

# Natural Resources Wales - Annual Scrutiny 2023-24: Updates to recommendations January 2025

Further to [our original response](#) in July 2024 to the Climate Change, Infrastructure and Environment Committee's Report '[Natural Resources Wales - Annual Scrutiny 2023-24](#)' we committed to providing the Committee with updates against a number of the recommendations made within six months.

## **Recommendation 3. NRW should provide an update as soon as practicable after October 31, 2024, on the progress of developing final strategic indicators and performance metrics.**

This work has been delayed due to our case for change programme. We will write again to update the Committee on our progress with it as soon as practicable.

## **Recommendation 5. NRW should develop and implement an engagement strategy that includes consultation with the public and stakeholders about decisions on service reductions or restructuring. This strategy should aim to manage expectations and explain changes in service delivery.**

We are developing a comprehensive engagement strategy to involve the public and stakeholders in meaningful discussions about service reductions and restructuring. This strategy is now being actively implemented for key areas where services will stop, ensuring clear and timely communication through public meetings, direct engagement, and other inclusive channels.

As implementation plans are finalised for areas of scaled-back service, the strategy will be further refined to address emerging needs and feedback.

Our approach underscores our commitment to transparency and collaboration, ensuring all affected groups clearly understand the reasons behind the changes, how services will evolve, and the steps being taken to support a smooth transition.

## **Recommendation 6: NRW should update the Committee in due course on the details and outcome of its invest-to-save bid.**

Two specific proposals were submitted to Welsh Government in August 2024:

1. Infrastructure rationalisation
2. Service Transformation Programme Customer Services – Marine Module.

Since then, we have had confirmation of funding for both of those bids and further funding to help with pay and inflationary pressures. We expect formal confirmation in the new year.

We have also recently written to Welsh Government to explain the need for further investment in the next financial year, which will lay the groundwork for the submission of further proposals.

## **Recommendation 7. NRW should report to the Committee within the next six months on the status of its visitor centres and outline plans to continue their operation.**

At its meeting on 5 November 2024, the NRW Board agreed to implement the case for change in which it was confirmed that NRW will no longer be operating the catering and retail provisions at our visitor centres at Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas. NRW appreciate the strength of public feeling regarding the Visitor Centres and that the decision to stop these services will be disappointing to many. Catering and retail services at all three sites, Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas, will remain open until 31 March 2025, after which they will close. The sites will continue to be open for recreation access, such as walking and biking and services such as play areas, car parking and toilet provision will also remain available.

We would also like to clarify that our Visitor Centre staff are not responsible for managing the land in and around the centres. This is the responsibility of our land management teams. Therefore, there will be no change to trail and access management nor the maintenance and management of wildlife and the natural environment.

Our priority is finding partners who can work with us to make Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin thriving hubs with a long-term sustainable future. Ensuring that we find the right partner for the right site is essential but to do this we need time to make sure that we are delivering the greatest value for users, local businesses and communities. In the meantime, we are exploring temporary solutions to minimise disruption and continue providing valued services to visitors.

Ynyslas is unique as it forms part of the Dyfi National Nature Reserve (NNR) and as such has specific statutory needs and requirements of which protecting the NNR is priority. This will include retaining an onsite office for land management staff. Ynyslas Visitor Centre will

therefore not be offered commercially and will be solely put forward for community use via an Expression of Interest. Those who have registered an interest in Ynyslas have been contacted by email to advise the Expression of Interest process is open and that the application form is available to download via the [Consultation Hub](#) our website.

We've already received interest in both Coed y Brenin and Bwlch Nant yr Arian, however, to ensure fairness and parity, no proposals are being considered in advance of the public tender exercise that will begin in 2025. The process will be conducted via the Sell2Wales website and those interested can register on the platform in advance of any process starting. We will provide more details of this process, including the start date, in due course.

Details of those who have already contacted us have been added to a mailing list of interested parties so that they receive details of the tendering process when available. Although the public tender exercise has not started, we have been meeting interested parties informally and have arranged drop-in sessions for each site, the details of which are available on the [Consultation Hub](#). To confirm, no formal discussions have taken place. All meetings have been informal and tentative to help identify whether the tender is right for them.

Public engagement sessions for each of our sites to update members of the community and stakeholders on the future of Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Ynyslas and Coed y Brenin visitor centres were held at the end of November.

The sessions were well attended and gave NRW the important opportunity to provide up-to-date information on the changes to retail and catering at our Visitor Centres, as well as answer specific questions and concerns from the public.

Following on from these we have produced a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which will be available for the public to view online via our [Consultation Hub](#). We will continue to update the FAQs as we work through the impact of the Case for Change on Visitor Centres. Any questions or queries can also be directed to a dedicated mailbox [ymgysylltu.masnachol@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:ymgysylltu.masnachol@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk).