

Agenda – Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Video Conference via Zoom	Marc Wyn Jones
Meeting date: 10 December 2020	Committee Clerk
Meeting time: 13.30	0300 200 6565
	SeneddCCERA@senedd.wales

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 (13.45–15.25)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(13.45)

2 Covid-19 and Transition from the European Union: Scrutiny session with the Welsh Government

(13.45–14.30)

(Pages 1 – 19)

Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

Gian Marco Currado, Director, Environment & Marine

Christianne Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer

John Howells, Director Climate Change, Energy and Planning

Dean Medcraft, Director Finance and Operations

Tim Render, Director Land, Nature & Food



Attached Documents:

Research brief

Break (14.30–14.40)

3 Covid–19 and Transition from the European Union: Continuation of scrutiny session with the Welsh Government

(14.40–15.25)

Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

Gian Marco Currado, Director, Environment & Marine

Christianne Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer

John Howells, Director Climate Change, Energy and Planning

Dean Medcraft, Director Finance and Operations

Tim Render, Director Land, Nature & Food

4 Paper(s) to note

(15.25)

4.1 Correspondence from the Minister for Housing and Local Government in relation to Future Wales – the national plan 2040

(Page 20)

Attached Documents:

Letter

4.2 Written submission from National Farmers' Union (NFU) Cymru in relation to biodiversity and rewilding

(Pages 21 – 24)

Attached Documents:

Paper

4.3 Correspondence from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales to the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs regarding a statement of objection to proposed net licence duties 2021–2023

(Pages 25 – 26)

Attached Documents:

Letter

4.4 Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales in relation to the Tan Lan Embankment

(Pages 27 – 30)

Attached Documents:

Briefing note

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

Private meeting (15.25–16.00)

6 Covid–19 and Transition from the European Union: Consideration of evidence received under items 2 and 3

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 4.1

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government



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

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mike.Hedges@senedd.wales

02 December 2020

Dear Mike,

Thank you for the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee's report on Future Wales - the national plan 2040. I am grateful for the Committee's scrutiny of the plan and very much welcome the contribution from all parts of the Senedd.

Over the coming weeks I will review your recommendations and those of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee. I will also reflect of the resolutions of the Senedd following the two debates on Future Wales on 29th September and 25th November.

In February next year, I will lay in the Senedd a detailed formal response to your letter, responding to the points you have raised and I will explain how these have informed the final published version of Future Wales.

Thank you once again for the Committee's scrutiny.

Yours sincerely



Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government

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

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

Agenda Item 4.2

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a
Materion Gwledig
Bioamrywiaeth ac Ailwylltio
CCERA(5) BR 08
Ymateb gan Undeb Cenedlaethol Amaethwyr
Cymru

Welsh Parliament
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs
Committee
Biodiversity and Rewilding
CCERA(5) BR 08
Evidence from National Farmers' Union (NFU)
Cymru

NFU Cymru is the voice of Welsh farming, championing, and representing farmers throughout Wales and across all agricultural sectors. Our vision is for a productive, profitable, and progressive Welsh agricultural industry, capitalising on global opportunities, contributing to the national economy, and supporting thriving rural communities. As part of the committee's enquiry into biodiversity and rewilding, NFU Cymru is pleased to be able to provide the following written submission.

1. NFU Cymru sees our landscapes as living, working, dynamic landscapes and which require ongoing management. The Welsh landscape is not natural per se, and has instead been created, shaped and is maintained by farmers over generations. The husbandry of grazing livestock has practised over hundreds of years and remains an integral part of Welsh upland agriculture.
2. Farmers manage over 80% of Wales's land area. Within this predominantly rural landscape, 60% of the land is defined as field pattern/mosaic with 20% categorised as open land.
3. Wales' farmers support biodiversity by looking after around 1.8m hectares of farmland (around 80% of Wales' land area). In addition to this, farmers have voluntarily enrolled some 560,000 hectares in agri-environment schemes
4. The rewilding debate ignores the fact that farmers are contributing to the environment. A significant number participate in agri-environment schemes designed by the Government to benefit the environment. Scheme design has been based on the best technical advice available, including advice from environmental groups. In these schemes most farmers have reduced stock numbers on the hills.
5. Today's farmers aim to work much more closely with nature, treading the fine line between maintaining a centuries-old landscape, producing food, and protecting wildlife through participation agri-environment schemes.
6. It must be remembered, however, that agricultural land constitutes part of a rural business. In Wales, for example, there are around 60,000 employed full or part time in farming in Wales. Farming in Wales underpins a food supply chain worth over £7.4bn and over 220,000 people are employed in the agri-food.
7. Rewilding as a concept has received increase focus in recent years. Rewilding has many and varied definitions. It means different things to different people

and we are concerned at the way in which it is being used by many as a vehicle for a specific agenda.

