewilding is deeply corrosive to the scientific reality and the real relationship between humans and nature."
19. For example, in the context of Wales, charcoal fragments indicate that woodland clearance through burning was the first human impact on the Cambrian Mountains around 7500 BC⁵ (Wiltshire & Moore, 1983), with a subsequent transition to the more widespread open conditions, typified by grass, heather and sedge, which persist to

² [Reintroducing rewilding to restoration – Rejecting the search for novelty](#), Hayward *et al.* (2019)

³ FUW webinar: Land use, conservation and cultural clearances - lessons for Wales and the UK from around the world (October 2020)

⁴ US Wilderness Act (1964)

⁵ Palaeovegetation and palaeohydrology in Upland Britain, Wiltshire, P., & Moore, P. (1983)

the present day⁶, while agriculture is believed to have arrived in Wales some 3,900BC⁷.

20. As such, by the time the Romans arrived almost two thousand years ago much of Wales would have been similar to what Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales archaeologist Dr Toby Driver describes in his 2016 book *The Hillforts of Cardigan Bay*:

21.21.

“Ceredigion in the Iron Age was not a dark, forested landscape with hillforts rising above a dense blanket of wild woodland. On the contrary, agriculture and widespread clearance had already transformed the landscape during the Bronze Age or even earlier...the prehistoric farming regime along Cardigan Bay is likely to have been mainly pastoral, with sheep and cattle predominating...”

22. So just as the negative and sometimes destructive impacts of changes in agriculture must be acknowledged, the degree to which habitats and species in Wales have come to rely partly or fully on humans and agriculture must also be recognised.

23. Evidence of this reliance, and the degree to which abandoning agricultural activity can and invariably does have negative impacts on species and ecosystems, is common:

- a. A 2014 review by the Stockholm University's Resilience Centre of 276 studies of the impacts of farmland abandonment found that while some areas saw increases in biodiversity, most did not - especially in Europe, an impact attributed to traditional farming having created a wide range of habitats for species that struggle or disappear when human intervention ceases⁸
- b. Analysis by the charity Plantlife⁹ has shown that *“...more than half of all wild plants need regular management or disturbance to thrive; 611 (39.6%) species will decline within a decade if the land on which they grow is simply abandoned and 127 (16.4%) will decline within 1-3 years. Moreover, of 112 Critically Endangered and Endangered vascular plant species, 84 (75%) will decline or even disappear if land is abandoned. Land abandonment and undermanagement is now identified as one of the major threats to sites where Red Data List plants grow and to open habitats in the UK and Europe.”*
- c. In Portugal's Coa valley, an area once used for grazing cattle and pigs as well as cork and honey production, activities which supported a mosaic of

⁶ The Role of Grazing animals in the Cambrian Mountains, Joyce, I., (2013)

⁷ The Tale of the Axe: How the Neolithic Revolution Transformed Britain. David Moor (2016).

⁸ Farmland abandonment: threat or opportunity for biodiversity conservation? A global review. Queiroz *et al.* (2014)

⁹ PlantLife Position Statement: Rewilding (July 2019)

habitats, land abandonment has resulted in much of the valley becoming overgrown with scrub and forest¹⁰

- d. A long-term grazing experiment¹¹ on the Glen Finglas estate in the Scottish Highlands, studying the impact of intensification (tripling sheep numbers), abandonment (removal of sheep) and grazer diversification (partial replacement of sheep by cattle) found that increased grazing and, to a lesser extent, the introduction of cattle had a greater positive impact on species diversity compared with the removal of sheep
- e. The RSPB's 2018 *State of Birds in Wales* report acknowledges that *"...curlews show a preference for habitats with lower vegetation densities and only moderate rush cover...livestock densities have also greatly reduced compared to historic levels. Therefore, it is highly likely that habitat conditions will have deteriorated for curlews over recent decades."*
- f. In Japan, where around 2,700 km² of rice paddies have been abandoned, ecologists have associated a steady decline of insects, birds, amphibians and plants with the growth of invasive vines and bamboo¹⁰
- g. In the Moor House Upper-Teesdale National Nature Reserve, scientists have been excluding sheep from areas by fencing them off since 1953, with more than eight areas enclosed and undisturbed for what is now more than 50 years, yet studies of the soil and vegetation in those areas have shown that very little has changed¹⁰
- h. Efforts to conserve the large blue butterfly in Britain by fencing off areas of heathland and preventing the grazing of sheep failed, such that by 1979 they were extinct in the UK. It was later discovered that this action had accelerated their decline, since the caterpillars of the large blue butterfly live as brood-parasites in the nests of a certain species of red ant (*Mermica sabuleti*) which is particularly sensitive to temperature and humidity and can only survive in grazed areas which are exposed to the warmth of the sun

¹⁰ The Call of Rewilding, New Scientist (13th October 2018)

¹¹ Long-term impacts of changed grazing regimes on the vegetation of heterogeneous upland grasslands, Pakeman *et al.* (2019)

