

## **ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

**Date:** Wednesday 17 January 2001  
**Time:** 2.00 pm to 5.15 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

### **COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES – PERFORMANCE MONITORING 1999-2000 AND FIRST HALF 2000-2001**

The following report covers CCW's achievement against the key targets set out in the 1999 Welsh Office Departmental Report (for 1999-2000) and in the National Assembly's first strategic plan – [www.betterwales.com](http://www.betterwales.com) (for 2000-20001).

As can be seen below, two external factors have had a significant impact on the achievement of some of CCW's targets, firstly the Assembly decision during 1999-2000 to double the budget for Tir Gofal and secondly the European Commission's requirement that the UK should significantly increase the number of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) that it was putting forward under the Habitats Directive. Both of these decisions have resulted in the organisation reprioritising its work and not achieving some of the targets that would otherwise have been met.

#### **1999-2000**

##### **Target 1: prepare 150 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Management Plans)**

There is an overall target to have management plans in place for all SSSI by the year 2004. These plans set out how a site needs to be managed to ensure that the valuable wildlife, for which it has been designated, is safeguarded or enhanced. 86 management plans were prepared in 1999-2000 because many of the staff involved in preparing these plans were diverted onto Tir Gofal work when the National Assembly took the decision to double the

budget for the scheme in November 1999.

## **Target 2: Define, maintain and publicise 1500km of Public Rights of Way (PROW)**

CCW uses its grants, mainly to local authorities, to secure access opportunities for walkers in Wales. Over the years 1997-99, CCW grant aid helped local authorities improve 3000km of PROW. Following consultation in 1999-2000, we began a shift in priorities to funding routes that are close to population centres, linked to public transport and to schemes that promote the health benefits of walking. In 1999-2000 we helped bring about the improvement of a further 1200km of PROW. The lower figure reflects the fact that PROW work was becoming more expensive as local authorities began to tackle more costly engineering works (bridges etc) and the shift to trying to get people in populous areas to get out in the countryside which involved more promotional type work.

## **Target 3: Secure 600 Tir Gofal agreements**

Offers were made to 472 farmers with the intention of bringing the balance in the following year. Under the original budget it would only have been possible to bring in 300 farms because the value of each agreement was much higher than anticipated, largely because entrants were offering far greater environmental benefits. The budget was doubled late in the financial year to try and keep the figure of 600 farms. Despite diverting non Tir Gofal staff onto recruiting additional entrants it was not possible to visit all 600 and make offers before the end of the year.

## **Target 4: Complete 48% of the survey of intertidal habitats**

The knowledge of our marine and coastal habitats is limited, compared to that for their terrestrial equivalents. To redress this we have set in hand a detailed survey of our intertidal habitats (those exposed between tides), aiming for complete coverage and mapping. This will provide the baseline against which we can monitor the health of our coasts, around 60% of which are of European significance. The 48% target was met.

## **Target 5: Undertake at least 20 NNR audits**

We aim to audit all of Wales' NNR on a 3-year rolling programme principally to ensure that they are being managed to safeguard the features for which they were designated and for their educational and research purposes. 23 audits were undertaken in 1999-2000. Given the additional funding that the National Assembly has identified for CCW from next year we are able to commence a programme of works to bring the NNR that CCW manages into better condition. Over recent years funding has only enabled care and maintenance work.

## **Target 6: 13 Local Authorities undertaking *LANDMAP* assessments**

*LANDMAP* is a landscape assessment methodology that CCW has developed in collaboration with partners to give local authorities an objective planning tool that enables them to assess the impact of development on landscapes. It is a GIS based application that overlays various landscape components (eg habitat, archaeological data). CCW grant aids local authorities to develop *LANDMAP*. During the year the Vale of Glamorgan won a Landscape Institute award for its *LANDMAP* work which has subsequently received the Council of Europe Landscape award. The target of 13 was met.

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## **2000-2001**

### **Target 1: Notifications of 40 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

At the half-year stage CCW had notified/renotified 8 SSSI. This had risen to 20 by the ¾ year stage and a further 20 are scheduled to be notified at the Council meeting in March. We are therefore estimating that we will meet the original target. The need to divert staff on to the work on SAC notification has had an impact on this work, particularly in the first half of the year.

### **Target 2: Define, maintain and publicise 750km of Public Rights of Way (PROW)**

The declining target reflects in part the declining grants budget for access this year, but also the continuing shift towards funding locally accessible routes and promotional schemes for the use of PROW especially linked to health (eg the Walking the Way to Health Initiative jointly funded by the British Heart Foundation). At the half-year stage we had negotiated programmes with local authorities that will deliver 560km of improved PROW and promotional work for the improved usage of the network.

Although CCW staff became heavily engaged in the first half of the year on preparatory work for the introduction of the statutory right of access to open country, that did not feature at the time the targets were set and the proposal could not be confirmed until the legislation was enacted at the end of November. Assembly officials are aware of the detailed operational plan that CCW is now working to in respect of this legislation.

### **Target 3: Secure 930 Tir Gofal agreements (inc 330 from 99-00)**

At the half-year stage 242 of the first year agreements had been signed and by the end of the year we estimate that this figure will have risen to 520. To obtain 520 agreements CCW staff have had to visit over 700 farms. We estimate that the area of farmland that will come into the scheme with the first year agreements will be 54,000ha compared to original estimates of 43,000ha. In addition we expect to have visited and commenced negotiation on a further 200 farms from the second intake.

#### **Target 4: Compete 61% of the survey of intertidal habitats**

At the half-year stage 58% of the coastline had been surveyed and as the field season ends in October this figure will not be exceeded. Because of the EU Commission's demands that the UK should significantly increase the number of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) that it was putting forward under the Habitats Directive the staff involved in this work have been diverted onto identifying the marine sites. As a result we have lost survey time and will not achieve the 61% this year.

#### **Target 5: Undertake at least 20 NNR audits**

At the half-year stage 8 had been completed. We estimate that we will again complete 23 by the end of the year.

#### **Target 6: 15 Local Authorities undertaking *LANDMAP* assessments**

At the half-year stage 14 local authorities were signed up. Work on Snowdonia National Park Authority *LANDMAP* will commence in the final quarter and the target will thus be met. The authorities which remain to take up the scheme are Powys, Ceredigion, Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil, Pembrokeshire, Flint, Neath Port Talbot, Conwy and the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks.