CCW QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW:

SECOND STAGE REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The quinquennial review of the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) has been conducted in two stages. The first considered whether there was a continuing need for all of the functions of CCW and whether the current organisational framework was the most appropriate. The first stage of the review, presented to the National Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in March 2001, concluded that there was a continuing need for CCW and its functions. A summary of the main findings arising from the first stage is given at Appendix 1 of this report.

This, second stage, report goes on to consider what improvements should be made to the way in which CCW's functions are delivered and its relationship with the National Assembly. It also examines whether CCW is managing its finances effectively and in accordance with the requirements of regularity, propriety and value-for-money.

The review

The review identifies areas where there is scope for improving CCW's effectiveness, and attempts to do so in a context that identifies CCW's achievements to date. In acknowledging the inputs of those who contributed to the consultation exercise, I have tried not only to reflect and balance the views of interested parties as much as is practicable but also to offer up constructive suggestions on how some of the improvements may be effected.

It is the nature of all reviews that they tend to impart criticism and highlight weaknesses rather than focusing on what has been done well. In addition, reviews of this kind are not static exercises. Consequently, the recommendations in this report relate to some issues that had been flagged up by CCW before the review started or were being tackled by CCW during the course of the review. Nevertheless, all of the recommendations have been presented in the Executive Summary not only for completeness, but also, and more significantly, as a summary series of action points for CCW and the National Assembly to consider in due course.

The key issues identified in the body of this report relate to:

- the general direction of CCW – in terms of improvements to the organisation's strategic planning, performance and monitoring mechanisms;
- communications – within CCW, and with external organisations, both of which could be more effective;
- the relationship between CCW and the National Assembly – which could be improved through closer working by both parties;
- implications for CCW in the longer term, as a result of similar reviews of other bodies, such as the Environment Agency.

The commentary that accompanies each set of recommendations below is, of necessity, brief and selective in highlighting these issues.

General direction of CCW

- **Strategic planning**

CCW has a sound planning framework in place with a corporate planning regime now clearly linked to an integrated detailed operational (or business) plan. CCW has also recently set out its longer term vision of aspirations for the Welsh environment over the next ten years or so which dovetails with that of the Assembly's *betterwales.com* strategy. With these mechanisms in place, the planning framework needs to be strengthened to clarify CCW's role by making more explicit linkages between the aims of the organisation, the outcomes which it is striving for, the programmes of action contributing to those outcomes, and the performance measures that indicate progress towards achieving those outcomes.

Recommendations

1 For future purposes, CCW should couch its activities consistently within the single set of themes described in its recent Vision Statement and to adopt those themes as the four core aims of the organisation, supplemented with an additional aim geared towards continuous service improvement. (Chapter 4.1)

2 CCW should kick-start the process of engaging with its partners and the Assembly in order to translate its aspirations for the Welsh environment over the next ten years, as set out in its Vision Statement, into a jointly agreed series of practical actions (Chapter 4.3)

3 CCW should adopt a new format for Corporate Plan and Annual Report purposes that makes explicit linkages between the organisation's long-term aims, outcomes, programmes of action and performance measures. (Chapter 4.1)

4 CCW should provide a 'SWOT' analysis in its future Corporate Plans to demonstrate more explicitly how its planned activities are directed towards tackling the threats to, and the benefits from, the Welsh environment. (Chapter 4.1)

5 CCW should focus more on publishing *qualitative* indicators of its performance to supplement the quantitative measures that are currently produced. (Chapter 3.4)

6 CCW, in conjunction with the Assembly, should embark on a programme of staff training on the values and practicalities surrounding sustainable development (SD), as a key component for developing its SD action plan. (Chapter 7.2)

7 CCW should consider incorporating various proposals into its forthcoming sustainable development action plan. These proposals include:

- redefining CCW's aims and objectives;
- compliance statements in Council papers;
- recasting Memoranda of Understanding with other partners that identify SD actions;
- developing SD appraisal criteria;
- drawing up proposals with other Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs);
- implementing CCW's green transport and housekeeping projects. (Chapter 7.2)

8 CCW should draw up an annual programme of Value for Money exercises, allied to its existing efficiency reviews, covering a range of its operations – a programme that should be brought fully within the remit of the cycle of Internal Audit reviews currently conducted by CCW. (Chapter 8.3)

- **Performance**

There is a consensus among those with expertise in the field that CCW's achievements have been successful and significant. It has also a generally good record of meeting the targets of outputs and other deliverables that have been set over recent years. In reporting on its future performance, CCW needs to provide information that reflects more fully the breadth of its activities, in addition to the Assembly's key priorities, and to benchmark its achievements against those of other similar organisations.

Recommendations

9 The Assembly, in association with other Government administrations, should agree that CCW and its sister agencies in other parts of the UK should draw up jointly agreed sets of meaningful and comparable financial and non-financial performance indicators; and that CCW should publish such data regularly. (Chapters 3.3 and 8.4)

10 CCW should display a greater recognition of, and provide more information on, its wider activities as an essential feature of its future performance reporting. (Chapter 3.4)

11 CCW should provide more contextual and qualitative information in its Annual Report to help readers gauge the significance of the organisation's achievements compared with the targets set for the year in question (Chapter 4.1)

12 CCW should be more vigilant in providing explanations of instances where differences occur between information presented in its Corporate Plan and that provided in its Annual Report. (Chapter 4.1)

- **Monitoring**

CCW is led by a Council of twelve Members appointed by the Assembly; and their role in steering the organisation is well understood. Council Members have limited time commitments to devote to CCW's business and they face a heavy and broad portfolio at Council meetings, which is largely shaped by the requirements of legislation and the National Assembly. The Members are responsible for monitoring the achievement of CCW's targets and for ensuring that they have enough information to enable them judge progress towards targets and to consider corrective action if performance diverges from plan. Council Members need to focus more attention on this role. There is an opportunity here, as elsewhere, for the Assembly to be more supportive through, in this instance, providing guidance and training to help CCW strengthen its approach for tracking the organisation's in-year progress and impact.

Recommendations

13 CCW Council Members should focus more on their role in assessing and monitoring the impact that their organisation is making on the Welsh environment. (Chapter 4.3)

14 CCW Council Members should, as a slight departure from current practice, conduct their monitoring through a more in-depth consideration of particular suites of performance indicators; and should encourage junior staff in CCW to report at Council meetings on progress in their particular specialist areas (Chapter 4.3)

15 The Technical Support and Research Committee of Council Members should operate in a more strategic manner in overseeing the awards of, and outcomes from, CCW-commissioned research *and* CCW's grant aid programme. (Chapter 9.4)

16 CCW should review those areas of activity where outputs have fallen short of the targets set in recent years in order to inject a greater degree of refinement into its overall target-setting process. (Chapter 3.2)

17 CCW should present a more analytical written commentary on the data contained in the Financial Statements presented at each Council meeting. (Chapter 8.3)

Communication within CCW

CCW has its Headquarters offices based in Bangor, with just over one-half of its staff complement located in five Area Offices and eight smaller sub offices located throughout the rest of Wales. The organisation has a narrow top management team, comprising the Chief Executive, a senior Director, and two other Directors. Despite the pressures that they are facing, within a complex organisation that is growing and changing in nature, senior management has implemented a range of mechanisms for engaging with their staff across Wales; and CCW hopes to achieve Investor in People status before the end of next year. The relationships between officers at an individual level can be extremely positive, but there are indications, however, that the lines of communication within CCW are not as effective as they should be.

CCW has highly dedicated staff and it is vital that it maintains a motivated and experienced workforce. The Council and senior management need to explore ways of improving the corporate culture within CCW and to tackle and minimise the frustrations felt by some CCW staff based in Headquarters' offices and others based in Area Offices. In framing its planned internal communications strategy, CCW should take account of the following recommendations:

Recommendations

18 CCW Council Members should consider earlier participation in CCW policy-making process; and should explore, with senior officers, opportunities for greater linkages and involvement between Members and other CCW staff. (Chapter 4.3)

19 CCW should generate prominent displays of real commitment by senior management, throughout the year – with greater visibility and participation of Council Members – in engaging with, and responding positively to CCW's staff across Wales, in order to stimulate and maintain a more widespread sense of corporate culture. (Chapter 4.4)

20 CCW should conduct regular staff surveys to gauge the progress being made to improve the attitudes of staff within the organisation. (Chapter 4.4)

21 CCW should explore the merits of revising its staff structure to bring together more scientific and policy staff working in similar subject areas. (Chapter 5.3)

22 CCW should incorporate a more comprehensive range of performance measures and targets in its Corporate Plan, which should be accepted by the Assembly, to help generate greater motivation among some key staff for delivering CCW overall objectives (Chapter 4.1)

23 The Assembly should support CCW's proposals to recruit a further two Directors: one in charge of (Finance, Personnel and Information Management) and the other focussing on agri-environment to strengthen the directorial responsibilities of the senior management team and to enhance their visibility and interaction with other CCW staff (Chapter 5.3).

24 CCW should consider the introduction of an internal 'newsletter' as a tool for conveying staff/management developments and opportunities within the organisation. (Chapter 5.3)

25 CCW is not currently monitoring its equal opportunities policy; and should do so (Chapter 5.3)

External communications

Much of CCW's overall achievements are delivered through joint work with a wide range of bodies in the voluntary sector, local government and others in the public sector as well as through a series of partnerships involving land owners and occupiers. Indeed, the relationship between CCW and others is symbiotic – with one dependent upon the other for the delivery of outputs.

The vast majority of consultees have confidence in CCW as a body with which they can do business; and they feel that productive, valuable relationships have been established between them. Despite praise for CCW's responsiveness and accessibility, there is nevertheless a continuing need for CCW to explore the scope for closer, greater joint working with other bodies and for enhancing its own public profile, within the external communications strategy that it is developing.

For many bodies and individuals, CCW's office network provides important local 'one stop shops' for the organisation as a whole. Its regional presence, however, is largely inherited and the opportunity exists for CCW to examine whether the role and capacity of its network is capable of meeting the challenges facing the organisation in the coming years.

Recommendations

26 CCW should consider establishing a formal platform of liaison and consultation between Council Members and representatives of other sectors as a mechanism for developing a stronger spirit of partnership working and for helping to inform Members on the future shape of CCW's strategic direction. (Chapter 5.2)

27. CCW should review the coverage and staff complement of its Area Office network, including opportunities for sharing accommodation and associated facilities with other ASPBs. (Chapter 5.2)

28 CCW should make greater efforts to not only promote itself to the public as an organisation its own right but also direct more of its work and that of other bodies, including the Assembly, into overtly demonstrable activities with which the general public can associate. (Chapter 6.1)

29 CCW Memoranda of Understanding with more organisations should be underpinned by formal joint action plans that describe the planned activities that each party will carry out over agreed timescales. (Chapter 6.2)

30 CCW should build closer connections with other sectors through joint initiatives with local government, education and training, voluntary sector, agricultural organisations as well as with other ASPBs. Such initiatives might include: educational sponsorships; more information provision on SSSIs; continuing with developing the economic potential of NNRs; joint staff training with the agricultural community; sustainable development; and green tourism. (Chapter 6.2)

31 CCW should consider adopting a client manager approach for managing in a more structured way its relationships with appropriate ASPBs. (Chapter 6.2)

32 In framing its communications strategy, CCW should take account of perceptions about issues relating to CCW's visibility; its lines of communication between HQ and Area Offices; and written communication. (Chapter 6.2)

33 CCW should consider undertaking a programme of regular surveys for gauging the satisfaction of customers with its services. (Chapter 8.5)

34 CCW should publish, on a routine basis, the agendas and non-confidential papers of Council meetings on its website. (Chapter 8.5)

35 CCW should revise its current 'Statement of Standards of Service'. (Chapter 8.5)

CCW and the National Assembly

The managerial and financial control arrangements between CCW and the Assembly are set out in a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum that define the framework within which CCW operates and provide the terms and conditions under which the Assembly provides funding to CCW in the form of grant in aid. Overlaying these arrangements is a series of Assembly policy documents, most notably, *betterwales.com* which outlines the guiding themes and values for influencing the way in which the Assembly develops its policies, priorities and programmes. There are clear indications that much of CCW activities are responding to the Assembly's guiding values; and the organisation, like other ASPBs, is developing an action plan for pushing forward the Assembly's sustainable development agenda. With more resources at its disposal compared with earlier years, CCW is in a stronger position to play a wider role in responding to other Assembly initiatives.

In carrying out its role as an independent advisor to Assembly Ministers, Government Departments and other interested bodies, CCW's expertise is highly respected by external organisations. And consultations with National Assembly officials provide positive indications of support for the quality of CCW's advice provided to them. CCW's sponsor division in the Assembly needs to ensure that it continues to work closely with CCW in helping and guiding the organisation to shape and meet its planned activities.

Both CCW and the Assembly are still coming to terms with each other; and there needs to be a strengthening of the relationship between them and for mechanisms to be in place for doing so and for avoiding any potential policy incompatibilities wherever possible, bearing in mind CCW's independent view as an ASPB.

CCW's agency role in managing the Assembly's agri-environment scheme, Tir Gofal, also deserves specific mention here in view of its potential impact, in environmental and financial terms, on the Welsh countryside. A recent 'stocktake' of Tir Gofal examined the scope for improving the administrative arrangements of the benefits from the scheme. Similar exercises need to be carried out in the future to ensure that the scheme is managed efficiently and effectively.

In corporate governance terms, CCW is a well-run organisation with sound control mechanisms in place as evidenced by the annual programmes of internal and external audit reports, CCW's Audit Committee, and more recently by a peer review carried out by the Assembly's own Internal Audit Service. The reporting arrangements between CCW and the Assembly are generally positive; but the Assembly needs to consider relaxing some of the controls that are currently in operation and to look for ways of providing CCW with more guidance and training on certain financial issues.

While some other recommendations below are quite specific in nature, they point to a broader need for greater integration between the Assembly and CCW, and for the Assembly to continue keeping a look out for opportunities to involve CCW (and other ASPBs) more generally in initiatives stemming from the Assembly.

Recommendations

36 The Assembly should consider an interchange of staff between CCW and the Assembly's sponsor division, and other relevant policy divisions, through a programme of short-term secondments, in order to generate a deeper understanding of each other's work. (Chapter 8.1)

37 CCW and the Assembly should put in place mechanisms for avoiding potential policy incompatibilities or contentious issues between the two parties, recognising the former's statutory independence. (Chapter 7.3)

38 CCW and the Assembly should consider better ways of developing a closer understanding between them. These might include:

- re-exploring ways in which Assembly Members (AMs) can see the work of CCW;
- opening up opportunities for AMs to forge stronger links with staff at CCW's local offices within their constituencies;
- developing a regular information service beamed at AMs;
- more time devoted to CCW business at meetings of the Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee;
- reporting with other appropriate ASPBs or other bodies on a thematic basis. (Chapter 7.4)

39 The Assembly should periodically review CCW's agency role in respect of Tir Gofal. The next 'stocktake' should review:

- the interface between CCW and the cartographic section of the Assembly's Agriculture Department;
- the administration costs of the scheme;
- its impact in environmental and socio-economic terms;
- the monitoring arrangements for the scheme within the Assembly;
- the views of other stakeholders; and
- the role of CCW Council Members in providing advice on the future shape of the scheme. (Chapter 7.5)

40 The Assembly should examine the scope for streamlining the various financial delegation limits that apply to CCW and for clarifying the rationale underpinning the Assembly's existing financial requirements. (Chapter 8.1) Allied to this, CCW should also consider whether the financial delegation limits that are currently applied by the Assembly to the organisation as a whole should also be cascaded to CCW's own managerial staff. (Chapter 8.1)

41 The Assembly should consider giving CCW complete freedom – within its annual running costs limit – to appoint and vary the staff it employs. The Assembly's need to monitor CCW's staff numbers should also be reviewed. (Chapter 7.6)

42 The Assembly should consider issuing guidance and providing training to CCW to help inform its plans for developing a risk management strategy. (Chapter 8.2)

43 The Assembly and CCW should continue to devise annual sets of efficiency targets, to be set out in the remit letters issued by the Assembly, that are challenging and realistic – with both parties monitoring the outcomes. (Chapter 8.6)

44 The Assembly should ensure that CCW's plans for improving productivity are managed in such a way that they deliver tangible results, on time and within budget. (Chapter 8.6)

CCW and the Environment Agency

The first stage of the review concluded that there was a continuing need for CCW and for its functions. In subsequent correspondence with CCW, the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities and the Minister for Environment, Planning and Transport agreed that CCW should continue to operate as an ASPB for at least the next five years. The Ministers pointed out that any fundamental constitutional change to CCW, for example, some form of CCW/Environment Agency Wales body, would be a matter for the medium to long-term, when account would be taken of the conclusions and recommendations from reviews of other associated public bodies.

The first stage report of the review of the Environment Agency (EA) was published in August and the report comes down in favour of retaining the agency in Wales as an integrated part of the Agency as whole. Rather than a separate Welsh agency, the report makes proposals for improving the Agency's Welsh focus.

Apart from the EA review, which is on-going, there are a number of additional bodies and agencies with direct and indirect land and water use interests - some of which are also subject to individual quinquennial reviews. Reviews of the Welsh Development Agency and Forest Enterprise have already been completed; while reviews of the Wales Tourist Board and of CADW are in the pipeline. A more general Cabinet Office and Treasury review of executive agencies is also underway.

These various reviews should generate a wide range of baseline information that can be used as a basis for assessing whether the entire organisational framework is best structured for meeting the needs of Wales in the longer term. This would be a major study, whose recommendations might well include far-reaching proposals that would require primary legislation.

Recommendation

45 In view of Assembly Ministers' intentions to return to the question of a combined EA/CCW body, the Assembly should consider undertaking a wider review of the current structures and arrangements for delivering land and water use functions in Wales as a whole. (Chapter 9.5)

Other issues

There were some aspects of CCW's operations identified in the interim report that were to be carried forward for more detailed consideration as part of the second stage of the review. For the most part, these are covered in the final chapter of this report that includes, in particular, recommendations for improving CCW's programme for grant aiding other organisations.