8. Rewilding is a vision that is at odds with how we use our land – the global focus is very clearly on how we can be more productive as an agricultural industry, whether in terms of management or the application of technology. Rewilding would reduce our farmed area and output, and this would have an inevitable impact on the rural economy and jobs.
9. Decisions about rewilding must be considered in the context of the challenges to our global food production system which are now well documented. This includes a growing population together with the impacts of climate change which will see the productive capacity of agricultural land decline in key food producing nations globally. Food security should be a concern to policymakers, and it is unsustainable and undesirable to rely further on food imports and to offshore food production to places where environmental, animal health and welfare and social standards are often lower. Such action cannot be reconciled with the concept of a globally responsible Wales.
10. Many examples of rewilding focus on upland locations. However, the arguments appear idealistic and ignore the economic impacts. Without our uplands, we would not have a UK sheep industry. Farmgate sales of lamb are worth over £1bn to UK agriculture, while sheep-meat exports generated £402 million in 2019. Farming underpins the rural economy – each farm business is typically economically linked to 40-80 other local businesses. To continue managing the countryside farmers need to have a viable business
11. In addition, livestock farming is integral to the landscape value of these upland areas. The tourist revenue from areas where a proportion of the land is maintained by beef and sheep production is estimated around £1.49 billion. The Welsh countryside, managed by farmers, provides the backdrop for a Welsh tourism sector with over £2.5bn.
12. Land is a limited resource and society does need to choose how land is used. The corollary cost to rewilding areas and taking them out of production is the need to import a greater proportion of the food supply in order to make up for the shortfall in domestic production.
13. NFU Cymru does not consider looking after the environment and producing food to be mutually exclusive. We can deliver increased food production and for the environment – the landscape, clean water, biodiversity.

NFU Cymru Vision for Welsh Upland Farming Survey

14. This autumn, NFU Cymru undertook research aimed at understanding the economic, environmental, social and cultural contribution of Welsh upland farming to the well-being of Wales; the understand the concerns of upland farmers for the future; and, to identify the key asks of policymakers for a

productive, profitable and progressive upland farming industry in Wales moving forward.

15. The survey attracted 765 responses, with over two thirds of those who responded identifying land use change (afforestation, rewilding) as a threat to upland farming.
16. A key recommendation of the NFU Cymru Vision for Welsh Upland Farming report is the creation of a decision making framework to guide land use change decisions – Welsh Government must understand the long-term economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts of its policies (for example decarbonisation, re-wilding projects, species reintroductions) - all of which have the potential to change land use from farming, reducing opportunities for the next generation. A decision-making framework is needed to ensure a balanced approach and social justice for rural communities.

Species Reintroductions

17. Recently there has been a growing lobby for species reintroductions. These are species that may have been in the country many hundreds of years ago when the environment was very different to the one we have today.
18. As a country we have many species that are recognised at an international level as being at risk of extinction, for example the nightingale, curlew, and puffin. We are far better to invest in supporting these species that we already have - so we know the environment they need to survive – than spend vast sums of money introducing a new species.
19. Species reintroductions are very expensive, and it cannot be assumed, once released, their behaviour can be predicted, and it is our view that there is a high risk of failure.
20. For those living in the countryside a species release represents a new risk that has to be managed, and raises a number of questions such as the impact on animal disease, the impact on animal welfare, and whether a farming system needs to be changed. Society demands high welfare standards of our farmers, and so farmers will be under pressure to manage risks and threats to the welfare of their livestock.
21. It is also reasonable to ask who will be responsible for the impacts of species reintroductions a generation into the future, after the campaign group has packed up and left. It will of course be those living in the countryside who will have to deal with legacy issues, and it is vital that their voices are fully heard during this debate.
22. A new species will have an impact on the current environment and the species present in it. For example, Lynx will predate other mammals e.g. pine martens, and so introducing one species could be seriously detrimental to another.

23. What happens in an area should be about the people living in the locality and caring for the land. Wales should not be allowed to become a test bed for romanticised notions of campaign groups with no local connection, and no exit strategy if things go wrong.

Ymgyrch Diogelu Cymru Wledig

Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales

Cadeirydd
Is Gadeirydd
Trysorydd

Chairman
Vice Chairman
Treasurer

Jonathan Colchester
Vic Warren, Geoff Sinclair
Penelope Williams



2nd December 2020

STATEMENT OF OBJECTION TO PROPOSED NET LICENCE DUTIES 2021-2023

Dear Ministers and Officials,

I write to you in relation to the proposed fee increases by NRW for the Salmon and Sewin fisheries as per the public notice published by NRW dated 28th October 2020.

I have been made aware of the proposals to dramatically increase the fees for those fishing by coracle and seine nets within our rivers. As an organisation with a mandate to protect the interests of those who live and work in rural Wales, its environment, culture and heritage, there is great concern that a prime rural asset will be lost by these actions.

