

HRLN 07 - Evidence from: Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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

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

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

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

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

National Landscapes and National Parks:

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

In addition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Realigning National Park and AONB Management Plans with the nature and

climate emergency

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

Nature Mapping

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

Building Collaboration

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

Resourcing action

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

Improving processes

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

Working fairly

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

Considering legislation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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