Recommendations

46 CCW should ensure that it fulfils, this year, its long-standing obligation to implement a systematic programme of post-payment grant monitoring reviews. (Chapter 8.2)

47 CCW should adopt other proposals for improving the administration of its grant aid regime. These proposals include the need for:

- a more transparent and accessible system;
- better management information;
- a more active, strategic, role of Council Members in overseeing the grant programme. (Chapter 9.3)

48 CCW and other bodies providing warden and ranger services should draw up proposals for greater joint working and training. (Chapter 9.1)

49 CCW should continue with its plans to look for appropriate opportunities for contracting out more of its management work on National Nature Reserves. (Chapter 9.2)

Next steps

This second stage (final) report of the quinquennial review of CCW is being submitted to the Assembly Minister for the Environment, Planning and Transport and the Assembly Minister for Finance, Local Government & Communities. Following Ministerial consideration of this and the first stage (interim) report, a Cabinet response will be announced later in the year and the review will subsequently be the subject of an Assembly Plenary session. Ministers will also commission, approve and publish an Action Plan to implement agreed recommendations arising from the review.

Acknowledgements

Finally, I would like to record my gratitude to the wide range of individuals and organisations who gave freely of their time and expertise during the course of the consultations undertaken during both stages of this quinquennial review.

I am conscious of the demands that the review process has made upon Council Members and the staff of CCW; and I am grateful for the receptiveness and goodwill shown by those who I met or consulted. My gratitude in particular goes to the Chief Executive, Paul Loveluck CBE JP, and his senior management team, for the enthusiastic support and assistance which they have consistently provided during the course of the entire review.

I I THOMAS

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September 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1: QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW – SECOND STAGE

1.1 Background

1.1.1 As part of a the programme of quinquennial reviews of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPB) announced in May 2000, the National Assembly for Wales commissioned a review of the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW).

1.1.2 CCW is the independent adviser to the National Assembly for Wales on countryside and wildlife issues. It has statutory responsibilities for wildlife conservation on land and at sea; for landscape conservation; for promoting enjoyment of the countryside; and for encouraging public understanding of the environment in Wales. The CCW also administers the Tir Gofal agri-environmental scheme on behalf of the National Assembly.

1.1.3 The National Assembly is committed to review each Assembly Sponsored Public Body (ASPB) every five years. Such reviews examine whether there is a continuing need for the functions carried out by the body under review and, if so, what might be done to improve its accountability, its strategic effectiveness and its conduct of business.

1.1.4 This report is the second stage of the quinquennial review of CCW. The report follows on from the first stage of the review, which was submitted in the form of an 'interim report' to the Assembly's SecretaryMinister for Environment, Planning and Transport.

1.1.5 The first stage of the review (the main findingsrecommendations from which appear in Appendix 1) concludedconfirmed that there was a the continuing need for CCW and for its the CCW's functions. ; and in In subsequent correspondence with CCW, the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities and the Minister for Environment, Planning and Transport agreed that CCW should continue to operate as an ASPB for at least the next five years. The Ministers pointed out that anyAny fundamental constitutional change to CCW would be a matter for the medium- to long- term, which would have to take account of the emerging conclusions of reviews of other associated bodies such as the Environment Agency.

1.1.6 The first stage of the review took account of the views of the National Assembly's Environment and Transport Committee earlier this year; and the Committee will again be expressing its views on this, the 'stage two' draft report, before the Assembly Cabinet comes to a view on the report's conclusions and recommendations.

1.1.7 The reviewer for the first stage (Ian Thomas at the Assembly's Finance Planning Division) was commissioned to carry out work on the second stage of the CCW review; and this report summarises the outcome of that work.

1.2 Terms of reference

1.2.1 The terms of reference governing the second stage of the CCW review are given in Appendix 2. They focus on two main issues:

- on theAre there improvements which should be made to the way in which the Countryside Council of Wales' functions are delivered, taking account of its statutory duties and the National Assembly's values and objectives, and to the functioning of its relationship with the National Assembly; ? and
- on whether CCW is Is the Countryside Council for Wales managing its finances effectively and in accordance with the requirements of regularity, propriety and value-for-money; and on the ? What progress it has has the Countryside Council for Wales made in improving the efficiency of its operation?

1.3 Consultation Conduct of the review

1.3.1 The quinquennial review process is open and transparent; and a feature of it is the opportunity for the body's partners, customers, staff and other stakeholders to submit their views and comments on CCW. This consultation involved a general invitation to a wide range of bodies working in the fields of environmental conservation, recreation, and access to the countryside, to submit written responses to a consultation paper. One hundred organisations and individuals submitted written comments to the consultation paper – a list of whom, together with and the consultation paper, appeared in the interim report.

1.3.2 In addition, aA series of face-to-face consultations with staff and members of CCW and with officials from the National Assembly and other organisations was also conducted, which covered, ing in particularly, issues surrounding the second stage of the review. As was the case with the first stage, I am grateful to those (listed in Appendix 3) who gave freely of their time and expertise during the course of my meetings with them. – and these are listed in Appendix 3.

1.3.3 Both stages of the review were overseen by a Steering Group which comprised the following members:

David Richards (Chairman), Principal Finance Officer, National Assembly for Wales

Richard Clarke, Financial Planning Division, National Assembly for Wales

Dr Mike Dunn, Head, Food and Farming Development Division, National Assembly for Wales

Martin Evans, Director, Environment, Planning and Transport Group, National Assembly for Wales

Paul Loveluck CBE, JP, Chief Executive, Countryside Council for Wales

Dr June Milligan, Head, Countryside Division, National Assembly for Wales

Mathew Quinn, Head, Policy Unit, National Assembly for Wales

Dr. Malcolm Smith, Senior Director, Countryside Council for Wales

Michael Trickey, Head, Financial Planning 2, National Assembly for Wales

1.4 Structure of the report

1.4.1 This report is structured to cover the main elements of the terms of reference and other issues brought forward from the first stage of the review:

- Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of CCW, in terms of its statutory basis and its main activities;
- Chapter 3 considers CCW's achievements and performance against targets;
- Chapter 4 examines the effectiveness of the organisation's corporate planning regime;
- Chapter 5 outlines CCW's organisational structure;
- Chapter 6 explores its relationships with partners, customers and the public;
- Chapter 7 analyses its relationship with the Assembly;
- Chapter 8 looks at CCW's financial and managerial control arrangements; and
- Chapter 9 revisits a certain variety of issues that arose fromwere highlighted in the interim report.

CHAPTER 2: COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES – OVERVIEW

2.1 Statutory basis

2.1.1 The Countryside Council for Wales is the statutory adviser to the National Assembly for Wales on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and the opportunity for outdoor enjoyment throughout Wales and its inshore waters. CCW's 'vision' is for Wales "to be a country with greater character in its appearance (and for Wales') countryside and surrounding seas to support more wildlife and the habitats that species depend on; be managed to provide sustainable employment; and improve the wellbeing (of) and give more enjoyment to residents and visitors alike".

2.1.2 The main duties and powers of CCW are set out in Sections 130 and 131 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which are as follows:

- to perform functions for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside;
- to encourage the provision or improvement of facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside, including opportunities for open-air recreation and the study of nature;
- to have regard to the social and economic interests of rural areas in Wales;
- to discharge nature conservation functions, including the notification of sites of special scientific interest; and the implementation of EC Habitats and Birds Directives and the Biodiversity Convention;
- to advise local planning authorities and other bodies on a range of developments or operations that might impact on countryside or nature conservation matters;
- to advise the Secretary of State, any other Minister or any public body, on conservation or countryside matters as they may refer to the CCW or as the CCW sees fit;
- to carry out or commission such research as the CCW deems necessary for the purposes of any of its functions;
- to establish (with 'sister bodies' in England and Scotland) a Joint Nature Conservation Committee to perform "special" functions – about GB wide and international matters, including the provision of advice and dissemination of knowledge on nature conservation, and establishing common standards for monitoring and research into nature conservation;
- to respond to consultations on, inter alia, development plans; Environmentally Sensitive Areas; Habitat Directive implementation; development proposals – including responding to duties laid on third parties to consult CCW;
- to be consulted, and advise the National Assembly, on appointments, plans, funding and administration of National Park Authorities;
- to experiment and implement experimental schemes;
- to give grants to public and voluntary bodies and individuals.

2.1.3 CCW's statutory duties and powers and its roles as a statutory consultee are wide-ranging; and a fuller description of them was provided in the Interim Report.

2.2 Activities

2.2.1 The work of CCW can be categorised into five main areas, comprising:

- ***Nature conservation and biodiversity*** – which involves CCW in protecting and enhancing the natural richness of the land, rivers, lakes and surrounding seas and their plant and animal life by, for example:
  - continuing the implementation (through research, survey work and the preparation of management schemes) of Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) agreed by the Government for the 222 species and habitats occurring in Wales in order to safeguard and enhance their distribution or abundance.
  - notifying sites and adding to the series of some 1,000 of Wales' most important biological and geological areas – Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – which merit the benefits of this protection; monitoring the condition of a sample of such sites; and advising on activities affecting them and their management. and preventing damage to them. (Some of the SSSIs back up areas designated as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and classified Special Protection Areas for birds (SPAs) which have been submitted to Europe as part of the UK's contribution to the EU's Natura 2000 programme);
  - extending the area of SSSIs under appropriate management through management agreements between CCW and land managers;
  - continuing to survey the intertidal habitats around the coast to provide information for notifying new intertidal SSSIs; and providing advice to local authorities and others in relation, for example, to oil spills;
  - implementing management works (for example, woodland, water or sand dune management) and surveillance arrangements in Wales' 63 National
  - Nature Reserves (NNRs) to ensure that their habitats and species are in good health;
  - liaising with other 'sister agencies' in the UK through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to meet UK Government obligations, such as those arising from the EU Habitats Species and Birds Directives, and to maintain common standards for monitoring the status of UK wildlife and habitats;
  - licensing certain operations that affect for protecting European protected species and advising on the conservation aspects of applications for licences associated with developments issued by the National Assembly to capture or disturb protected species;
  - providing data and information to support the implementation of local biodiversity action plans led by local authorities in association with voluntary bodies and others.
  - encouraging local authorities to establish Local Nature Reserves, particularly those accessible to more urban areas;
  - supporting Coed Cymru in reintroducing sustainable management for broadleaved woodland and Tir Coed in encouraging new planting through community-led initiatives.
- ***Agri-environment*** – which involves CCW in administering the all-Wales scheme, Tir Gofal, (and its experimental pilot, Tir Cymen), on behalf of the National Assembly, The scheme makes payments to landowners and occupiers to manage their land in ways that restore wildlife value, provide public access and promote environmental understanding. The scheme thus impacts upon all of CCW's other work areas.

  Tir Gofal involves CCW in drawing up and maintaining administrative procedures for dealing with applications to the scheme and advising the National Assembly; visiting land to assess and draw up plans for managing the farms; negotiating agreements with landowners and occupiers; making payments to those accepted into the scheme; compliance monitoring to ensure agreements are being adhered to; issuing guidance on proposals and modifications to agreements; responding to enquiries and providing advice and information about the characteristics of Tir Gofal; and providing regular updates on progress to the National Assembly.
- ***Landscape conservation*** – involving the protection of landscapes, sea views and geological heritage, by
  - working with local authorities to produce and implement landscape assessments using the CCW-designed 'LANDMAP' method to classify, map and evaluate the Welsh landscape in order to help guide their planning processes on a consistent all-Wales basis;
  - supporting National Parks and their work to conserve and enhance the landscapes they contain;
  - encouraging, through advice and grant aid, enhancement of landscapes designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coasts;
  - advising the National Assembly and local authorities on strategic and development plans;
  - producing good practice guides (e.g. on countryside buildings and other design issues) on the management of protected landscapes;
  - undertaking research to maintain quality of advice on landscape impacts;
  - responding to consultations and requests for advice from developers and others to ensure that developments proceed in ways that do not damage landscape and wildlife;
  - developing ways for assessing seascapes to help advice on visual impacts (e.g. arising from offshore windfarms and other energy proposals) on inshore waters and coasts.
- ***Access and recreation*** – which involves CCW in offering opportunities for people to enjoy the natural beauty and wildlife of the countryside coast and inshore waters by, for example:
  - helping to ensure that local authorities have the most-used public rights of way system opened, signed and maintained;
  - ensuring that the National Trails are designated and managed to high standards;
  - increasing the networks of linear routes for cyclists and horseriders as well as improving access opportunities, linked to public transport, to walkers in the countryside and to encourage walking for health;
  - working with the National Assembly, landowners and occupiers to implement Government action for a legal right of access to increased areas of mountain, moor, heath and down, by preparing maps to 'open country' and common land, helping local access forums and grant aiding on-the-ground works;
  - auditing existing access arrangements on National Nature Reserves.
- ***Improving understanding*** – which involves CCW in enhancing public awareness and understanding of the natural environment by, for example:
  - providing an environmental education support service to the public from within CCW;
  - improving its publications and website for school and college purposes;
  - helping others, including voluntary and community organisations to improve environmental understanding through advice and grant aid;
  - developing the education potential of National Nature Reserves, by improving site interpretation, extending visitor facilities and educational materials linked to school curricula, and providing guided walks;
  - working with the National Assembly and others to follow up relevant work of the Environmental Education Council for Wales in the context of sustainable development.

CCW's toolkit

2.2.2 In brief, the means by which CCW delivers the activities outlined above comprise:

- Specialist advice – for example, in advising on some 4,000 annual casework consultations in 2000-01, including some 1,200 planning consultations with developers and planning authorities;
- Survey and research work – which range from, for example, inter-tidal surveys of marine habitats and species to research on assessing the economic value of the Welsh environment;
- Information, interpretation and educational schemes – for promoting, for example, urban wildlife through collaborative schemes with the private sector, and learning packs on biodiversity in the school curriculum;
- Legal protection of designated sites and species – involving, for example, around 1,000 existing Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the suite of Special Areas of Conservation required by the Habitats Directive;
- Provision of grant aid – in support of a variety of projects, ranging from local authority woodland schemes to voluntary sector community programmes;
- Whole farm agri-environment and site specific management agreements – which involves CCW staff negotiating and liaising with landowners and occupiers in injecting some £16 million into the Welsh rural economy;
- Management of Wales' National and Marine Nature Reserves – that involves CCW staff not only in practical conservation work on the Reserves and helping the public but also in promoting their economic and social potential; and
- An office structure throughout Wales – based on a network of Headquarters Offices, five Area Offices and eight smaller sub-offices.

3. **Structure**

2.3.1 These activities are delivered through:

- five regional Area Offices - in the North West, North East, East, West and South Wales; and
- headquarters offices, centred in Bangor, providing central support functions, specialist expertise and managerial direction – the composition of which is described in more detail in Chapter 5.

The activities described earlier in the chapter are led by a Council of twelve Members, appointed by the National Assembly, who have collective and individual responsibility for the direction, regularity, effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation's operations. CCW's activities are delivered through a decentralised structure which, in the main, comprises Headquarters Offices based in Bangor and five regional Area Offices.

2.3.2 The responsible for advising the Council on the discharge of its responsibilities, the day to day operations and management of the organisation, and for the proper stewardship of CCW's public funds rests with the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is supported by a senior management team located at the Headquarters Offices.

2.3.3 Apart from managerial direction, in terms of the development of operational strategy and accounting policies and performance monitoring and reporting, Headquarters Offices provide centralised corporate services and contain a range of scientific and policy expertise, much of which is used to guide and support the work of the Area Offices.

2.3.4 Just over a half of CCW's staff are based in five Area Offices and eight small sub offices, reporting to the Area Offices, based throughout Wales. The Area Offices are located in Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Llandrindod Wells, Mold and also in Bangor. Each of these is headed by an Area Officer, who is responsible for CCW's work programmes and performance for their respective catchment areas, as agreed with the Chief Executive and his senior management team.

CHAPTER 3: CCW's PERFORMANCE

3.1 Achievements since inception

3.1.1 In its position statement on the qQuinquennial rReview, CCW reported a number of achievements in its first nine years of existence that included the following:

- 184 new SSSIs notified involving 30,000 hectares of land;
- the quadrupling, to 41,000 hectares, of SSSIs under positive environmental management;
- 18 new National Nature Reserves established;
- 44 candidate Special Areas of Conservation under the EC's Habitats Directive notified;
- an increase from 3 to 13, or 77,000 hectares, of Special Protection Areas under the EC's Birds Directive;
- over 1,000 farms admitted to the Tir Cymen agri-environmental scheme, the forerunner of Tir Gofal;
- comments and advice to local authorities and others on around 25,000 development and other land use change proposals;
- help with improving almost 3,000 miles of Public Rights of Way;
- help with establishing the Environmental Education Council for Wales;
- grant aiding a range of voluntary organisations;
- support for the development of Countryside Strategies by all local authorities in Wales;
- a reduction of 21 per cent in the overhead costs per member of staff.

3.1.2 It is important to recognise that the list of achievements cited above is a summary compiled by CCW for inclusion in its position statement at the very beginning of the review and is therefore slightly out of date. The summary ddoes not demonstrate CCW's (qualitative but less quantifiable) efforts in areas such as the design of the Tir Gofal; the innovation of 'Landmap' as a tool for landscape assessment; the implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans; and the considerable extent of CCW's inputs into various consultative processes – all of which serve to illustrate the real difficulty of presenting performance information in terms of 'outcomes' rather than 'process'. (A more complete record of achievements can be found in the Interim Report, Annex B.)

3.1.3 It was on the basis of the summary list above, however, that I consulted organisations for their views on CCW's achievements. The consultations revealed a broadly positive attitude towards CCW and a generally widespread recognition that the organisation's achievements have been significant and valuable – and, in the view of some bodies, often more than is generally acknowledged. With a few exceptions highlighted below, the majority of consultees from among the academic, agricultural, local government and voluntary sector representatives gave positive indications of support for CCW's achievements.

3.1.4 It is perhaps inevitable in any given review that consultees will tend to focus their attention on their disappointments with, rather than the successes of, a particular organisation's performance. With that important caveat in mind, but in an attempt to identify areas where effectiveness may be improved, the aspects which attracted most concern from external organisations about CCW's achievements:

- the rate at which CCW was designating SSSIs and the need for greater protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats;
- the emphasis on scientific, rather than landscape protection and recreation work;
- the need for longer than yearly time commitments of CCW annual cycle of grant administration and inadequate funding provided to partner organisations;
- the lack of clarity and vigour in promoting public awareness and understanding on environmental matters;
- the diversion of staff numbers from CCW's core functions to Tir Gofal; and
- the difficulties, including staffing, associated with the introduction of Tir Gofal,

3.1.5 Further comments on these issues appear in the rest of this report. But what these concerns (quite a few of which are conflicting) convey, at the outset, is the very real difficulty CCW has in striking the right balance of activities that is capable of fully satisfying different audiences – even within particular sectors – as well as meeting the more pressing needs and priorities of the National Assembly.

2. **Performance against targets**

3.2.1 CCW produces a Corporate Plan annually, setting out the organisation's direction and priorities for the short-term. The plan contains a set of high-level targets – a mix of quantifiable outputs and other deliverables – covering the principal results that CCW aims to achieve. The Annual Report provides CCW with an opportunity to report on its main activities during the course of the year and to provide information about what it achieved.

3.2.2 Evidence gleaned from comparing CCW's targets at the beginning of the year (as set out in its Corporate Plans) with the outputs achieved by the end of the year (as set out in its Annual Reports)its outputs in recent years (and which are presented in Appendix 4) indicate that the organisation has met a majority of its annual objectives set in the areas of landscape, biodiversity, agri-environment, access and improving understanding.

3.2.3 By and large, the achievements in 2000-01 were much lower than the targets that had been set at the beginning of the yearexpected , owing mainly to unanticipated work on the EU Habitats Directive in identifying, surveying and preparing candidate Special Areas of Conservation, additional work on Tir Gofal, and the Foot and Mouth outbreak towards the end of the year. But the figures (provided in Appendix 4) for each of the previous three years reveal several examples where the targets set at the beginning of the year were met or exceeded by the year-end.

3.2.4 Nevertheless, there are a few areas of activity where outputs have fallen short of targets in recent years. ; which suggest the need for these to be reviewed by CCW in order to inject a greater degree of refinement, perhaps using peer review mechanisms, into its overall target-setting process. These include:

- the production of management plans for SSSIs;
- the outputs from Biodiversity Action Plans;
- the number of farms brought within Tir Gofal (irrespective of the creditable fact that that the land area covered by the scheme has been exceeded).

Recommendation

CCW should review those areas of activity where outputs have fallen short of the targets set in recent years in order to inject a greater degree of refinement into its overall target-setting process.

3.2.5 The confidence that external bodies and others place in CCW is strongly influenced by the extent to which the organisation delivers what it sets out to achieve. It is important that the both CCW and the Assembly ensure that their planning negotiations generate ambitious, yet realistic, targets at the beginning of each year. The mechanism of a 'remit letter', issued by the Assembly earlier this year, and containing leading to the far clearer, and unambiguous targets for CCW than in the past, for CCW, issued by the Assembly earlier this year is a welcome step in this direction.

3.3 Comparison of performance with other bodies

3.3.1 Surprisingly, there are no commonly agreed performance indicators currently available to compare individual agencies involved in nature and landscape conservation to enable meaningful comparisons to be drawn. I recommend that the basis of such information should be jointly agreed between CCW; English Nature; the Countryside Agency; Scottish Natural Heritage; and the Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland. And that CCW should publish such data regularly. The compilation of such information could then provide the basis for an on-going assessment of how CCW is achieving service and efficiency improvements which at least match those secured by comparable organisations elsewhere in the UK.

AAs matters stand, the information base currently available makes an objective assessment of CCW's performance with other bodies extremely difficult to undertake. And it calls for far more comprehensive research to be undertaken than this review allows for, in order to gauge how the baseline positions of CCW's 'sister agencies' in other parts of the UK, as well as their resources and priorities, have shaped their respective performances in recent years.

3.3.2 With this consideration in mind, I have assembled some data (in Appendix 5) that allows only very limited comparisons to be drawn between CCW and other 'comparable organisations'. The bulk of the information focuses on biodiversity and nature conservation, because the data are measurable and can be fairly readily compiled. But even a seemingly straightforward comparison of the relative progress of different country agencies, say, on SSSI notifications, can be blurred by factors such as the complexity of sites in the different parts of the UK; the numbers of land owners and occupiers; and their predilection towards their land having SSSI status bestowed upon them. Nevertheless, compared with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)*, CCW has designated a larger number of SSSIs in recent years. While the increase in area designated has been much the same in both countries, CCW has brought in a higher proportion of land under management agreement than SNH. And far Far more progress has also been made in Wales in increasing the number of National Nature Reserves.

3.3.3 in WalesOnly a very small number of consultees felt able to comment on CCW's performance compared with other bodies, but their general perception was that its performance compares favourably with comparable organisations, for example, in delivering Natura 2000 sites and biodiversity, but less so in education and interpretation where greater priority, resources and staffing levels are higher elsewhere.

3.3.4 The figures in Appendix 5, to some extent, substantiate these impressions. They show, for example, that a relatively greater proportion of land and marine area in Wales than in Scotland has been put forward to the EU as candidates for Special Area Conservation status; and that about one-third of SNH's total expenditure goes on access, recreation and improving understanding, compared with some one-eighth of CCW's budget given over to activities in these areas.

3.3.5 It is difficult to draw well-rounded conclusions from these limited sets of data; and a more comprehensive and reliable series of inter-country information is required if meaningful organisational comparisons are to be made. Such information could then provide the basis for an on-going assessment of how CCW is achieving service and efficiency improvements that at least match those secured by comparable organisations elsewhere in the UK.

Recommendation

The Assembly, in association with other Government administrations, should agree that CCW and its 'sister agencies' in other parts of the UK (English Nature; the Countryside Agency; Scottish Natural Heritage; and the Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland) should draw up jointly agreed sets of meaningful and comparable performance indicators; and that CCW should publish such data regularly.

3.3.6 Brief comparisons, between CCW and some of the agencies in other countries, of staff costs and other running costs are shown in Chapter 8.4 that also point to the need for benchmarking information to be generated.

3.4 Performance issues

3.4.1 There are some key themes that are touched upon later in this e report underlying some of the concerns expressed earlier about CCW's achievements. These themes can be summarised as the need for:

- improving the information base;
- better staff communication;
- stronger partnership working; and
- closer management oversight

1. **Staff communication**

There is a fairly wide perception that internal communication within CCW is not as strong as it could be. While relationships at an individual level are good and the staff are highly committed and dedicated to their particular work, there is a tendency for many to be somewhat detached from associating with, and hence celebrating the performance, of the organisation at a corporate level. CCW's achievements outlined at the beginning of this chapter plays down, for example, the statutory advisory role of CCW's past and on-going contributions in helping to shape wider strategic priorities such as EU funding; waste strategy; sustainable energy framework; integrated transport policy; and land use and planning policy. More information and greater recognition by CCW of its wider activities needs to be an essential feature of future performance reporting not only to promote the organisation's successes but also as means of buying in staff commitment, across the board, to corporate performance.

Better iInformation

3.4.2 CCW has a wealth of information held within a wide range of data sets that are held and scattered throughout the organisation. But rarely, it seems, are data brought together in any coherent manner; the periodic 'State of the Environment Report' and CCW's Annual Report being the notable exceptions. However, steps are now being taken within CCW to start collating and disseminating the data through the appointment of a biodiversity data co-ordinator.

3.4.3 Reliable, comprehensive and timely data are an essential requirement for sound governance. They can help to:

1.

-
- provide a platform on which to help evidence-based approaches to formulating policies and strategic priorities;

1.

identify areas for more or better joint working between different organisations on cross-cutting issues;

-
- develop local and national planning and monitoring of action;

- and provide information on organisational performance.

- provide a platform on which to help evidence-based approaches to formulating policies and strategic priorities;
- identify areas for more or better joint working between different organisations on cross-cutting issues;
- develop local and national planning and monitoring of action; and
- provide information on organisational performance.

3.4.4 Although the data produced by CCW for Corporate Planning and Annual Reporting purposes have a number of desirable characteristics, the range of qualitative measures of performance could be enhanced so that the information on the numbers of SSSIs, for example, which CCW publicises, might also refer to their general condition, or the regularity of contact made with the occupiers of such sites. Similarly, information published on the lengths of Public Rights of Way could be supplemented by indicative data on their general use and condition. AAnd more generally, information on habitat richness and species diversity, such as farmland birds, could also be cited.

Recommendation

CCW should focus more on publishing *qualitative* indicators*y* of its performance to supplement the quantitative measures that are currently produced. ublished.

3.4.5 Greater emphasis on data capture, collation, analysis and dissemination would of course bite into CCW's existing resources. But without a stronger information base, then it seems that CCW may be at a disadvantage in identifying pressure points on the Welsh environment and on the organisation's performance in developing in-house measures or securing the resources to respond to those pressures.

Better communication

3.4.6 There is a fairly wide perception that internal communication within CCW is not as strong as it could be. While relationships at an individual level are good and the staff are highly committed and dedicated to their particular work, there is a tendency for many to be somewhat detached from associating with, and hence celebrating the performance of, the organisation at a corporate level. CCW's achievements outlined at the beginning of this chapter plays down, for example, the statutory advisory role of CCW's past and on-going contributions in helping to shape wider strategic priorities such as EU funding; waste strategy; sustainable energy framework; integrated transport policy; and land use and planning policy.

Recommendation

CCW should display a greater recognition of, and provide more information on, its wider activities as an essential feature of its future performance reporting.

Better pPartnership working

3.4.7 Much of CCW's overall achievements are delivered through joint work with a wide range of bodies in the voluntary sector, local government and others in the statutory sector as well as through a series of partnerships with individual land owners and occupiers. Indeed, the relationship between CCW and others is symbiotic – with one being dependent upon the other for delivery of outputs. CCW's performance can therefore be improved through closer and greater partnership working with others – the scope for which is explored further in Chapter 6.

Better mManagement oversight

3.4.8 The range of CCW's interests is wide and varied and the volume of papers arising from consultations and legislation generates a heavy workload for Council Members to consider at each of their meetings. Council Members also monitor CCW's performance CCW's financial and non-financial performance to ensure that the organisation is on track for meeting its aims, objectives and targetsat each of their meetings during the course of the year. The Council may wish to consider reviewing the degree of scrutiny currently subjected to the monitoring of CCW's financial and non-financial performance to ensure that the organisation is on track for meeting its aims, objectives and targets. These activities are central to Council Members' roles and responsibilities; , but, as pointed out in Chapter 4, the amount of time time spent on them at Council meetings appears to be far too brief to permit Members from carrying out a more incisive examination and presentation of information on CCW's planned and actual performance.

CHAPTER 4: CORPORATE PLANNING

4.1 Effectiveness in developing strategic direction, targets and priorities.

4.1.1 CCW prepares and submits annually a Corporate Plan to the National Assembly Minister Secretary of Environment, Planning and Transport. The Plan is developed within the general framework set, and submitted according to the timescale specified by, the Assembly in the Management Statement which sets out the relationships between CCW and the Assembly.

4.1.2 While CCW determines the structure and content of its own Plan, the Plan must include the organisation's aims and objectives; its strategy for achieving them; a statement of its priorities; targets and performance indicators for measuring its achievements. The Plan has to include a review of the CCW's performance in the previous financial year; and it has to look ahead to the next three financial years.

4.1.3 The Corporate Plan is normally submitted around May each year so that subsequent discussions between CCW and the Assembly can enable the Plan to inform the budget planning round announcements in the autumn. CCW's Plan takes account of the guidance on resource assumptions and policies provided by the Assembly at the beginning of the planning round which for the three years, 2001-02 to 2003-04, are as follows:

£million

2001-02 2002-03 2003-04

Mainstream 28.2 32.2 34.2

Tir Gofal 10.9 13.9 16.9

Total* 39.0 46.0 51.0

*Owing to rounding, figures do not sum to totals shown. The figures exclude receipts from EU/other externally funded work.

4.1.4 The Assembly SecretaryMinister meets CCW formally each year to discuss the Corporate Plan, the organisation's past performance achievements, its current and future activities, as well as general policy developments. A formal round of annual review meetings between CCW and the Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in the Assembly is also conducted.

4.1.5 The Corporate Plan is not necessarily approved or agreed in every detail and it is up to the Assembly SecretaryMinister for Environment, Planning and Transport to establish annually the key measures of performance and associated targets for CCW following consultation with the organisation. CCW subsequently reports progress against its targets to the Assembly SecretaryMinister through a series of quarterly performance returns submitted during the course of the year. Performance against plan is also published in CCW's Annual Report.

4.1.6 As a supplement to the three year Corporate Plan, a Business Plan (or 'Operational Plan') has to be prepared which provides more detailed information, for the first financial year only, on activities, targets and performance measures developed and set by CCW. Both the Corporate Plan and the Business Plan have to be published.

4.1.7 In recent years, the Corporate Plan has increasingly become a document that tries to satisfy three purposes:

- as a 'bidding document' to the National Assembly setting out what CCW is able to do with existing resources and what more that could be done over the next three year period with extra funding;
- as a document for external consumption in which CCW tries to set out its stall to the outside world, most notably to its partners who are consulted on the contents of the Plan; and
- a document for internal purposes in which CCW sets out its strategic high level directions for guiding the underpinning detailed work plans of area office and headquarters staff in the organisation.

4.1.8 As a bidding document, the Corporate Plan seems to have failed to be a strategic rolling plan that makes clear linkages with the vision of what CCW wants to achieve and the activities it is undertaking to realise the vision. The Corporate Plan, as it stands, has too short a timescale – hence the recent preparation by CCW of its Vision Statement outlining its aspirations for the environment by the end of the decade. TThe activities of CCW presented in ithe ts Corporate Plan gives the impression, with which I have some sympathy, of a series of activities which are much the same from one year to the next, without any real recognition of where those activities are leading to; or how far; and without any analysis of why they are being taken in the first place. However, measures designed to enhance the environment, by definition, call for long-term sustained action and it is hardly surprising that CCW's direction is beamed at maintaining the momentum of its current statutory and discretionary activities. On the other hand, a 'SWOT analysis', drawing in part on updated information from CCW's joint report (with the Forestry Commission and soon the Environment Agency) on the State of the Environment – which provides an appraisal of the Welsh environment, highlighting areas of declining habitats and species – would help to demonstrate, to more explicitly than at present, how the actions of CCW, as proposed in its Corporate Plan, are geared to arresting or reversing in the longer term the decline of such threatened habitats and species.

Recommendation

CCW should provide a 'SWOT analysis' in its future Corporate Plans to demonstrate more explicitly how its planned activities are directed towards tackling the threats to, and the benefits from, the Welsh environment.

4.1.9 As a public document, there have been concerns expressed by some of CCW's partners who are consulted on draft Plans that CCW's priorities have changed too frequently in the past and that they have lacked the opportunity to have a meaningful input in, and feedback from, the priority setting process. However, improvements are underway; and this year CCW engaged with its partners, in, for example, in the environmental voluntary sector, far earlier in its planning cycle than in the previous years.

4.1.10 And as a document for internal consumption, CCW's planning process has been hampered by a lack of sound information systems with comprehensive data that can help to better allocate staffing and financial resources to particular priorities. The introduction of a resource budgeting system for 2001-02 will allow CCW, for the first time, to attribute running costs to programme expenditure so that the true costs of specific areas of activity can be analysed and assessed.

4.1.11 CCW's performance measures submitted to and established by the Assembly have since CCW's inception, had a number of desirable attributes. Generally speaking, they have been quantifiable and measurable; they have been continuous between one year and the next to enable comparisons of trend over time; they are relatively simple to interpret; and they have been based on readily available data at reasonable cost. However, the indicators have not been adequately comprehensive in their coverage to more fully reflect the work of the entire organisation. This is an important issue; far more important than it appears on face value.

4.1.12 Historically, the information presented in CCW Corporate Plans has been focused mostly in terms of activities that supported nature conservation and biodiversity, landscape policy, agri-environment, access and improving understanding. But a significant cohort of staff (dealing, for example, with on casework involving the formulation of responses and advice on large volumes of consultations) have seemingly, been ignored, certainly in the eyes of the staff affected, in the corporate planning process simply because the fruits of their labours in outputs terms, have not figured in Corporate Plans.

Recommendation

CCW should incorporate a Staff 'ownership' of a more far more comprehensive range of performance measures and targets in its Corporate Plan, which should be accepted by the Assembly, to help generate greater motivation among sneeds to be generated if some key staff for are to feel more motivated in delivering CCW's overall objectives.

4.1.13 The very latest set of performance measures and targets, for 2001-02, set by the Assembly, supplemented by CCW's own additional internal targets, together with CCW's formulation, for the very first time, of a detailed integrated 1-year Operational (or Business) Plan in collaboration with Area and Group staff to identify their respective workloads , that which identifies the workload of area and headquarters group staff, to underpins its Corporate Plan, together with other initiatives, should go a long way towards helping to remedy a deep-rooted concern and scepticism felt by some staff about CCW's strategic planning regime.

4.1.14 A further welcome improvement to the overall corporate planning system has been the introduction, in 2001-02, of a 'remit letter' issued by the Assembly SecretaryMinister which provides clearer, firmer, guidance (than in past 'grant in aid letters') on the key priorities that that the Assembly expects of CCW and on the key targets and other deliverables (described in Appendix 6) that should be incorporated in CCW's Ooperational Pplan. But even those targets fail to acknowledge more fully the breadth of CCW's operations.

Linking performance with the purpose, aims and objectives of CCW

4.1.15 The *general purpose* of the Countryside Council for Wales, as described in the Management Statement that sets out the relationship between the Assembly and CCW, is to act as

> "the National Assembly's statutory adviser on nature conservation in Wales and on general countryside matters"

The *aims* of CCW are to:

> "promote and keep under review the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of Wales;
>
> conserve its flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features; and
>
> improve and extend opportunities for the public to enjoy, appreciate and have access to the countryside in Wales";

and in pursuit of its aims, CCW's key *objectives* are to:

> "help make Wales a country with greater character in its appearance; and
>
> help ensure that its countryside and surrounding seas:
>
> - support more wildlife and a greater diversity of habitats on which species depend;
> - are managed to provide sustainable employment;
> - improve the wellbeing of, and give more enjoyment to, residents and visitors alike".

4.1.16 The stated 'objectives' in the Management Statement are difficult to disentangle from CCW's 'aims'; and its 'general purpose' fails to encapsulate CCW's broader mission in life.