These heritage fisheries are a jewel in the cultural crown of West Wales and are many hundreds of years old. They support the livelihoods of individuals making up part of their income that will become unviable should the proposed fee option be implemented.

We are blessed with heritage fisheries in other parts of Wales that are also under pressure and restriction, such as the Black Rock Lave Net Fishery in Gwent. Every effort should be put in place to protect these fisheries and to promote their unique status. I note that Welsh Government is content to use these fisheries within its Wales.com platform as part of its global brand pitch, yet is now willing to erode and pressure such fisheries through regulation and cost recovery.

While I am sympathetic to the pressures Welsh Government is under financially through this ongoing COVID crisis, throwing the baby out with the bath water in relation to this matter will have a multiplier effect, not only impacting on the livelihoods of a number of fishers, but also within our tourism and food offer, culture and heritage. This is the wrong time to implement such measures given the policies and restriction in place at Wales level for COVID that have had a profound impact on incomes.

I would ask that you step in as Minister and consider the long term damage this move will cause to rural communities and ask NRW to work with stakeholders to develop more appropriate initiatives that will sustainably support these fisheries and communities.

Yours sincerely

Ymgyrch Diogelu Cymru Wledig

Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales

Cadeirydd
Is Gadeirydd
Trysorydd

Chairman
Vice Chairman
Treasurer

Jonathan Colchester
Vic Warren, Geoff Sinclair
Penelope Williams



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Colchester'.

Jonathan Colchester
Chairman, CPRW



Briefing Note: Tan Lan Embankments

Purpose

This note is supplied in response to the query raised by Llyr Gruffydd MS in the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee meeting, on 8 November, on the cost of repairs at Tan Lan (Conwy Valley). Please see Annex 1 for the transcript of the query.

Current situation and previous repairs at Tan Lan

NRW is responsible for protecting people and homes most at risk from flooding. In line with Welsh Government priorities, we must take a risk based approach to the way we utilise public funds, prioritise accordingly and ensure that appropriate decisions on investment are made considering economic, technical and environmental factors. We must also take a sustainable approach to flood risk management, and explore opportunities to enable our landscape to adapt to climate change, working within the budget available to us.

The impact of last winter's storms on communities has been felt across the whole of the country, and dealing with their aftermath continues, alongside the challenges of adapting to the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

During Storm Ciara on the weekend of 7 February 2020, the Conwy Valley flood scheme successfully defended properties in Llanrwst and Trefriw from flooding from the River Conwy. However, the high river level did, once again, breach the Tan Lan embankment causing agricultural and low-lying land to flood. Damage was identified along a 3km stretch of the Tan Lan embankment in the Conwy Valley, including a substantial breach measuring approximately 17m long, 14m wide and 5m deep. An inspection and assessment of the breach was carried out and an options report was prepared.

The experience of completing previous repairs on this embankment have shown that several considerations must be factored into our design of works and estimated repair costs for this location. Due to the scale of any repairs, any works would need to be carried out under the current Construction (Design & Management) Regulations (CDM 2015). These are the regulations for managing the health, safety and welfare of construction projects that we work to.

Our estimates for full repair of the breach and other damage included the cost of contractors to carry out the work, the sourcing and delivery to site of 1700 tonnes of clay and 300 tonnes of topsoil material, and the hire of appropriate machinery to carry out the repair and welfare facilities for contractors. Alongside this, there are additional costs for temporary works access, fees associated with crossing the Conwy Valley rail line, and an allowance for dealing with land agency issues and risk should weather or ground conditions conspire to work against the contractors. These costs, with risks factored in,

total £150,000. In 2016 we saw a breach slightly larger than that experienced this year – that repair cost £220,000.

Future considerations at Tan Lan

Climate change science indicates and increasing likelihood of frequent storms and heavy rain, as well as rising sea levels. The breaching and damage of the Tan Lan Embankment will, therefore, continue to be an ongoing issue, given its deteriorating condition and relatively low level. We are seeing more frequent damage of this embankment and have recorded at least 11 breaches of varying degrees over the years, each time requiring some sort of repair.

We therefore need to consider the longer-term sustainability of these embankments and the flood risk management role they play locally.

The Tan Lan embankment currently provides a very low-level of flood protection to 6 homes, local businesses (including 49 caravans), agricultural land, the main A470 trunk road and the rail link connecting Conwy Valley communities with the mainline at Llandudno Junction.

It is also a location where we undertake minimal levels of maintenance, because of the low risk to life compared to other locations, and the constraints on our budgets. We are undertaking a viability study to find the best options for the future of the embankment, in relation to the local communities of Maenan and Tan Lan, taking into consideration the impact of the wider Conwy Valley area.

Through this viability study we are keen to work with the community and wider stakeholders, to explore opportunities to create a sustainable flood management solution. This will also give us an opportunity to explore enhancements to the local natural environment.

The study will seek to identify sustainable options for managing the embankment and flood risk to the local communities. The options can typically range from improving and maintaining the existing embankment through temporary or long-term repair work; realigning the flood defence; leaving the embankment to naturally decline and re-connecting the floodplain; providing local flood measures to properties; or a combination of the above. All options will be considered and appropriately appraised using techniques and guidance set out by HM Treasury and Welsh Government

Any decision about the future of the embankment will also take into account the West Wales Shoreline Management Plan, which provides the framework for managing the long-term impact of tidal flooding across Wales and includes the Conwy Valley up to Maenan and Tan Lan. The solution will also need to ensure the Sustainable Management of

Natural Resources in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) and the Environment (Wales) Act (2016).

NRW will continue to work closely with the local communities and stakeholders throughout the study. Once we have initial information about the flood management options, we will be in touch with the local community in the coming months to discuss ideas and better understand local priorities and aspirations, to help shape the future of the scheme.

In the meantime, you can find further information on the project webpage, which we will continue to update as the project progresses: www.naturalresources.wales/tan-lan

December 2020

Annex: Transcript from CCERA session, 8 November 2020

Llyr Gruffydd

Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much. I just want to go back a little bit to where we were when we were talking about investing in more and new infrastructure, be it hard infrastructure or soft infrastructure. There's also the issue, of course, of maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure, which brings substantial cost with it. I'm sure you'll be aware of issues with the Tan Lan embankment in the Conwy valley, where it was breached in February and hundreds of acres flooded, crops lost, livestock lost. I think Natural Resources Wales quoted around about £150,000 to fix the breach, but that wasn't going to happen until a viability study was completed to look at options around the embankment. That isn't going to be completed until at least 2022, and then, of course, the options would be identified, there'd be a preferable option, there'd be a need to resource work, commission work and then complete it. So, you're talking potentially three, maybe more years between the breach and its effectively being addressed. In the meantime, of course, as I'm sure you know, the local community has come together and they've forked out to fix it themselves, using local contractors. It cost £15,000, so there's a question there about making best use of your own investments if a local community can do it for £15,000 and you're quoting a price tag of £150,000. But the question I'm asking is, shouldn't NRW have been in a position to fix that even if it was only on an interim basis, given that the community actually had to do it themselves in the end?⁵³

Clare Pillman 14:18:24

Yes, I'm aware of the Tan Lan embankment and talked to Janet about it. It is not one of our managed assets. We do have around 3,000 assets that we maintain and keep up to standard, invest in and ensure that they operate. But it is a hugely labour-intensive and

difficult cycle, and, as you've demonstrated, Llyr, you can maintain them up to a particular level, but, equally, over time they take more and more investment. So, we always need to look at the viability of that particular asset and the expenditure against it. But I can see Jeremy wants to come in too.⁵⁴

14:20

[Llyr Gruffydd MS](#) 14:20:30

But, in the meantime, it was just going to be left by NRW as it was. Sorry, Jeremy.⁵⁵

Jeremy Parr 14:20:36

No, not at all. I think you're right, Llyr, in terms of the maintenance legacy from the network of defences that we have, and we have to make decisions about where to prioritise the resources that we've got and the investment that goes in. We have repaired those embankments, as I'm sure you know—we've repaired the embankments at Tan Lan at various points in the past. But this presents some of the challenges and some of the issues in terms of the resource that we've got and the prioritisation, obviously, across Wales. It is done on a risk-to-life basis—it is driven largely by where communities are. Where we don't have communities then, unfortunately, we would like to do more work in locations, but in some locations we can't, or it is harder to do. That's the honest position of where we're at, and part of the consequence of having to prioritise.⁵⁶

We're always keen to work with local stakeholders, we're always keen to look at what the solutions are, including in locations where perhaps the time is—I'm not saying necessarily so in Tan Lan—to step back and put the line of defences somewhere else. Obviously, that comes with massive consequences, not least to the landowners. I stress again that's not what necessarily will happen here, but I think again it goes back to our earlier question about thinking about what all of the options are, and what all of the options are in the long run.⁵⁷

[Llyr Gruffydd MS](#) 14:21:58

So, how could it be, then, that addressing the issue cost £15,000 to a local contractor, when, actually, NRW were telling people locally it would £150,000?⁵⁸

Jeremy Parr 14:22:08

I don't know the detail, unfortunately, Llyr, in terms of what the cost comparisons are. I don't know whether that's a truly like-for-like comparison, for example.⁵⁹

[Llyr Gruffydd MS](#) 14:22:16

Maybe you could write to committee giving us what exactly—⁶⁰

Clare Pillman 14:22:19

I think probably we would have been looking at doing it to a different standard.