24. These constitute just some examples of the observed and measured adverse or negligible impacts of removing human - primarily agricultural - interactions with landscapes where they have long been an intrinsic part of ecosystems, and the experience of many FUW members in terms of falls in species numbers as a result of participation in agri-environment schemes which require reduced management, in particular reduced sheep grazing, very much echoes such scientific observations.
25. A key argument made by many of the proponents of rewilding is that agricultural communities are unviable, and that a rewilded landscape would provide greater economic benefits for indigenous populations through tourism.
26. For example, when Rewilding Britain applied for funding from the Endangered Landscapes Programme in order to establish its “first landscape scale” project, which would have covered some 240 square miles of Mid Wales, the organisation stated that “...*the wider area...also faces economic crisis and uncertainty, post-Brexit. With low incomes, high dependency on subsidies and insufficient employment, local communities struggle to keep young people in the area...Core areas will support well-managed, low-impact tourism and recreation and will be extended over time where possible...Surrounding buffer areas will sustain a range of productive enterprises of high nature value, such as low impact continuous-cover forestry, harvesting of natural products, and value added meat production and fishing.*”
27. The economic sustainability of such rewilded areas, where tourism must effectively replace key traditional incomes, is highly questionable; for example, George Monbiot claimed in his 2013 rewilding book *Feral* that “...*farming in Wales contributes just over £400 million to the economy...‘wildlife based activity’ generates £1,900 million*” while failing to acknowledge that the original source of this figure, *‘Wildlife Economy Wales’: An Economic Evaluation Scoping Study (2007)*, states that “*Category 3 (and particularly agriculture-related) activities contribute the greatest proportion of wildlife related output, 64.9%*”.
28. Whilst a paucity of economic data for rewilded areas makes direct economic comparisons with agricultural areas difficult, it is perhaps worth noting the employment figures associated with Yellowstone Park - an area dedicated as a “*public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people*” under the US 1872 Act of Dedication, where traditional Native American interactions with the environment dating back 10,000 years or more were effectively removed by eviction, force and intimidation.

29. A 2018 report on the economic contributions of National Park visitor spending found that visitor spending supported 7,354 jobs around Yellowstone Park in 2017, equating to 0.8 jobs per hectare of national park - a figure which is around a quarter of the number supported by agriculture on Welsh farmland.
30. In a similar context, it is also worth noting the comments of ecologist and author Dr Ogada Mordecai speaking in a recent webinar about the impact of conservation bodies in Kenya¹²:

“When you find people who are specialists in producing livestock at the moment and you remove livestock from the scene, you’ve disempowered them and you’ve created dependency [on tourism], which is the aim of conservation right now.”

“The coronavirus crisis we are currently going through has ruthlessly exposed the myth that tourism is a valid basis for conservation. There are no tourists coming now, and the indigenous communities who retained their livelihoods like pastoralism or agriculture are doing fine, but those who have found themselves in these microcolonies called wildlife conservancies are suddenly relying on relief food handouts.”

31. While the FUW does not undervalue the economic importance of activities on Wales’ wildlife reserves (which are generally very different in nature to the types of reserves and parks established on continents such as Africa), the economic scalability of these or any other enterprises is questionable to say the least, and expansion of such areas above a relatively low threshold would simply serve to dilute existing economic benefits per unit area.
32. Given that rewilding is often associated with increases in tree cover and afforestation - primarily deciduous forests in the context of Wales and the UK - it is worth noting that the GVA of forestry and logging is around £73/hectare for all Welsh woodland and £149/hectare if only coniferous forestry is taken into account. This compares to a GVA for Welsh farmland (excluding farm woodland) of £212/hectare.
33. Similarly, around 0.6 people work in the forestry and logging industry for every km² of Welsh woodland (1.2/km² if only coniferous forestry is taken into account) compared with around 3 people working on farms for every km² of Welsh farmland (excluding farm woodland).

¹² [The Eco-Fascist History of Conservation](#) (June 2020)

34. Given that the overwhelming majority of economic activity relating to forestry and logging in Wales occurs in forestry plantations, and that the value of deciduous timber is generally close to, or below the cost of extraction, it is fair to assume that the GVA per hectare of deciduous woodland is currently around to zero - notwithstanding the brief economic benefits derived from planting and fencing.
35. As such, while the creation of large conifer plantations on what is currently Welsh farmland might on average replace *some* of the economic and employment benefits of agriculture, the natural or artificial creation of deciduous forests on such areas would have a significant negative overall impact in terms of economics and employment.
36. The Welsh Government has highlighted¹³ that 43% of those working in Wales in the ONS 'agriculture, forestry and fishing' category - which is predominated by agriculture - speak Welsh. This is the highest proportion for all work categories, with the second highest being education, at 27%.
37. The Welsh Government has also pointed out that four of the top six counties in terms of the proportion of people speaking Welsh are also four of the top six counties in terms of the proportion of the population employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing¹³.
38. By comparison, the proportion who speak Welsh in the 'accommodation and food' category - which might be equated to the tourism industry - is 16%, compared with an overall Welsh average for all employment categories of 17%.
39. This demonstrates the clear relationship between the use of the Welsh language within Wales' agricultural sector and the degree to which moves such as rewilding that undermine the sector would be extremely damaging to the Welsh language.
40. As such, the evidence shows that future land management policy proposals must recognise the interdependency between agriculture and biodiversity, and that agriculture and family farms must remain economically viable in order to ensure the ecosystems, species, landscapes, economy and culture of Wales survive - principles highlighted by the FUW previously to committee. Moreover, such objectives would be severely compromised by any attempts to rewild areas, while also undermining the ownership and control of Welsh land by Welsh residents in favour of outside influences.

¹³ Agriculture in Wales, Welsh Government (2019)

Agenda Item 8

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

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