4.1.17 Nevertheless, the linkages between CCW's aims and objectives and its performance measures and targets – as set out in its Corporate Plans and Annual Reports – have not been expressed in the past as explicitly as they might have been. CCW's targets and achievements in these documents have, traditionally, been expressed in terms of broad categories of core *activities* (biodiversity, landscape, access, agri-environment etc) rather than in terms of its aims and objectives. While such an approach has been helpful in allowing for continuity of comparison between one year and another, it has not been easy to readily assess the extent to which the organisation has, in fact, been meeting its declared objectives.

4.1.18 CCW couched the targets in its Corporate Plan for 2001-04, and, more recently, its Plan for 2002-05, within the five themes of BetterWales.Com, the National Assembly's overall strategy for Wales. But there is a plethora of other themes which have tended to blur the focus, and impeded the articulation, of CCW's general direction. These include:

- the Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme, that has environment and biodiversity; self sustaining economy; viable communities and health; and people participation themes;
- CCW's State of the Environment Report, that has themes covering sustainable energy; integrated transport; efficient natural resource use; sustainable land use; biodiversity; education, communities and partnerships; monitoring health and environment quality; and improving environmental quality themes;
- CCW's Technical Support and Research programme, that sponsors research projects falling into thirteen themes ranging from pollution to agri-environment;
- the targets agreed issued by the Assembly to CCW for 2001-02, expressed in six broad categories of activities and themes comprising: designated sites; survey/monitoring; biodiversity action plans; access; sustainable development; and modernising government; and
- CCW's recent Vision Statement, setting out what the organisation wants to see by 2010 that has four main themes: a distinctive landscape character and greater biodiversity; more wildlife and habitats on land and sea; economic development respecting the natural environment; and greater access to, and enjoyment of, the countryside and coast.

4.1.19 In order to minimise any ambiguity of direction that might arise from these various themes, CCW should position itself on those set out in its Vision Statement and adopt those as its core aims – supplemented, I suggest, with one other aim, termed perhaps "striving for continuous improvement in service delivery", which would serve to demonstrate the extent of CCW's ambition for converting 'better government' principles into in-house efficiencies and external improvements.

Recommendation

For future purposes, CCW should couch its activities consistently within the single set of themes described in its recent Vision Statement and to adopt those themes as the four core aims of the organisation, supplemented with an additional aim geared towards continuous service improvement.

I recommend that CCW should position itself on the themes set out in its Vision Statement and adopt them as its core aims – supplemented, I suggest, with one other aim ("striving for continuous improvement in service delivery", for want of a better term) which would serve to demonstrate the extent of CCW's ambition for converting 'better government' principles into in-house efficiencies and external improvements.

4.1.20 CCW is in the process of reviewing how best to capture the diverse range of its work within new programmes that can better describe to external parties what the organisation is striving to do, through linking its short term corporate plans and its 'medium term' vision, and at the same time integrate internally the various parts of the organisation. Some of the emerging programmes are couched in working titles such as "Accessible Wales", "Our Living Landscapes" and "Supporting Economic and Social Development". Whatever the programme themes CCW finally determines, outcome of its review, it will be important to ensure that there will be see more explicit connections between them and ose programmes with the overall aims of CCW. that those programmes are designed to underpin, support and fulfil.

4.1.21 In the interim, I propose that CCW's information for future Corporate Plan and Annual Report purposes should be defined and presented in a new and different way so that there are clearer, less ambiguous, linkages between

- the organisation's *aims;*
- the *outcomes* which it is striving for;
- the *programmes of action* that contributeing to the delivery of those outcomes; and
- the *performance measures* that indicate progress towards achieving those outcomes.

4.1.22 The proposed format shown in Appendix 7 is by no means perfect – but I do recommend that CCW considers it as a platform on which to build. The table includes a few new performance measures; and it allows for connections to be made between CCW's overall performance and the central aims of the Assembly's Sustainable Development agenda.

Recommendation

CCW should adopt a new format for Corporate Planning and Annual Report purposes that makes explicit linkages between the organisation's long-term aims, outcomes, programmes of action and performance measures.

Linking the Corporate Plan with the Annual Report

4.1.23 There are a number of other areas where CCW might improve the presentation of its information to enable stakeholders and the general public to gain a clearer view of the organisation and that of its performance.

4.1.24 The Annual Report provides stakeholders and others with information about CCW's progress and achievements in an attractive and readable way,

- but the data in the Annual Report are confined to comparisons between targets and the achievements for the year in question. Trend information over a longer period, say, three or five years, would enable interested parties to assess whether performance is improving over time. There is very little baseline data or information against which to gauge whether the targets set in the Corporate Plan and the achievements subsequently reported in the Annual Report are particularly significant.

Recommendation

CCW should provide more contextual and qualitative information in its Annual Report to help readers gauge the significance of the organisation's achievements compared with the targets set for the year in question.

4.1.25 While the Annual Report provides comments explaining the reasons for significant differences between performance achieved and the targets set at the beginning of the year,

- it would be more helpful to provide readers, especially non-specialists, with more explanatory notes to help them to better understand the complex nature of CCW's activities. In addition, CCW's data are mostly confined to indicators of throughput: information on CCW's performance should also include financial data (to show in particular how planned expenditure compares with outturn) and data on its in-house efficiency and service quality.

4.1.26 There are managers who have assigned responsibility for performance reporting at CCW; and the performance of the organisation is regularly monitored by senior officers and Members at each CCW Council meeting. However, a comparison of CCW's annual targets contained in its Corporate Plans with achievements published in its Annual Reports over the last three years (1997-98 to 1999-2000) reveals some a number of anomalies in the presentation of such information. For example:

- a very small number of targets appearing in the Annual Report were not reported at the Corporate Planning stage;
- a few instances of targets contained in the Corporate Plan decreased quite appreciably in value when cited, also as targets, in the Annual Report; and
- a small number of targets with projected three-year lives in one Corporate Plan failed to materialise in the following year's Corporate Plan
- a few targets, but in key areas of activity, established in the Corporate Plan not being reported on in the Annual Report.

4.1.27 Whilst target setting and organisational performance in meeting those targets are dynamic processes which are affected by changes in policies, new initiatives or other circumstances in any given year (the Foot and Mouth crisis is a case in point), the inconsistencies outlined above do suggest that….

Recommendation

CCW shouldneeds to be more vigilant in scrutinising the accuracy of the information that it presents and in being more informative in providing detailed explanations of instances where 'selective reporting' or differences occur inbetween information presented in its Corporate Plan and that provided in its Annual Reportoccur in its published documents.

4.1.28 This could be overcome by formal mechanisms being in place between CCW and the Assembly to cover amendments and reporting of amendments when other priorities emerge.

4.2 Effectiveness of match between inputs and objectives

4.2.1 Part of the difficulties that CCW has faced in the past has been the lack of certainty in the grant in aid that CCW received to enable it to plan its activities properly over a reasonable timescale. Historically, its grant in aid has been fixed for one year in advance. The Assembly's move to setting clear 3 year resource planning assumptions for its sponsored bodies from 2001-02 onwards now provides CCW with a greater degree of stability to help the organisation move towards a better planning regime.

4.2.2 For planning purposes, CCW has continued to focus its resources on meeting its statutory duties, notably on the designation of wildlife sites and landscape areas, the provision of open air countryside recreation; and on its advisory duties and functions.

4.2.3 In so doing, it has recognised that its has to adapt to and respond to new and changing circumstances which in turn have placed greater burdens on the work of the organisation. In the short space of a few years, some of the obligations to be fulfilled have included the implementation of:

- Habitats and Species Actions Plans, resulting from the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan under the Convention on Biological Diversity Rio Earth Summit, which identify threatened which identifies threatened wildlife species and habitats at the UK level;
- the EU Habitats and Birds Directives to bring under management a series of land and marine areas for habitats, birds and species requiring protection at the international level;
- the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme on behalf of the National Assembly;
- the implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act which, inter alia, opens up public access to 'open country' and gives greater protection to SSSIs.

4.2.4 These additional responsibilities have meant that CCW has had to focus its additional resources to support these obligations, as illustrated in Appendix 8, and that inevitably certain other activities have had to take a back seat. CCW's activities associated with landscape policy and improving understanding, for example, have seen their share of overall programme resources fall from A and B per cent to C and D per cent respectively – giving the signal to many parties with a direct interest in these particular areas that they are no longer seen by CCW as areas of priority.

4.2.5 My interim report noted that there was general agreement among respondents to the consultation exercise that CCW's current work programme reflected its statutory duties and powers. However, a large number felt that certain facets of CCW's work were weighted too heavily towards particular areas of work: some felt that its programme of work is skewed towards biodiversity, for example, at the expense of landscape or recreation functions. Conversely, others felt that the organisation was not focusing enough on both designating and protecting Sites of Special Scientific Interest. But even where consultees' views diverged on the emphasis that should be placed on certain priorities, a significant number, in common, were looking to CCW to be more proactive in providing strategic direction, raising public environmental awareness and championing environmental issues. The core issue to emerge here from the views of stakeholders was not so much whether CCW was fulfilling its functions, but the *degree* to which it was doing so right across the board.

4.2.6 There is little doubt that the scope of CCW's responsibilities is broad. Gauging from the views of some consultees who commented that CCW was over-stretched and under-resourced, the organisation may have been expected has perhaps bitten off more than it can chew to be able to do too much, fully and quickly, to satisfy everybody's expectations. For example, tThe concerns highlighted earlier from some quarters that CCW is failing to make sufficient progress in surveying and notifying larger numbers of SSSIs was echoed by others concerned about its capacity to participate fully in developing Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Local Access Forums.

4.2.7 However, a judgement on the balance of CCW's priorities and hence the resources attributed to them within the organisation's overall portfolio is extremely difficult to make; and especially against the background of its funding allocations in the late nineties. (It was not until 1999-00 that CCW's running cost figure was allowed to exceed, in real terms, the level prevailing in 1995-96.) There may be justifiable concern that the statutory activities of CCW seem to have taken precedence over its other functions. But in view of the organisation's increased obligations in recent years, it is not surprising that the lion's share of staffing and financial resources has gone into biodiversity and nature conservation; agri-environment; and access. This is a trend that is set to continue, given the direction clearly set out by the National Assembly for the forthcoming year. In its remit letter, the Assembly's key priorities for CCW in 2001-02 include:

- continued running of the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme
- implementing a programme of notification of SSSIs, including the completion of notifying Natura 2000 sites;
- working to assist the implementation of the new access and wildlife provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and support for the continuation of Public Rights of Way improvement work;
- facilitating the implementation of species and habitat biodiversity action plans
- supporting sustainable development projects under the Environment Development Fund

4.2.8 Despite these priorities, there is still room for CCW to start developing other non-statutory work over the next year or so to satisfy some many oof the wishes of consultees that were described earlier. And in this year's Operational Plan, CCW has signalled its intention to do so: by, for example, working up an environmental education strategy; introducing a pilot scheme for grant aiding local communities on conservation projects; and developing guidelines for promoting environmental participation by disadvantaged people. While these initiatives are to be welcomed, CCW could also may wish to cconsider how it might can also press ahead with similar schemes with statutory and voluntary partners for promoting landscape conservation in urban areas and on developing sustainable tourism in collaboration with other partners.

4.3 Role of Council Members and senior management in objective setting and monitoring

4.3.1 CCW's Management Statement reminds Council Members that they are responsible, individually and collectively, to the Assembly for providing effective leadership for CCW, for setting its policy and for ensuring that it meets its objectives within the statutory, policy and financial framework laid down for it. In particular, Members have an important role in ensuring that challenging performance targets are proposed to the Assembly. and in being responsible for monitoring the achievement of the targets set by the Assembly.

4.3.2 Council Members meet around eight times a year; , and generally in March or April each year, they consider and agree a draft Corporate Plan. A; and at all all subsequent meetings, they receive and consider monitoring reports summarising financial progress with reports on non-financial targets at 6 month and 9CCW's in-year financial and non-financial progress in meeting the targets set out in the Plan month stages.

4.3.3 From discussions, the role of Members in the planning and monitoring process seems to be fairly well understood. In considering the Corporate Plan, Members have to rely very heavily on the documentation presented to them by CCW's senior management team; but nevertheless broadly feel that they are steering the general direction of the organisation. However, it would be refreshing to see Members of the Council, quite independently of officers, proactively set out their own range of options, within the context of their Vision Statement, for the work of the organisation and for senior managers to translate these into programmes of action for further debate and agreement.

4.3.4 However, during the planning process I am not entirely convinced that "options in target setting are carefully assessed for value for money" by Council Members – as the Management Statement calls for. The options that are considered at the planning stage are ones that indicate the broad implications for the work of the organisation in the event of a five per cent reduction or increase in the total budget. CCW's (past) inability to produce financial data linked to non-financial data has hampered the Council's ability to properly evaluate VFM considerations for given activities (for example, in weighing up the total costs of SSSI activity compared with the cost of habitat protection by Tir Gofal) at sufficiently detailed levels.

Monitoring

4.3.5 The Management Statement makes it clear that Council Members are responsible for monitoring the achievement of CCW's targets and for ensuring that they have sufficient information during the year to enable them to judge progress towards targets and to consider corrective action if performance diverges from plan.

Again, the monitoring role of Members is understood and exercised. Members frequently challenge officers on the financial and non-financial information presented in progress reports at each Council meetings. However, But the short time available at Council meetings inhibits any form of penetrating examination of the information in the reports. Besides, the performance indicators (in excess of 40 of them) are far too numerous to readily provide a gauge of progress. I do not advocate a reduction in the data presented, but a distinction between 'headline' indicators and other performance measures might help improve matters. Either way,

Recommendation

CCW Council Council Members should, I believe, focus more on their role in assessing and monitoring the impact that their organisation is making on the Welsh environment.

In addition, a slight departure from current practice, which I believe would be generally welcomed, would be forRecommendation :

CCW's Council Members should, as a slight departure from current practice, conduct their monitoring of the organisation through a

monitoring to be conducted on a more in-depth consideration of particular areas of activity or suites of performance indicators; and should encourageon which

- more junior staff in CCW to report at should be invited to report Council meetings on progress in their particular specialist areasfields to, and participate in discussions with, Council Members. Such interaction between could also take place in the context of policy development..

There appears to be an opportunity here for the Assembly to play a more supportive role, through the provision of guidance and training, in helping CCW to strengthen its approach for tracking the organisation's in-year progress and its overall impact.

Policy setting

4.3.6 Council meeting agendas are largely shaped by external forces, notably by the requirements of legislation and of the Assembly. And it is inevitable that full-time senior officers of CCW are more aware than part-time (3 days a month) Council Members of what needs to be considered by the Council. After all, it is a key role of senior management to advise their Council.

Council meetings are for the most part shaped by the agenda set by officers at senior management. While this present regime this in itself does not, in itself, a pose a problem,, there does appear to be some merit in earlier participation by Members in CCW's policy making processes. This might help to:

- make more efficient use of officers' time in drafting papers for Council consideration;
- make more effective use of Members' time by stimulating a more proactive rather than reactive approach for joint working between Members and officers; and
- avoid avoid Members from appearing over-critical on occasions when they challenge the recommendations of officers who have drawn up papers for first time consideration by the Council;
- generate a greater sense of Member ownership of the finalised policies, plans or publications and more confidence when they are called to explain, defend or promote such policies to external contacts;
- enable Council business to be conducted at a more leisurely pace than currently, so that Members are able to inject more of their advice and views on the issues brought before them. It appears that there are too many papers on the Council's agenda at any given time; and, as they are often sent to Members only a few days prior to Council meetings, too little time for them to be considered in as much depth as they might be – both by individual Members (who may wish to consult external parties) beforehand and collectively at Council meetings.;

4.3.7 Council Members could may wish to explore with senior management the extent to which some of them might they can get more involved with CCW's internal workings. There seems to be a grey area between the extent that Members can get involved in telling the Chief Executive how to run his business and the extent to which they have a legitimate interest in the way the business performs. From time to time, the Chairman of the Council sits in at senior management team meetings; and notes of these weekly meetings are copied to Council Members. Nevertheless, cCloser linkages between the Council and officers could be effected through the occasional attendance of Members at meetings of top management (the Chief Executive Advisory Board and the Executive Board) and middle management (the Executive Board)meetings – a proposal .that would, of course, have significant implications for Council Members' time commitments.

Recommendation

CCW Council Members should consider earlier participation in CCW's policy-making process; and should explore, with senior officers, opportunities for greater linkages and involvement between Members and other CCW staff.

Vision Statement

4.3.8 The Council-inspired Vision Statement provides CCW with a solid opportunity to re-assess the extent to which it carries out its functions in the next ten years or so. In its dialogue with other organisations, it will need to map out those areas where it will continue to carry out work itself (e.g. on site designations); those areas where it can concentrate on policy development and new initiatives; and those areas where it can support the delivery of local action by building up the capacity and competence of other organisations.

4.3.9 Commendably, the vision statement is couched very much in terms of the contribution it will make to the Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme. And it is also expressed in terms of a series of laudable aspirations. . However, it fails to answer the begging question, "Iif that's where we want to get to, how will we know we've got there?" While CCW's corporate plans of the future should describe the organisation's activities contributing to the delivery of the vision, the part of the jigsaw that is currently missing is the baseline information that answers the question, "Wwhere are we now?" Only then will it be possible to translate the vision into a series of improvements that can be tracked and measured, by the end of the decade.

4.3.10 Having taken a leaf out of the Assembly's book (*betterwales.com*) and expressed its vision, CCW needs to go further by developing its own 'Wales Environment 2010 benchmarks' (for want of a better term) that set out quantitative targets against which progress and success in meeting its qualitative aspirations will be judged.

4.3.11 If CCW's vision is one that is shared by the Assembly and other partners on what 'medium-term' success will look like is to be realised, then CCW and its partners aneed ll should to agree on what needs to be done between now and 2010. CCW rightly recognises that it cannot achieve its vision on its own. It will require the initiative and ability of a wide range of organisations within the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. A mechanism for harnessing these players – and one that I put forward in the interim report – is through the adoption of a *corporate Welsh approach*, for:

- establishing the current 'stock' of Wales' natural assets (using for example data underpinning the 'State of the Environment' Reports that CCW, FC and EAW will be producing);
- tracking how those assets are changing;
- defining a clear vision for management which embraces clear, measurable and prioritised *outcomes*;
- defining the relationships between the various organisations involved for setting out a closer functional interface between them at policy and operational levels;
- planning and setting out the contributions expected of such bodies on a "who does what best" basis, according to their relative strengths and weaknesses;
- establishing and evaluating whether their respective activities, individually and corporately, are having the desired effects.

4.3.12 Whether this approach manifests itself partly through an existing forum such as the Welsh Rural Partnership, or through the creation of a new, formal wider partnership arrangement, is somewhat immaterial. The important issue is that…for

Recommendation

CCW should to kick-start the process of engaging ement with its partners tand the he Assembly and its partners for in order to translate its aspirations for the Welsh environment over the next ten years, as set out in its Vision Statement, into a jointly agreed series of practical actions. delivering a shared vision.

4.4 Staff ownership of corporate objectives

4.4.1 I have referred previously to my concern about the degree of staff ownership of CCW's corporate objectives; and reinforce the point here – by listing some of the main issues expressed in representations made to me during the course of the review. While there is an undoubtedly a strong sense of allegiance to CCW's underlying purpose and philosophy, a number of staff have questioned:

- the effectiveness of their participation in discussions relating to the organisation's corporate objectives
- the clarity of the organisation's objectives; and
- where their particular roles and outputs fit into the overall picture.

4.4.2 It is hard to assess the scale of such staff detachment, but the depth of feeling suggests that it is not insignificant – even though this summary of views may have come from a biased sample of staff comprising those who were sufficiently concerned about CCW to respond in writing to the consultation paper and those who agreed to be interviewed. But, rather worryingly, comments from the Trade Union Side convey a widespread feeling amongst CCW staff that they are trapped in an organisation that has built up a head of steam for change that they are powerless to influence, even when constructive comment is made.

4.4.3 Results from a recent survey of CCW staff have reinforced some of these sentiments. The survey confirms that there is a high level of staff commitment to what CCW is trying to achieve; and job satisfaction is high; and staff are positive in their attitude to change, seeing it as a challenge rather than a concern. **.** However, the findings also show that staff morale is low; that staff are not convinced that top management has a clear vision of where the organisation is going; and that responsibility for the various roles of CCW is poorly defined. (Disturbingly, the findings are considerably worse right across the board among the influential middle management tier of heads of Group heads and the heads of Area Offices. Such attitudes may be found in many large organisations (as was demonstrated by the findings of the National Assembly's own staff survey (December 2000) which showed roughly similar perceptions of poor morale, isolation and lack of confidence among those in a similar grade. But that in itself should not deter CCW from tackling an important issue of concern.).

4.4.4 This is not to say, however, of course, that the senior management of CCW has sat idly by in recent years to let matters deteriorate. They have undertaken consultations with staff on the corporate plan and on the vision statement and they have instigated other initiatives, involving management/TUS co-operation, for example, on workload and casework reviews studies and for working towards Investor in People (IiP) status. They also commissioned the staff survey as a stepping stone towards gaining IiP status.

4.4.5 Despite pressures on a very limited number of Directors at senior management level, within an organisation that is changing in nature and which has experienced a large increase in staff in recent years, a number of other measures have been taken by senior management in the last year or so to communicate more closely with staff. These have included, for example, annual meetings between the senior management team and the staff of each HQ Group and Area Offices; annual 'all-staff' gatherings; and more frequent Executive Board meetings of senior and middle management personnel; and regular Group and Area staff meetings. CCW's growing IT network of all of its offices, together with increasing use of audio/visual facilities, has also helped to bring staff together electronically.

4.4.6 Nevertheless, It it is vital that CCW maintains a motivated and experienced workforce throughout the organisation and that its staff hhave opportunities for developing new skills. While conclusions from the staff survey's findings and appropriate plans of action will, inevitably, need be drawn up (and in so doing CCW might wish to consider adopting the European Foundation for Quality Management model which the National Assembly has embarked upon), what is called for in the interim is a considerably greater degree of staff involvement and open debate in the planning and resource allocation processes. Similarly, on other work topics or themes….,

Recommendation

CCW should generate there is need for more prominent displays of real commitment by senior top management, throughout the year – , with greater visibility and participation of Council Members –, in engaging with, and responding positively to CCW's staff across Wales, in order to stimulate and maintain a more widespread sense of corporate culture.

Recommendation

CCW should conduct regular staff surveys to gauge the progress being made to improve the attitudes of staff within the organisation.

CHAPTER 5: CCW'S ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

5.1 Current structure

5.1.1 In locational terms, the current organisational structure of CCW is built on a three-tier framework made up of Headquarters offices; five Area offices; and a series of eight XX smaller sub-offices (together with a series of wardening bases) reporting to the Area offices throughout Wales.

5.1.2 In managerial terms, as Table Figure X 5a shows, CCW is structured on the basis of three directorates:

- a Science Directorate, comprising a Natural Science Group; a Marine and Earth Science Group; and an Environmental Audit Group;
- a Countryside Policy Directorate, comprising a Recreation, Access, and European Affairs Group; a Land Use and Landscape Policy Group; and an Interpretation, Communications, and Education Policy Group; and
- a Conservation Directorate, that includes a Land Management and Site Safeguard Group; and which has managerial responsibility for each of the five Area offices of CCW – in North West Wales; North East Wales; West Wales; East Wales; and South Wales;

all of which are supported by Groups providing central services, covering fFinance and pPersonnel; iInformation management; and rResource pPlanning and eEfficiency functions.

5.1.3 There is a narrow top management structure within CCW, focused in the main on the 'Chief Executive's Advisory Group' (CXAG), which is made up of the Chief Executive; a the Senior Director; the head of Countryside Policy Directorate, the head of Conservation;heads of each of the three Directorates; and the head of Finance and Personnel Ggroup. (The Senior Director heads the Science Directorate and has oversees the two Directors.); and the head of the Resource Planning and Efficiency Group.

A A second wider forum of management is the Executive Board (EB), which comprises the CXAG officers and all other heads of Group and Area Offices. Each tier informs the other on:

- the development of policies for the organisation;
- proposals for published guidance and advice on issues of corporate significance;
- keeping under review the implementation of CCW's programmes; and
- providing advice to CCW's Council for meeting its aims and objectives.

The inter-relationships between each of the officer Groups within CCW's senior management structure is outlined below, together with a brief description of the functions of each Group. (The staff numbers in each Group are shown in Appendix 5, Table G.)

Table 5a : Management structure of CCW

- **Figure X : Management structure of CCW**

Diagram to go in here

- **The Science Directorate**

5.1.4 The three Science Groups play a major part in the identification and justification of designated sites, including the suite of Special Areas of Conservation required by the Habitats Directive, their underpinning SSSI status and the notification of all other SSSI of national biological and earth heritage importance. They advise on, co-ordinate, and maintain the standards of a programme of SAC and SSSI monitoring and management needs assessment, carry out the auditing of the National Nature Reserves that CCW holds and manages in trust for the nation, and compile the annual update of the State of the Environment Report.

5.1.5 The Science Groups take a lead role in delivering the requirements of the Habitat and Species Action Plans for marine, terrestrial and freshwater habitats and species. They develop programmes of technical support and research, including surveys, that are in direct practical support of these responsibilities and advise the National Assembly, statutory bodies and others on matters concerned with habitats, species, monitoring and earth heritage.

- *The Natural Science Group* comprises specialist teams in freshwater, plant and animal ecology, covering habitats and species, and also pollution impacts. As well as developing Wales-wide research and survey programmes, they act as CCW representatives on UK-wide conservation issues. Specialists from this Group provide advice to Area teams and to Council itself, and there is an input to policy development. In addition, close links are developed with other specialists in universities, research institutes, and relevant agencies.
- *The Maritime & Earth Sciences Group's* role is to help ensure conservation and sustainable management of the Welsh coast, seas and earth heritage. The Group operates within four broad teams of specialists: Maritime Habitats & Species; Coastal Science; Maritime Policy and Advice; and Earth Science. Together, the Group aims to have a detailed knowledge of the geology and geomorphology of Wales, the features, habitats and species of its coast, estuaries and seas, and the pressures affecting them. The Group advises the Assembly, Government departments and agencies, on policy and strategy to promote conservation of the coast, seas and earth heritage. It commissions research and survey, advises other users of the sea and organisations with maritime responsibilities, advises and supports CCW's Area teams throughout Wales, monitoring marine and earth science sites, maintaining databases and making information available to others**.**
- *The Environmental Audit Group* is responsible for development of procedures and standards for conservation planning, management and monitoring; and for reporting on the State of the Environment. Standards are established through training, written guidance, and formal audit. The Group includes field staff working on designated sites and protected species.

- **Countryside Policy Directorate**

5.1.6 The Directorate is concerned with the provision of advice to the National Assembly, UK Government, and other institutions whose spheres of influence directly or indirectly affect the biodiversity, landscape, enjoyment and understanding of the countryside of Wales. The Directorate also has responsibilities for implementing some of CCW's functions, particularly on access to open country; interpretation and visitor provision; CCW's programme of publications & press coverage; information on the internet, and educational resources.

- *The Land Use and Landscape Policy Group* focuses on how the countryside is being used - by farmers, foresters and developers; and the effect that use has on the quality of the biodiversity, visual landscape and amenity potential of that countryside. Its remit includes advising other parts of CCW on land use issues including agriculture, agri-environment (Tir Cymen and Tir Gofal) forestry, landscape, and development planning. The Group monitors and responds to developments within relevant Assembly, UK and EU policy and legislation, and liases with appropriate interested bodies and agencies. The Group has statutory responsibilities in relation to planning and the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty in Wales; , and is responsible for developing and maintaining LANDMAP and the Register of Historic Landscapes; and . carries out and support Area Office casework of one kind or another.

- **The Conservation Directorate**

5.1.7 The Directorate is responsible for the local delivery of CCW's services through its Area and district teams, described below. TThe Directorate team at HQ co-ordinates the work of the Area- based staff to ensure a consistent approach across Wales.

7.

5.1.8 The Directorate, through its

- *The five Area Offices* are managed by an Area Officer responsible for CCW's work programmes, the main ones being:

  - working with owners and occupiers to notify, manage and monitor over 1000 SSSIs and the 92 Natura 2000 sites in Wales. This work extends to the marine environment through the marine SACs;
  - working with local authorities on strategic planning and development control (Area Offices handle on average 1,200 planning application consultations per year) with the aim of making economic development more environmentally sustainable;
  - working with local authorities and other partners, using CCW's grant aid system, to fund environmental work in the countryside and coast to do with biodiversity, landscape, access and improving understanding;
  - working with the farming communities on the Tir Gofal and Tir Cymen agri-environment schemes;
  - managing the series of 63 National Nature Reserves in Wales to ensure the highest standards of conservation and visitor management.

All the Area Offices are responsible for delivering CCW's work, according to the characteristics of their respective catchment areas. Their structures are broadly similar in that the work undertaken in a given Area is carried out by teams of staff with responsibilities for discrete geographical 'districts' in the Area. (There are 17 district teams in total.) Generally speaking, the main elements of the work of these teams is common, although there are differences according to the composition of the areas' landscape, habitat and other characteristics. There are, additional, specialist teams in some Areas; and each Area also has a number of singleton posts working on Area-wide basis. For example, in North West Wales, there are three district teams (Ynys Mon, North Gwynedd, and Meirionydd); a specialist team dealing with marine and species work; and an Area Ecologist, Area Land Agent, Area Countryside Officer; and an Area Earth Science post shared with North East Area. Nature Reserve management posts are either home-based or work from the two sub-offices in Penrhyndeudraeth and Dogellau.

The Land Management and Site Safeguard Group, based at HQ, is also responsible for the delivery of the protected site systems in Wales and the the co-ordination of all statutory nature conservation designations, including SSSIs, NNRs, LNRs, SACs, SPAs, and Ramsar sites. As well as co-ordinating the designation process, the Group provides guidance and information to CCW staff and external contacts on the interpretation and implementation of the relevant Acts, Regulations, European Directives and International Conventions. It also advises on statutory casework where designated sites may be affected, including work on enforcement and prosecutions. Under its land management role, the Group provides guidance and information to CCW staff on legislation, policy and procedures relating to estate management on NNRs and SSSIs and on valuations and terms for management agreements. Central ServicesThe Directorate also operates CCW's l

icensing system and works with the police in tackling wildlife crime.

- **Central Services**

5.1.9 'Central services' provide essential administrative back up and managerial support to the rest of CCW from Group of staff dealing with finance and personnel issues; information management; resource planning and efficiency; and a secretariat serving the Chief Executive, Chairman and Council.

  - *The Finance and Personnel Group* aims to ensure that all of CCW's financial activities provide security of public funds and that an accurate account of CCW's grant-in-aid expenditure is provided to the National Assembly. The group is divided into four teams: Personnel, Payroll and Training; Accounts and Contracts; Safety and Properties; and Internal Audit.
  - *The Information Management Group* provides computer and communication systems to support CCW's functions and activities. The Group provides an information service to the organisation (based in the library) and mapping services as well as guidance to ensure that the information and data that CCW needs to function is collected, organised, managed and distributed properly. It also provides advice and guidance on information issues such as copyright, intellectual property, access to information, data protection etc. so that CCW meets its legal obligations. The Group is divided into four discrete teams: corporate applications development and support; network services; library and information services; and a geographic information unit.
  - *The Resource Planning and Efficiency Group* aims to bring greater efficiency to the way that CCW secures, disburses and expends resources. The Group comprises three main teams dealing with external funding; corporate planning; and management accounts.
  - *The Central Office* provides secretarial and administrative support to the Chief Executive, Chairman and the Council as well as secretarial services to senior management (the Chief Executive's Advisory Group and the Executive Board). CCW's Welsh language officer and CCW's National Assembly liaison officer also works directly to the Chief Executive, as does the Senior Public Relations Officer for day to day purposes.

Area Offices

5.1.10 The five Area Offices are managed by an Area Officer responsible for CCW's work programmes, the main ones being:

  - with the close involvement of HQ staff, working with owners and occupiers to notify, manage and monitor over 1000 SSSIs and the 92 Natura 2000 sites in Wales, of which 89 have been notified to the EU.
  - working with local authorities on strategic planning and development control (Area Offices handle on average 1,200 planning application consultations per year) with the aim of making economic development more environmentally sustainable;
  - working with local authorities and other partners, using CCW's grant aid system, to fund environmental work in the countryside and coast to do with biodiversity, landscape, access and improving understanding;
  - working with the farming communities on the Tir Gofal and Tir Cymen agri-environment schemes;
  - overall responsibility for the series of 65 National Nature Reserves in Wales, of which 28 are managed with or through partners, to ensure the highest standards of conservation and visitor management.

5.1.11 All the Area Offices are responsible for delivering CCW's work, according to the characteristics of their respective catchment areas. Their structures are broadly similar in that the work undertaken in a given Area is carried out by teams of staff with responsibilities for discrete geographical 'districts' in the Area. (There are 17 district teams in total.) Generally speaking, the main elements of the work of these teams is common, although there are differences according to the composition of the areas' landscape, habitat and other characteristics. There are, additional, specialist teams in some Areas; and each Area also has a number of singleton posts working on Area-wide basis. For example, in North West Wales, there are three district teams (Ynys Mon, North Gwynedd, and Meirionydd); a specialist team dealing with marine and species work; and an Area Ecologist, Area Land Agent, Area Countryside Officer; and an Area Earth Science post shared with North East Area. Nature Reserve management posts are either home-based or work from the two sub-offices in Penrhyndeudraeth and Dogellau.

Headquarters and Area Offices

5.1.12 The vast majority of the Groups described above are centrally based at CCW's headquarters in Bangor;; while the Area Offices based in other locations (Bangor, Mold, Llandrindod Wells, Aberystwyth and Cardiff) are line managed from headquarters. Just over half of CCW's total staff complement of some 460, at end-March 2001, are located in the Area Offices.

5.1.13 The relationships between the Area staff and headquarters staff, however, are not as close as they might be. There seems to be a degree of disaffection between the two camps – a concern that a fewnumber of external organisations had also expressed in commenting on their day-to-day dealings with CCW.

5.1.14 The perception held by such organisations is of rivalry or confusion between Area and HQ offices, which can prevent or hold up coherent responses to customers. Some commentators pointed out that while some 'central' functions (such as funding and maintenance programmes for National Trails; and complaints regarding the Tir Gofal scheme) are discharged outside Bangor, even on these, it seemed, policy issues arising from them had to be referred back to headquarters. And in comparison with the good relationships at Area Office level, some bodies had yet to meet some of the more senior HQ-based staff, which generated the perception, rightly or wrongly, that they were lower down in the 'partnership pecking order' than other organisations.

5.1.15 The scale and scope of such disaffection between the Areas and HQ is difficult to gauge, but some of the area staff do believe that the success of their work and degree of isolation from 'the centre' has been hampered by a shortage of operational front-line staff at local delivery points compared with what they see as large 'specialist' or 'administrative' Groups based at HQ. Having said that, of the 140 planned increase in staff in 2001-02, three-quarters of them will be stationed in Area Offices.

5.1.16 To some extent, the tension arises from a perception that HQ staff are not sufficiently appreciative of the load of Area Office staff in handling casework, in particular. On the other hand, the establishment of an in-house working group to review casework provides some evidence at least of top management's appreciation of Area workload.

5.1.17 Over the last three yearthree-year period, CCW has dealt with an average of around 4,000 casework consultations per annum, with local Area Office staff spending about half of their time dealing with statutory casework. While there is a casework recording and reporting system in place – summary figures of which are regularly presented to Council – there are a number of concerns about the way that the system operates. Given the importance of casework, not only in terms of the large amount of staff input but also in terms of the critical role it plays in providing the public face of CCW to the organisation's partners and customers, it is disappointing that such work does not figure more highly in CCW's corporate planning regime and reports. The casework system is deficient in a number of respects, impeding senior management's ability to monitor and assess the impact of the work at Area Office levels. . Improvements could include improving the quality of information, in terms of its completeness and interpretation; providing guidance on the priority that should be attached to different pieces of casework; and improving the perceived value placed by HQ on the data that are compiled.

5.1.18 Tensions between Area Offices and HQ can also arise over the targets that are set out in the Corporate Plan – as, more often than not, the targets relate to activities that the Area Offices have to deliver in their dealings with the organisation's customers. The The Areas thus Areas tend to feel more 'in the firing line', as it were, than other parts of the organisation within a target setting process that is orchestrated from HQ - despite the fact that they . have opportunities to influence that process through mechanisms such as the six-weekly meetings of the Executive Board, of which the five heads of the Area Offices are members.

5.1.19 The friction, however, is not one way: there is also a perception among some HQ-based staff that large parts of the Area Office complement tend to have the 'mentality' of the former Nature Conservation Council in that site designation and monitoring, for instance, is still regarded as the most important part of CCW's work, and that CCW's initiatives outside the world of science, are treated with suspicion and mistrust.

5.1.20 Such tensions are not healthy. They need to be exposed and addressed. While there is a move underway which is geared towards greater integration of activities and responsibilities, better career structures; reduced lines of internal communication; and consistency of grading between and *within* Area Offices, that in itself will not tackle the underlying discontent between Areas and HQ.

5.1.21 There need to be inter-disciplinary teams of Area Office and Headquarters staff on future project work to try to prevent any potential rivalries within the organisation – a methodology that is currently being used for re-shaping CCW's activities into new programme themes in the coming year.

Other issues

Of a less serious nature, CCW should consider identifying and reviewing areas where occurrences of distant or different reporting lines of communication within the organisation, such as the following, may give rise to concerns as to whether liaison internally and partnership working externally is as effective as it could be:

- the Area Office covering West Wales is based in Aberystwyth (virtually the most northern part of the region) reportedly results in little personal contact with staff in the Haverfordwest office that serves Pembrokeshire;
- the environment audit function is line managed from Aberystwyth but with operations staff sited in locations ranging from Barmouth to Bridgend;
- a senior agricultural policy officer based in HQ, line managed from Aberystwyth, and whose closest colleagues is in Swansea;
- scientific expertise on woodland is based in the Natural Science Group, but responsibility for woodland policy rests within the Land Use and Landscape Policy Group;
- the Maritime and Earth Sciences Group is responsible for scientific *and* policy work on marine but not freshwater species for which responsibility rests with the Natural Science Group.

5.2 Recognition of regional needs

5.2.1 The understanding of some external organisations of CCW's management structure is generally quite poor, with impressions of an organisation that is 'top heavy', in being dominated by staff numbers located at headquarters; and which is remote geographically, which tends to inhibit the development of personal contacts and working relationships. In fact, the numbers of staff based in CCW's headquarters is roughly the same as the numbers based in offices outside its HQ; and compared with other ASPBs, the distribution of CCW's offices in the Principality is more widespread. CCW's regional presence outside its Bangor headquarters, is focused on Area Offices based in Bangor (again), Mold, Llandrindod Wells, Aberystwyth and Cardiff, with each of them being responsible for separate and considerably smaller sub-offices, as shown below:

Table 5bX: CCW's office locations

Area Offices	Sub-Offices
North West: Bangor	Dolgellau; Penrhyndeudraeth
North East: Mold	Bala
East: Llandrindod Wells	Newtown; Abergavenny
West: Aberystwyth	Haverfordwest; Llandeilo (and wardening bases at Capel Iwan, Llwyn Awel; Tregaron, Martinshaven and Stackpole)
South: Cardiff	Swansea

5.2.2 CCW's office network seems to have been largely inherited from the organisation's former Nature Conservation Council days, when most of the sub-offices were located in close proximity to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (such as the Berwyn SSSI and NNR which the sub-office in Bala deals with). Although CCW staff located in a variety of different locations across Wales inevitably lead to extra costs in terms of expenditure and communication across the organisation, it is difficult to gauge whether such costs are outweighed by the advantages that a more local presence brings: . for many external bodies and individuals, the CCW Area Office is an important local 'one stop shop' for the organisation as a whole. In general terms, the following outlines some of the key issues:

Table 5cX : Advantages and disadvantages of fewer CCW office locations

The advantages of fewer offices	The disadvantages
Opportunities for economies of scale in central costs	Increased travel and subsistence costs
Stronger potential for team work	Staff relocation with potential losses of staff, expertise and damaged morale
Greater concentration of expertise and specialists on tap	Reduced local presence in responding to local needs and reduced scope for partnership work
Better, more flexible, programme management; and more co-ordinated, consistent working practices	Loss of a local perspective to help shape all-Wales, strategic, issues

5.2.3 Although I am notAlthough I am not suggesting that CCW should devolve some of its headquarters functions to Area Offices (CCW is currently tackling this, by revising its current activities into a suite of thematic programmes that cut across HQ and Area functions), CCW should consider whether the role and the capacity of its office network are capable of meeting the demands and pressures facing the organisation in, say, five years' time.

5.2.4 While comprehensive data are not available on the running costs of maintaining CCW's individual offices, figures on rental, rates and service charges alone reveal such a wide disparity in accommodation costs that CCW should explore the possibilities of alternative, cheaper, locations; increasing the opportunities for staff to carry out home-based working; and sharing office services and accommodation with other ASPBs or public sector organisations. ,

5.2.5 In reviewing its office structure, CCW will need to consider a wide range of issues to ascertain whether its representation in some areas of Wales is disproportionately greater than other parts. The distribution of CCW staff in the areas of Wales outside Headquarters is skewed towards the western half of the country, with the North West and West Area Offices accounting for a half of CCW's area-based staff. the organisation should examine the scope for rationalising its office network. While comprehensive data are not available on the running costs of maintaining CCW's individual offices, figures on rental, rates and service charges alone reveal such a wide disparity in costs between offices (ranging from around £500 to over £5,000 per employee) that CCW should explore the possibilities of alternative, cheaper, locations; increasing the opportunities for staff to carry out home-based working; and sharing office accommodation with other ASPBs or public sector organisations.

In reviewing its office structure, CCW will wish to consider a wide range of issues to ascertain whether its representation in some areas of Wales is disproportionately greater than other parts. The distribution of CCW staff in the areas of Wales outside headquarters is skewed towards the western half of the country, with the North West and West Area Offices accounting for a half of CCW's area-based staff.

5.2.6 CCW does, of course, aim to respond to geographical characteristics that give rise to differences in service and (hence staff) provision. But a comparison presented in Table 5dX below, albeit crude, begs the question whether the South area for example, is relatively under-resourced and whether the current distribution of CCW staff reinforce the perception felt by a few consultees that even as a 'countryside organisation', CCW is too preoccupied with rural areas. With sixty per cent of the Welsh population based within the catchment area of CCW's office in the South, CCW should consider might wish to review whether its representation in that part of the country is sufficiently strong to encourage greater partnership working with individuals and organisations close to where a majority in Wales live and work whilst taking account also of . CCW's workload in areas such as agri-environment and Special Areas of Conservation.

Table 5dX: Area Offices and selected characteristics of their Area catchment areas Offices

North North East West South

West East

--------- --------- ---------- ---------- ---------

% share of total population 8 14 4 12 61

Number of unitary authorities

and NPAs in area 4 4 2 4 12

% share of total CCW caseworkcomments 19 17 18 23 24

% share of planning caseworkon planning proposals 16 13 27 14 29 Any data available on these??

% share of SSSIs:

numberss 21 9 24 27 19

area 22 15 25 21 16

% share of agricultural land

area 19 11 26 29 15

CCW staff numbers 63 31 35 63 47

% share of CCWarea area office staff 26 13 15 26 20

Recommendation

CCW should review the coverage and staff complement of its Area Office network, including opportunities for sharing accommodation and associated facilities with other ASPBs.

Regional representation of CCW's Council

5.2.7 Section 128 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 allows for the appointment of not less than eight and no more than twelve Council Members, including the Chairperson, by the National Assembly's First SecretaryMinister/Assembly SecretaryMinister for Environment, Planning and Transport. Appointments are made with due regard to the Assembly's Code of Practice on Public Appointments; and the roles and responsibilities are set out in the document, 'Guidelines for Council Members of the Countryside Council for Wales'.

5.2.8 The current complement of Members are based in all of the regional parts of Wales; and while it appears that a disproportionate number of them are domiciled in Mid Wales, it is perhaps too much to expect an ideal blend of technical expertise *and* geographical representation within the Council.

5.2.9 There is a perception among a small number of outside bodies that the membership of the Council fails to be sufficiently representative of their sectoral interests. But with a membership of only twelve, it is inevitable that a number of areas of specific expertise will be under-represented on the Council. In my view, the current composition of the Council (readily available on CCW's web site) displays a sufficiently diverse range of backgrounds of direct relevance to the nature of CCW's work.

5.2.10 The Council recognises that it is important not to have too many representatives factions representing different of particular sectoral interests. There is a strong scientific focus among the membership, which is needed in sufficient measure to discharge the Council role in notifying and confirming SSSIs; and which is helpful too in acting as a check on the scientific expertise of the executive.

5.2.11 While there is no ppractising natural scientist, ecologist, or field botanist, for example, serving on the Council,, the future membership of the Council could benefit from having a greater injection of expertise from financial or community development circles professionals rather than perhaps perpetuating the scientific concentration of the Council's representation.

5.2.12 In order to allay the concerns of the few critics of the Council's composition but more importantly in order for the Council to take the views of external bodies to help inform Members' decisions on the work of CCW, there would seem to be merit in Council Members holding, regular but infrequent meetings, with their counterparts in other sectors, particularly agricultural, local government, voluntary and social partners in Wales. CCW officers already conduct periodic liaison meetings with officials representing some of these sectors and Council Members take informal soundings from individuals within a wide range of external bodies during the course of their normal business.

Recommendation

CCW should consider establishing But a more a formal platform of liaison and consultation between Council Members CCW at Board level and representatives of other sectors as a mechanism could prove beneficial not only for in developing a stronger greater spirit of partnership working and for but also in helping to inform Council Members on the future shape of CCW's strategic direction.

5.3 Wider 'fit for purpose' issues

5.3.1 The culture within which CCW currently operates appears to have been shaped by a number of significant factors:

- *Its inheritance* – CCW is the product of a merger between the former Nature Conservancy Council and its functions relating to nature, and the former Countryside Commission with its functions relating to landscape, countryside and access issues. The work associated with both elements are fundamentally different: with an 'executive role' exercised by specialist, scientific, staff on the one hand, and an 'enabling role' carried out by the other.

  Nevertheless, ten years on, there still appears to be a certain frisson between both camps of staff, with the one not fully appreciating the role of, or even interacting much with, the other. This is a difficulty that can result in a lack of 'common purpose' and a lack of association with the objectives in the Corporate Plan. This is not to say that staff in CCW lack commitment. Indeed, the dedication of staff to the value of their work within CCW is very impressive. But a greater integration of views between the policy and science sides of CCW is called for. Planning and policy development has been described by some within CCW as a 'Cinderella' in the eyes of many, with scientific work being undertaken in a policy vacuum without reference to the 'bigger picture'. On the other hand, such critics may be failing to recognise fully that CCW does need to have a strong science base if it is to competently and authoritatively carry out its conservation functions.

  CCW's plans to move towards more programme-based work should lead to closer, more thematic, ways of working between policy, scientific and Area-based staff. The bringing together of responsibility for scientific and policy work within the same staff reporting line of command has already been undertaken within one Group of CCW, the Maritime and Earth Science Group; and…..

  Recommendation

  CCW should explore the merits of revising its staff structure to bring together more scientific and policy staff working in similar subject areas.

  The Countryside and Rights of Way row Act brings together regulations which means that some staff have extra responsibilities for protecting wildlife while others staff are engaged in encouraging more access onto environmentally sensitive areas which may be environmentally sensitive. These are not competing roles; they are complementary functions which offer an opportunity for bringing staff performing the two duties closer into working towards shared corporate aims.

- *In recovery mode* – following the then Secretary of State's decision in 1995-96 to cut CCW's budget which led to a relatively large number of job cuts (including the pruning of the senior management posts, Deputy Chief Executive and ; Chief Scientist, and the Director of Resources). Comments from some consultees suggest that the 'Redwood cuts' had a long-term impact on CCW, in terms of its relationships with external bodies having to be cut back and then re-established and in terms of activities having being reduced, leading to friction between operational Groups over the distribution of resources. The cuts had a long-term impact on CCW's confidence in being more up-beat in developing a constituency of understanding about what the organisation is and what it does. Despite the fact that funding was subsequently restored, this was not until 1999-00 in real terms for the core budget (as illustrated in Appendix 8). The episode has seems to have had an impact

which has manifested itself in CCW being perceived among some outside observers as a low key, defensive, organisation that is sensitive to criticism.;

- *A spirit of cautiousness* – CCW is highly conscious of its obligations to fulfil its statutory duties and of the possibility that its actions or inactions might expose the organisation to legal proceedings or judicial review. And rightly so. But there are concerns about the extent that it prefers to pursue its statutory duties in precedence over building up its portfolio furtherthe development of n through new ovel initiatives in areas in which it has discretionary powers.;
- *A firm management grip* – couched within a small, centralised, top management team of officers (, the Chief Executive's Advisory Group), which has developed an integrated view of corporate policies, but which to some staff in the organisation seems to be a remote and top-down mechanism for decision making. ;

Self analysis

5.3.2 During the course of the quinquennial review, CCW carried out a its own diagnosis of its own organisational condition and concluded that it was not fit to take on some of the challenges that it faces over the coming years. It pointed to a number of aspects that required addressing issues –

none of which isis a a new issue for management, generally, to deal with: – that required treating:

- the involvement of staff in developing CCW's policies;
- staff training and development;
- staff numbers and staff mix;
- management structure;
- productivity; and
- staff recruitment and retention.

5.3.3 However, there are no clear indications from CCW how it proposes to get staff more involved in the development of the organisation's policies; and it seems to be pinning its hopes for doing so through its commitment to achieve Investor in People (IiP) status by the end of next year.within three years or so. Commendable though it is, IiP may not in itself generate the degree or the type of involvement that CCW staff seem to be searching for. (The staff survey that CCW recently conducted showed that while roughly two in every five members of staff felt they were already involved, a similar proportion wanted more involvement, in the organisation's affairs.)

5.3.4 From my consultations with CCW staff, it seems that what is required is closer and earlier consultation between management and group-based and area-office based staff in the corporate planning process; and thereafter, regular dialogue on, and feedback from, proposals put forward by staff. And I have recommended earlier that sSenior management and Council Members should consider holding, more frequently than at present, a programme of seminars with all staff at group and area levels to promote a greater degree of commitment to CCW's corporate objectives.

5.3.5 While this proposal will undoubtedly impact upon Council Members' time commitment, it need not necessarily involve all Members. However, it would This may go some way to bonding further a quite diverse (functionally and geographically) workforce, by raising levels of awareness and understanding of CCW's key programmes and in encouraging a more satisfied feeling of staff engagement within the corporate planning process. There is no substitute for consultations to be undertaken on a face to face basis; but balancing the increasing use and ease of electronic communication and people's need for personal contact, especially when they are physically remote from the 'centre' is an issue that all organisations, not just CCW, will have to address.

To supplement its internal communications…..

Recommendation

CCW should also consider the introduction of an internal 'newsletter' – there is none of any kind at present – (there is none of any kind at present) as a tool for conveying staff/management developments and opportunities within the organisation.

5.3.6 Despite highly qualified academic skills within CCW (as the largest single body of specialist scientists in Wales), there are concerns among consultees, borne out by CCW's staff survey, that career development opportunities need to be bolstered. Similarly, staff need to acquire new skills or to update existing ones; and although CCW's commitment to double its staff training and development budget in the forthcoming year is to be welcomed, the overall allocation (equivalent to roughly £800 per head) is still relatively modest.

5.3.7 CCW's plans, which are being implemented, for restructuring staff teams within Area Offices should help not only with integrating CCW's work at 'district level' but also provide better opportunities for career progression. Again, these measures are to be welcomed – provided that the degree of specialisation necessary for managing the Tir Gofal scheme at a local level is not diluted in any way.

5.3.8 CCW has grown rapidly in recent years, and the nature of the organisation is changing; but the composition of the senior management team has failed to keep pace. Compared with some other ASPBs, and for an organisation that is set to grow to a complement exceeding 500, there is a very narrow top management team (comprising of the Chief Executive and three Directors). CCW's proposals to add a further two Director posts to help spread the workload of a hard-pressed senior management team appear sensible.

Recommendation

The Assembly should support CCW's proposalsThe organisation's plans to recruit a further two Directors to its senior management team: one , one in charge of Resources (Finance, Personnel and Information Management) and the other focussing on agri-environment, to strengthen the directorial responsibilities of the senior management team and to enhance their visibility and interaction with other CCW staff.

5.3.9 Boosting the directorial team would enable greater face to face contact to be made with staff across Wales, help ease the frustrations of the type that can occur in organisations with both HQ and field based staff, and allow more time for forward planning and strategic direction. CCWTir Gofal, are sensible. CCW will need to ensure, that however, that thesethese additional posts do not lead to confused lines of communication between senior management and staff in Area Offices to whom they will report.

5.3.10 CCW has signalled its intention to improve productivity through a variety of measures, most notably by with greater investment in information and communications technology (see Chapter 8.6), and the associated introduction of a new resource accounting system (Chapter 4.1) and through a programme of efficiency exercises (Chapter 8.6). In addition, the Resource Planning and Efficiency Group was set up specifically to integrate CCW's corporate and operational processes and to seek out efficiency gains across the organisation. These are positive and encouraging moves. These are positive moves; but CCW needs to ensure that they are managed in such a way that they deliver tangible results, on time and within budget.

5.3.11 Finally, CCW plans to improve staff recruitment by establishing better linkages with higher and further education institutions, ELWA and others It also has plans to improve staff retention through better career development paths at district level and through the introduction of a competence-based staff assessment process. Again, these intentions for future action are commendable; but again, attention must be drawn to concerns about current operations that also need to be tackled.

5.3.12 It is disappointing to learn, for example, that only two thirds of staff completed their Annual Staff Reports in 1999-2000, which suggests that managers may not be actively managing the performance of their staff or identifying new opportunities for staff training and development.

5.3.13 And if it is to improve its recruitment processes, CCW needs to ascertain whether its existing mechanisms are adequate. For example, the gender imbalance among CCW management grades is hardly exemplary: as at June last year, 50 per cent of the entire staff complement was female – a proportion that decreased, however, to 20 per cent of staff in middle management grades (Grades D and above) and to just 10 per cent of those in higher management grades (Grades E and above).

Recommendation

CCW is not currently monitoring its equal opportunities policy; and should do so.

5.3.14 If it continues not to monitor its policy do so and fails to analyse such data such as that illustrated inabove, relation to other associated information, then the organisation may not be too well placed to identify whether there are inherent problems in its personnel procedures on staff recruitment, retention, or other aspects of career development, that require remedial action.

5.3.15 There appears to be a strong commitment within CCW towards family-friendly policies and supporting employees with caring responsibilities, but there is as yet no equal opportunities action plan – although work has started recently on building one up – for achieving equality of opportunity for people of ethnic minority origin, for women and for disabled people. Nor is it apparent that there are methods in place within CCW for monitoring the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy or for gauging whether the organisation as a whole reflects the diversity of the Welsh population, or of the clients it serves.

CHAPTER 6: CCW'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERS, CUSTOMERS AND THE PUBLIC

6.1 General understanding about the role of CCW

6.1.1 The vast majority of consultees have a sound understanding of the role of CCW. This is hardly surprising because the vast majority of respondents – whether from the agricultural, academic, local government or voluntary sectors – have regular dealings with CCW in their capacity as representative bodies or individual organisations.

6.1.2 However, there appears to be a degree of suspicion or scepticism among the farming community about CCW's remit and a real gap in the public's knowledge of CCW's identity and purpose. The extent of the former is impossible to gauge accurately (despite representations made during the consultation period); but evidence regarding the latter strongly suggests that there is some work for CCW to do in improving general understanding about itself as a recognisable and recognised organisation.

6.1.3 Results from a CCW-commissioned survey (March 1999) indicate that the CCW has singularly failed to get the most basic message about itself across to the general public: only five per cent of the adult population public knows that CCW is an organisation responsible for advising the Government on protecting wildlife, landscape and access to the countryside in Wales.

6.1.4 Other research, even on visitors to National Nature Reserves* confirms the paucity of knowledge about CCW. Less than a fifth of NNR visitors know who manage NNRs; less than half do not know the responsibilities of CCW; and of those who did, their knowledge is only partial.

6.1.5 These findings imply that if members of the public do not make connections between CCW and nature and landscape conservation and countryside access issues, then that in itself represents a barrier to people's ability to gain a foothold leading to a greater understanding, experience and appreciation of those issues. There is, after all, a clear public desire to enjoy a better quality natural environment. While more jobs, less crime, better health and better education are regarded as the most important aspects that improve the quality of life, one in six of the adult population (rising, significantly, to one in four in the South Wales Valleys) believes that 'more wildlife' and 'better access to the countryside' would also help to improve the quality of their lives.

6.1.6 Similarly, the survey shows that there is clear public support for environmental ob objectives, with ninety per cent of the population agreeing that it is important to maintain a variety of plants and animals in the countryside, coasts and towns of Wales; and a similar proportion agreeing that maintaining a clean environment is beneficial to the local economy. Given the scale of such support for CCW's wildlife objectives (even though people do not associate those objectives with CCW), the

***** Keirle, Christie and Scott, 'An Evaluation of Interpretation in Welsh National Nature Reserves'.

research does signal the

***** Keirle, Christie and Scott, 'An Evaluation of Interpretation in Welsh National Nature Reserves'.

environment is beneficial to the local economy. Given the scale of such support for CCW's wildlife objectives (even though people do not associate those objectives with CCW), the research does signal that….

Recommendation

need for CCW should make to make greater efforts to not only promote

itself to the public as an organisation in its own right, but also direct more of its work and that of other bodies, including the Assembly, into overtly demonstrable activities with which the general public can associate.

CCW's external communications strategy (described briefly at the end of this chapter) which is being developed should go some way to put this recommendation into effect.

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6.2 Scope for developing closer relationships and joint working

6.2.1 The working relationships between CCW and the majority of external organisations which expressed their views during consultation, are regarded as productive and valuable. In particular, a number of bodies emphasised the close and supportive nature of the links enjoyed between practitioners at a local (area office) level. Examples of joint working that were cited as particularly positive included, for example, CCW's advice on Biodiversity Action Plans; the establishment and administration of the National Access Forum; and the LANDMAP system.

6.2.2 In the interim report, I referred to some tensions, inevitable with any grant regime, that will arise between grant recipients and their funders about their respective relationships and influences. It was not surprising, therefore, to learn of the concern expressed about the difficulty of CCW's senior management's in grasping what a few consultees perceived as the 'true spirit of partnership' in operating the CCW grant system. CCW's grant administration is the subject of analysis later in the report (Chapter section 9.3), but suffice it to say at this stage that both grant giver and grant recipients need to exhibit a greater degree of mutual understanding and empathy about their respective priorities. CCW has certain national objectives that it sets to fulfil the National Assembly's strategic aims, whereas local authorities and voluntary organisations tend to have more local needs and priorities that may not accord with those at the all-Wales level. One approach perhaps for tackling such potential conflict and hence for strengthening present relationships is through the build up and adoption of '"partnership agreements"' (for want of a better term) that go further than the memoranda of understanding that currently exist between CCW and a few other organisations.

Memoranda of understanding

6.2.3 CCW has initiated a series of separate Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with some organisations (for example, with the Welsh Local Government Association and with the Forestry Commission; and a 'compact' is currently being developed with the environmental voluntary sector) as a formal means of maintaining and developing better working relations and as a systematic trigger for regular liaison at senior management levels between the organisations concerned.

6.2.4 As documents, the MOUs provide a framework on general principles such as consultation and the exchange of information between CCW and the relevant bodies involved. But they do not go much further than that. To be more effective, the MOUs ,

should be the MOUs need to be underpinned by action plans that articulate not just the expectations of *how* each party interacts in broad terms (as they do now) but on *what*. A joint action plan – setting out the specific activities which each party will carry out over an agreed timescale – would help to stimulate not only enhanced clarity in the divisions of responsibilities between the respective parties, but also generate more joined up thinking and a greater sense of common purpose.

Recommendation

CCW's Memoranda of Understanding with more organisations should be underpinned by formal joint action plans that describe the planned activities that each party will carry out over agreed timescales.

6.2.5 The implementation of this recommendation does not suggest more bureaucratic mechanisms that might distract CCW and others from more meaningful activities, but merely the preparation of simple indicators of tangible 'on the ground' actions of joint working.

Building closer connections

6.2.6 Partnership working between various organisations requires early dialogue and early participation between the parties involved, with each partner being sympathetic to the views and the contributions of the other(s). Partnerships need to focus on delivery of services, but with a clear realisation that an investment of time over a long period may be needed to enable the partnerships to flourish.

6.2.7 With this in mind, there are a number of sectors within which closer connections between CCW and others can be built up:

- **With local government generally** – in developing a more proactive dialogue for activities that go beyond CCW's role as purely a sponsor of grant aid. In the absence of that role, one suspects that the relationship would be the poorer. Getting local communities more closely engaged in CCW's work can be facilitated through unitary authorities, community councils and other bodies, thus helping to translate CCW's vision of greater community involvement into action on the ground.
- **With the education and training sectors** - for building on CCW's commitment to develop environmental education in Wales. CCW has already established working relationships with some higher education institutions, on research and training in countryside management, for example, which have helped shape vocational courses. It has also provided funding support for the National Museum's Schools in Communities Agenda 21 Network for equipping schools to undertake environmental checks and surveys for improving the quality of life in local communities; and before its demise, the Environmental Education Council for Wales was supported mainly by CCW funding support.

  Potentially, CCW could go further by exploring ways in which its expertise could be incorporated, for example, into teacher training programmes so that the teaching force of the future could help to impart awareness of CCW's work and enhanceand enhance environmental understanding within the school syllabus.

  Recommendation

  Sponsorships of honorary lectureships, studentships or of modern apprenticeships are other possibilities that CCW should might wish to consider in helping to raise not only its own profile but also, more importantly, also that of the environment in Wales more generally.

- **With the public** – in providing increased information and interpretation at wildlife sites. The paucity of public's awareness of CCW as an organisation responsible for advising the Government on protecting wildlife, landscape and access to the countryside has been commented upon earlier in the chapter. But there is also a related problem about the relationship that people, notably in urban areas, have with their surrounding landscape. Public awareness of the landscape and their interdependence with the natural environment is generally poor. But the opportunity exists to engage the population in a process of awareness, understanding and education with regard to landscape conservation and biodiversity - and in language that they understand – to channel greater resources into education, awareness and understanding. Examples of ways that might help promote public support and understanding not only of CCW specifically but also environmental education more generally would be for CCW to: :
  - make information about SSSIs more widely known to local people and visitors, preferably electronically, in a simple format that is readily accessible and understandable top the lay person; and likewise,
  - to publicise National Nature Reserves as the jewels in the crown of Wales' natural environment. Apart from a few well-known locations, NNRs in Wales are not particularly well publicised and the public's association of them with CCW is poor. CCW should continue, nsider with others, to ways of exploiting ways of enhancing tthe economic importance of NNRs as as recreational venues (but which also respect the very purpose of Reserves) and in so doing promoting its own modus operandi to command greater support and sympathy with the organisation and the rationale of its objectives. In fact, plans are now underway within CCW to develop and enhance the interpretation of education and visitor potential of Wales' four most visited NNRs.

    Recommendation

    CCW should explore ways of making information more widely known about Sites of Special Scientific Interest and continue to develop the economic potential of National Nature Reserves.

  A greater focus on CCW's work to be carried out in urban areas is an issue which CCW itself recognises – hence its proposal in the near future to embark on an 'urban roadshow' – ; and one that that a number of consultees would welcome. While clarity is needed on the precise extent to which CCW can carry out activities in urban areas – given that the legal functions of the organisation are very much geared towards the 'countryside' and 'rural areas' of Wales (see Chapter 7.2) – there appears to be legitimate scope for CCW to enhance its *nature conservation role* in urban areas. This role might include promoting to urban dwellers the benefits of nature in built up areas; identifying species and habitats at risk in urban areas; and working with urban community-based organisations.

- **With voluntary organisations** – under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, CCW has a duty to include in its Aannual report a statement of action taken to promote the enjoyment of the countryside by members of the public who are disabled. Generally speaking, the statement describes the amount of grant aid provided to support projects that improve access to people with disabilities. There has to be must be similar scope for CCW to work with voluntary sector bodies and other organisations on activities that can offer opportunities for other groups (such as disaffected or disadvantaged young people) to experience wildlife and the Welsh countryside.
- **With land owners and occupiers** – some many SSSI owners and occupiers have had no little personal contact with CCW staff personnel for a number of years, although .the SAC consultation process and the re-negotiation of management agreements have led to numerous contacts with many of them. CCW's database (ISIS) provides a system for recording contacts with land users, but the use of it by CCW staff is variable. Without consistent and comprehensive data on its customer base, then there must be doubts about whether the relationships here are as effective as they might be, despite improvements on a central basis in the working relationships between CCW and representative organisations over recent years.

  Anecdotal Representations during the review evidence suggests that perceptions of the 'farming community' may have been coloured by the attitudes, knowledge and agricultural understanding of field staff, particularly those working on the Tir Gofal scheme – which raises questions about the extent of CCW's training of its staff in practical agriculture and related land management issues. The reasons for such perceptions are difficult to pin down; and some may have been shaped at a time when a number of seconded staff left CCW to return to their previous FRCA posts. Either way….

  Recommendation

  CCW should explore with the agricultural community the potential for joint training activities CCW might, therefore, wish to consider training its staff along with other bodies in the 'farming sector' as means of enhancing skills development for the mutual benefit of both parties. the organisation and the agricultural industry.

  Similarly, closer links with the agricultural community could be developed if CCW were to be associated with promoting and marketing a wide variety of Welsh farm produce, perhaps with a 'green image'.

- **With other Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies** – in pursuing sustainable development together. By proactively coming together as a collective partnership, there is a clear opportunity for CCW and other ASPBs to identify the distinctive roles that each of them can play in promoting and contributing to the Assembly's sustainable development agenda - rather than waiting for the Assembly itself to propagate such action. Articulating their respective roles would then allow the Assembly to integrate the corporate plans and actions of all its ASPBs under the umbrella of Sustainable Development.

  CCW has provided advice to the Welsh Development Agency in carrying out environmental audits on WDA estates; and the CCW's development of LANDMAP has helped to inform WDA decisions on site locations. With the Wales Tourist Board, CCW has produced a "Greening your business" document aimed at tourism businesses; and both are hoping to develop a 'walking strategy' beamed at the tourism infrastructure along long-distance walks. CCW has also recognised that it has a role to play in helping rural communities and the rural economy to recover from the effects of foot and mouth. Under the Rural Recovery Plan, it is charged with working with the Wales Tourist Board and the Forestry Commission to develop new integrated tourism, leisure and environmental projects aimed at maximising access opportunities in the Welsh countryside. Other examples illustrating the partnership working that already exists between CCW and some other ASPBs are indicated summarised in Appendix 9. **(The diagram!)**

  There may is,be however, scope to do even more. For example, iIn conjunction with the Wales Tourist Board, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Sports Council for Wales, land owners and occupiers and other statutory business and voluntary sector interests, a database could be developed that sets out Wales—wide information on the recreational opportunities and facilities on land and water that are quality assured and compatible with conservation interests. Projects on recreational activities could also be worked up. Given the widespread public interest in wildlife, outlined earlier, there have to be more opportunities – perhaps under the banner of 'green tourism', for integrating this interest with countryside recreation in ways that inform and educate the general public, promote the environment, and generate economic benefits within local communities. Schemes might include developing linkages between National Nature Reserves and the local hotel and catering trade; and for developing niche tourist products targeted at, say, landscape artists, or water sports enthusiasts (as opposed to the more conventional audiences of walkers, ramblers and horse riders).

  Recommendation

  CCW, in collaboration with other ASPBs, should examine the scope for further joint partnership work on issues such as sustainable development; information services; and 'green tourism'.

  While a number of consultees pointed out that there is more scope for better working relationships, very few could articulate the fields of activity where such close working was required or where the gaps in 'joint service provision' needed plugging. Some commented more on organisational attitudes and behaviour such as the need for more proactive information sharing between parties; greater promptness in responding to advice; greater mutual recognition of the expertise of other organisations. Against this background, and given also that contacts between senior management of CCW and other ASPBs seem to vary, from close and regular to ad hoc and opportunistic, while formal contacts between CCW's Council and the Board members of other ASPBs seem to be virtually non-existent…. Perhaps in this context,

  Recommendation

  CCW should consider adopting a 'client manager' approach for managing in a more structured way its relationships with appropriate all ASPBs. across the board. Contacts between senior management of CCW and other ASPBs seem to vary, from close and regular to ad hoc and opportunistic; while formal contacts between CCW's Council and the Board members of other ASPBs seem to be virtually non-existent.

Confidence in CCW

6.2.8 It was pleasing to learn that the vast majority of consultees have confidence in CCW as a body with which they can do business and in the organisation's effectiveness in delivering its functions. But despite their expressions of support, a few number of consultees qualified their responses by stressing that their confidence in CCW was couched more in terms of CCW's ability to deliver its statutory functions on countryside and wildlife issues (rather than in terms of its role in other aspects in developing, say, environmental education or in forging partnerships). The support of a few consultees was also conditional upon CCW having adequate resources to do its job properly and dependent upon the organisation being staffed sufficiently professionally.

6.2.9 Correspondents offered a variety of factors that would boost their own confidence in CCW even further. These concentrated mostly on the following themes – which, it should be noted, undoubtedly reflect the fields of interest of particular consultees:

- Shifting CCW's focus; through
- a reassessment of the balance of resources directed towards landscape protection so that it delivers on its whole range of responsibilities;
- a greater emphasis being placed by CCW on its recreational role;
- Greater local delegation; by
- more of CCW's functions being performed by other bodies, notably local authority and voluntary bodies, leading to better integration of service delivery at a local level (facilitated through the secondment of CCW staff to more local organisations), thus leaving CCW to concentrate more on policy development, good practice and monitoring;
- strengthening local officer networks to allow closer working relationships;
- Better grant aid arrangements; through
- greater publicity and transparency of CCW's grant aid programmes, coupled with more flexibility, and reduced bureaucracy, in implementing grant aided projects at a local level;
- Promoting partnerships and enhancing CCW's image; through
- a more proactive dialogue and demonstration of commitment towards partnership working with all bodies concerned with rural development;
- a reduction in the perception held in certain quarters that CCW is a 'purist' conservation organisation, by shifting its emphasis to promoting environmental quality for community and economic benefit.

These issues are considered, in one way or another, in the body of this report.

6.3 Accessibility, responsiveness and promotion of purpose

6.3.1 Generally speaking, the vast majority of consultees spoke with confidence about CCW's accessibility as an organisation. Some pointed to the progress it is making in improving its accessibility by continuing to produce an attractive, high quality, range of publications for public consumption, as well as technical reports beamed at specialist audiences, and by developing more comprehensive information on its website.

6.3.2 Similarly, the majority spoke highly of CCW's co-operation, commitment and promptness in responding to calls for advice and literature; although one suspects that much of this is down to outside organisations having developed solid working relationships with particular individual officers in CCW over time.. If new working relationships, or different ways of working, are to be cultivated between CCW and outside bodies, then ready accessibility by external customers and the general public to the 'right' contact points in CCW is critical. With this in mind, CCW has overhauled its web site in recent months; and much of its content is still under development. It has tackled, to some extent at least, the irritation that many users feel about any given web site – namely, the ability to readily find relevant, named, contacts within the organisation. The heads of Ggroup and Aarea oOffices are now listed on the CCW web site and are readily contactable electronically. However, tThis may not prove to be as efficient or effective as intended, if more junior officers (who are not listed and whose roles and responsibilities are not described) are more appropriate to deal directly with specific enquiries from external customers or, indeed, internal colleagues. (Even internally, there is no guide to readily finding out who in CCW does what.) Consequently, CCW has embarked upon action, identified prior to this review, to improve its accessibility by establishing a trained team to staff up a telephone enquiry line.

6.3.3 Laudably, CCW is in the process of developing a strategy for improving its external (and internal) communications on a corporate basis. In so doing, it should may wish to address some of the following aspects in order to improve ways of reaching out to customers:

- apart from CCW's electronic 'visibility', there are a few concerns too about CCW's physical visibility. For example, its offices tend to be poorly signed; remotely located away from public thoroughfares; and they are not generally designed for public use as information centres – issues ;that CCW should consider in reviewing its office network (see Chapter 5.2)
-
- that the lines of communication between HQ and local area offices are somewhat blurred;
- that the lines of communication between HQ and local area offices are somewhat blurred; and that there needs to be a stronger ability for local areas to make decisions rather than through referral to HQ;
- that written communication between CCW (specialists in particular) and with external bodies needs to be communicated in less academic and more practical terms;
- a photographic library that can be made available to the public to not only help in promoting environmental education but also reduce duplication of effort by various organisations which produce their own literature.

Recommendation

CCW should take these issues of accessibility into account in framing its communications strategy.

Promotion of purpose

6.3.4 The general impression of consultees by respondents to this question was that CCW has not promoted its role as effectively as it might have done. There are real concerns, which I share, that the organisation has not pushed itself, its aims or its activities in sufficiently forceful and imaginative ways that can appeal to a wide range of different audiences.

6.3.5 This is not to say that the connections between CCW and some other bodies in the statutory, public and voluntary sectors are not strong. They are; and there are numerous examples that demonstrate this is the case. However, the underlying feeling is that CCW should go further to win over the 'hearts and minds' of decision-makers and the general public alike.

6.3.6 It could be argued that there are few opportunities for actually increasing the resource of nature and that the achievements of nature and landscape conservation are often the prevention of further losses; and that in effect, conservation *is* a largely defensive process. Whether this process may have coloured CCW's culture in being somewhat reticent about celebrating its achievements and promoting its successes as an organisation is somewhat debatable; but there does seem to be a clear need for CCW to explore more effective ways of enhancing its image in order to foster positive perceptions of the organisation among its stakeholders.

6.3.7 Quite apart from adopting a more positive, outgoing approach, to foster a greater understandinggreater understanding of CCW within the Assembly, there is a far wider audience of people and organisations who know little or nothing of the work of CCW and its aims. Raising public awareness generally about environmental matters within the organisation's aims and objectives would have the knock-on effect of giving CCW a higher profile.

6.3.8 Against this background, it is pleasing to note that the communications strategy referred to earlier will be tackling some of the issues highlighted in this chapter by bringing together a range of proposals for:

- engaging with communities (e.g. through the 'Balchder Bro' initiative);
- improving education (e.g. provision of teacher packs);
- improving better interpretation facilities (e.g. new signage on NNRs);
- enhancing publicity (e.g. at exhibitions);
- increasing the range of publications (e.g. through a new series of booklets on habitat and species); and
- developing CCW's website (e.g. information on special sites);. and
- setting up a Wales-wide enquiry telephone service.

CHAPTER 7: CCW AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

7.1 CCW's aims and objectives and the Assembly's guiding themes and values

7.1.1 The National Assembly has adopted guiding themes and values for influencing the way in which it develops its policies, budgetary priorities and programmes over the coming years. The *themes* are:

- Sustainable development – for meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own;
- Tackling social disadvantage – for developing an inclusive society where everyone has the chance to fulfil their potential; and
- Equal opportunities – for promoting a culture in which diversity is valued and equality of opportunity is a reality.

7.1.2 Underpinning these themes are *guiding values* and principles which not only inform the Assembly's policy making and ways of working but also act as benchmarks for others to judge whether the Assembly is living up to the standards it has set. Its values are to act strategically; to work in partnership; to be inclusive; and to promote good government.

7.1.3 CCW's activities and modus operandi reflect a number of all the Assembly's guiding *values*, ; as exemplified in nd the following Table 7a. provides an insight into how it does so.

Consultation

7.1.4 In offering their views on whether CCW's aims and objectives reflected the guiding themes and values of the National Assembly, the vast majority of consultees focused their attention on CCW's roles in 'sustainable development' and 'working in partnership'. CCW's partnership work with other organisations was covered earlier (Chapter 6); while issues surrounding CCW's role in sustainable development are explored further in this chapter.

7.1.5 Generally speaking, consultees respondents were broadly supportive of CCW in the way it was developing its approach towards the Assembly's themes and values, most notably on sustainable development; working in partnership and acting strategically. Some organisations suggested that it was unreasonable to expect CCW, given its statutory duties, to reflect all of the Assembly's guiding themes and values; and others pointed to the difficulty CCW has in embracing the themes of social disadvantage and equal opportunities into its portfolio, other than through issues surrounding countryside access. Some other bodies argued that the guiding themes of the Assembly could not be achieved by any one organisation on its own. In their view, they could only be achieved by different organisations working together towards common objectives arising from the leadership of the Assembly.

7.1.6 While such arguments have considerable force, they should not, in my view, prevent CCW from developing, or modifying, its programmes and policies in terms of how these contribute to *all* of the wider themes and values of the Assembly. Such themes and values need not have equal weight within CCW's overall portfolio (indeed, it would be most peculiar if they did). But some demonstration of how the organisation, through its services and its modus operandi, is already reflecting those themes and values, albeit to varying degrees, as Tables 7aX and 7bY try to map out, might help to develop constructive thinking a little further on the subject.

On equal opportunities, for example, while there appears to be a strong commitment within CCW towards family-friendly policies and supporting employees with caring responsibilities, there is no action plan – which CCW's equal opportunities policy promises – for achieving equality of opportunity for people of ethnic minority origin, for women and for disabled people. Nor is it apparent that there are methods in place within CCW for monitoring the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy or for gauging whether the organisation as a whole reflects the diversity of the Welsh population, or of the clients it serves.

Table 7aX: CCW and the Assembly's themes

The Assembly's themes	Examples of how CCW reflects the Assembly's themes
• **Sustainable development**	*Individual examples embracing all three strands of sustainability:* • CCW's operation of the Tir Gofal scheme which helps the Assembly's biodiversity commitment and is aimed at ensuring that developments in Welsh agriculture are more sustainable economically and socially • CCW's production and promulgation of guidelines on how to build environmental sustainability into projects supported by EU structural funds • CCW's work with developers to ensure that industrial, commercial and social developments proceed in ways that are compatible with protection of environmental interests (such as Hyder's new water treatment works through the Gwent Levels SSSI; and securing satisfactory conditions for Celtic Manor's bid to secure the Ryder Cup golf tournament) • CCW's initiative to develop and market the tourism potential of Glyndwr's Way, by signing up and training tourism operators interested in offering accommodation catering along the route (currently on hold owing to FMD)
• **Tackling social disadvantage**	• CCW's support for organisations, such as Groundwork Trusts, aimed at supporting community groups to undertake projects to improve the environment in their areas • CCW's grant scheme to improve public rights of way has been skewed towards improvement works on those routes that serve local communities and those connected with public transport
• **Equal opportunities**	• CCW support of projects and schemes for the BT 'Access for All' campaign, aimed at creating access opportunities to the countryside for people with disabilities • CCW's exploration with BEN (Black Environment Network) about ways in which more ethnic minority groups represented in Wales might be encouraged to visit the countryside. CCW will be supporting the HLF-funded Groundwork initiative in this respect and is also considering an application for grant aid from BEN

Table 7a: CCW and the Assembly's themes

The Assembly's themes	Examples of how CCW reflects the Assembly's themes
• **Sustainable development**	*Individual examples embracing all three strands of sustainability:* • CCW's operation of the Tir Gofal scheme which helps the Assembly's biodiversity commitment and is aimed at ensuring that developments in Welsh agriculture are more sustainable economically and socially • CCW's production and promulgation of guidelines on how to build environmental sustainability into projects supported by EU structural funds • CCW's work with developers to ensure that industrial, commercial and social developments proceed in ways that are compatible with protection of environmental interests (such as Hyder's new water treatment works through the Gwent Levels SSSI; and securing satisfactory conditions for Celtic Manor's bid to secure the Ryder Cup golf tournament) • CCW's initiative to develop and market the tourism potential of Glyndwr's Way, by signing up and training tourism operators interested in offering accommodation catering along the route (currently on hold owing to FMD)
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Table 7bY: CCW and the Assembly's guiding values

The Assembly's values	Methodology	Examples of how CCW reflects the Assembly's values
• **Acting strategically, by...**	• ...setting frameworks through which organisations and their partners can work. • ...looking for areas of work where delivery is better placed with others • ...challenging its own performance and that of its partners against set targets • ...tackling the root causes of problems and look for long-term solutions	• CCW's annually compiled Corporate Plan sets out an overarching strategy, based on betterwales.com themes, that is designed to help meet the Assembly's priorities and those of others • CCW's grant regime encourages voluntary bodies and local authorities to carry out locally-based projects to help fulfil nationally-driven objectives • Members of CCW regularly monitor progress of the organisation's in-year financial progress and non-financial outputs at each Council meeting. • CCW's provision of advice and information to help inform and shape the Assembly's policies and programmes on for example, Structural Funds' issues; sustainable development; planning Policy; energy; waste; integrated transport; and agricultural diversification
• **Working in partnership, by...**	• ...aiming for agreement on issues with partners • ...promoting participation through openness and debate • ...building on Welsh values, including the importance of community • ...facilitating partnerships with the statutory, voluntary and business sectors so that services can be organised on a "who does what best" basis • ...promoting the active involvement of people in all age groups	• CCW cannot function without the support and co-operation of other parties: the preparatory work underpinning the designation of the WyeUsk as a Special Conservation Area involved some 1,600 personal visits to land occupiers and others affected. • The National Access Forum provides an example of a successful mechanism established by CCW to generate transparency and discussion by individuals and organisations on a wide range of issues involving access to open countryside • Building on its published guidance, 'Community participation to benefit the environment', CCW will be piloting a new initiative ("Balchder Bro") with the voluntary sector to help local communities formulate plans to capitalise on their local distinctiveness • CCW is looking, for example, to identify opportunities for its partners to manage certain of its National Nature Reserves • CCW offers Example neededschools, for example, fieldwork visits to some of its National Nature Reserves

Table 7b: CCW and the Assembly's guiding values

The Assembly's values	Methodology	Examples of how CCW reflects the Assembly's values
• **Acting strategically, by...**	• ...setting frameworks through which organisations and their partners can work. • ...looking for areas of work where delivery is better placed with others • ...challenging its own performance and that of its partners against set targets • ...tackling the root causes of problems and to look for long-term solutions	• CCW's annually compiled Corporate Plan sets out an overarching strategy, based on betterwales.com themes, that is designed to help meet the Assembly's priorities and those of others • CCW's grant regime encourages voluntary bodies and local authorities to carry out locally-based projects to help fulfil nationally-driven objectives • Members of CCW regularly monitor progress of the organisation's in-year financial progress and non-financial outputs at each Council meeting. • CCW's provision of advice and information to help inform and shape the Assembly's policies and programmes on for example, Structural Funds' issues; sustainable development; planning Policy; energy; waste; integrated transport; and agricultural diversification
• **Working in partnership, by...**	• ...aiming for agreement on issues with partners • ...promoting participation through openness and debate • ...building on Welsh values, including the importance of community • ...facilitating partnerships with the statutory, voluntary and business sectors so that services can be organised on a "who does what best" basis • ...promoting the active involvement of people in all age groups	• CCW cannot function without the support and co-operation of other parties: the preparatory work underpinning the designation of the WyeUsk as a Special Conservation Area involved some 1,600 personal visits to land occupiers and others affected. • The National Access Forum provides an example of a successful mechanism established by CCW to generate transparency and discussion by individuals and organisations on a wide range of issues involving access to open countryside • Building on its published guidance, 'Community participation to benefit the environment', CCW will be piloting a new initiative ("Balchder Bro") with the voluntary sector to help local communities formulate plans to capitalise on their local distinctiveness • CCW is looking, for example, to identify opportunities for its partners to manage certain of its National Nature Reserves • CCW offers schools, for example, fieldwork visits to some of its National Nature Reserves

• **Working in partnership (continued), by…**	• …maintaining linkages with the Assembly and other government departments to help inform and influence policies and programmes • …developing the profile and influence of Wales in Europe and internationally	• CCW advice and contributions to the Assembly's developing thinking on planning policy; fisheries policy; renewable energy; and agricultural diversification, provide examples of such linkages • CCW is helping to fulfil the Assembly's European obligations on the environment by contributing, for example, to the Natura 2000 network of sites of international importance
• **Being inclusive, by...**	• …promoting equality of opportunity and tackling disadvantage • …addressing the needs of all social groups • …working for the whole of Wales, testing policies and programmes for their wider impact on each region • …recognising the specific needs of rural areas and areas of social deprivation	• CCW, for example, promotes the enjoyment of the countryside by people with disabilities; and it has a statutory duty to report upon such activity. • CCW is intending, for example, to take environmental interpretation 'roadshows' into urban centres. Example needed • CCW's all-Wales agri-environmental scheme, Tir Gofal, was developed on the back of Tir Cymen – an experimental project that had been tried and tested in three separate locations (Gower, Dinefwr and Meironnydd) in Wales • CCW is supporting agri-environmental measures as well as a range of community initiatives through its grant aid regimeExample needed
• **Promoting good government, through...**	• …implementing the highest standards of probity • …testing the added value and effectiveness of work and that of partners against stated values and priorities • …rationalising and simplifying procedures and programmes • …framing policies and decisions by basing them on the best evidence available and the participation of users	• CCW has a well-structured annual programme of audits across the range of its operations. Example needed • • CCW has recently established a Resource Planning and EfficiExample needed • ency Group which in part is responsible for tackling measures for minimising bureaucracy. • CCW is increasingly involving its environmental voluntary sector partners, for example, at early stages of its corporate planning formulation. Example needed **Example needed**
• **Working in partnership (continued), by…**	• …maintaining linkages with the Assembly and other government departments to help inform and influence policies and programmes • …developing the profile and influence of Wales in Europe and internationally	• CCW advice and contributions to the Assembly's developing thinking on planning policy; fisheries policy; renewable energy; and agricultural diversification, provide examples of such linkages • CCW is helping to fulfil the Assembly's European obligations on the environment by contributing, for example, to the Natura 2000 network of sites of international importance
• **Being inclusive, by...**	• …promoting equality of opportunity and tackling disadvantage • …addressing the needs of all social groups • …working for the whole of Wales, testing policies and programmes for their wider impact on each region • …recognising the specific needs of rural areas and areas of social deprivation	• CCW, for example, promotes the enjoyment of the countryside by people with disabilities; and it has a statutory duty to report upon such activity. • CCW is intending, for example, to take environmental interpretation 'roadshows' into urban centres. • CCW's all-Wales agri-environmental scheme, Tir Gofal, was developed on the back of Tir Cymen – an experimental project that had been tried and tested in three separate locations (Gower, Dinefwr and Meironnydd) in Wales • CCW is supporting agri-environmental measures as well as a range of community initiatives through its grant aid regime
• **Promoting good government, through...**	• …implementing the highest standards of probity • …rationalising and simplifying procedures and programmes • …framing policies and decisions by basing them on the best evidence available and the participation of users	• CCW has a well-structured annual programme of audits across the range of its operations. • CCW has recently established a Resource Planning and Efficiency Group which in part is responsible for tackling measures for minimising bureaucracy. • CCW is increasingly involving its environmental voluntary sector partners, for example, at early stages of its corporate planning formulation.

7.2 Contributing to, and championing, sustainable development

7.2.1 There were mixed views from consultees as to whether CCW's aims and objectives should be changed to reflect the Assembly's themes of sustainable development; tackling social disadvantage; and promoting equal opportunities. As mentioned earlier, CCW's role in addressing social disadvantage and in promoting equal opportunities is relatively limited in relation to its primary functions; but the majority of respondents thought that a revision to CCW's aims and objectives to mirror the Assembly's themes would oblige CCW to adopt a more proactive role than hitherto on sustainable development through better integration of environmental and socio-economic agendas. Some consultees pointed to the need for a more overt demonstration by CCW that 'conservation' issues should not take precedence over 'people' issues and for a greater acknowledgement by the organisation that habitats and the countryside are in fact managed by people on whose co-operation wildlife depends.

7.2.2 Broadly speaking, the consultation exercise threw up two schools of thought on CCW's role in sustainable development. One was based on the thesis that because CCW was engaged in biodiversity and nature conservation work, then such work for the benefit of the environment – as one of the three key strands of sustainability – was in itself sufficient demonstration that CCW was advancing sustainable development. The other perspective was based on a wider view that CCW has social and economic contributions to offer too.

7.2.3 Both kinds of views arewere evident within CCW and outside CCW; with those CCW staff holding the latter view believing that CCW's culture – throughout the organisation – hasd to change to embrace wholeheartedly all three strands of sustainability.

7.2.4 The latter view is also one that I endorse. If CCW is to deliver its remit successfully, it is important, whatever aims and objectives CCW adopts in the future, that those are couched within a broader context that embraces all three strands of sustainable development, as proposed earlier (Chapter 43) and in terminology that readily conveys the message.

7.2.5 The National Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme requires CCW and other public bodies to promote sustainable development actively through their corporate planning and policy development. It is, therefore, not alone in having to balance or integrate environmental, social and economic duties in fulfilling its remit.

7.2.6 Indeed, the integration of environmental and socio-economic considerations has been a feature of CCW's activities since its very inception. Given the view of some observers that CCW is a 'single issue', environmental, organisation, it is important to reinforce the point that CCW is in fact a body which has social and economic responsibilities that are an integral part of its statutory functions:

- Section 130 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that CCW *shall have regard to the social and economic interests of rural areas in Wales* when discharging functions relating to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in Wales, amenity of the countryside, and to the encouragement of opportunities for open air recreation; and

- Section 37 of the Countryside Act, which requires CCW to *have due regard to the needs of economic and social interests of rural areas* when carrying out its functions.

In effect, the legislation setting out CCW's principal functions is designed to ensure that CCW does not focus on its primary functions to the exclusion of other, socio-economic, considerations.

7.2.7 Some consultees suggested that CCW should 'take the lead' in promoting sustainable development – a view that I do not share because CCW is simply not equipped to pursue social or economic goals in a comprehensive manner any more than organisations with a primarily social purpose can pursue all-embracing environmental goals.

7.2.8 There are also a few critics who believe that CCW is not doing enough to champion the environment let alone sustainable development and that it should focus on the former rather than the latter. They argue that rather than taking an approach whereby different Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies try to adopt a generic sustainable development agenda, a preferable approach would be to bring such bodies together to focus on contributing to an all-Wales delivery of sustainable development.

7.2.9 While I sympathise with this view, the one approach does not negate the need for the other. It is only when individual organisations have *internally* explored the scope of how their particular policies and programmes can contribute to each strand of sustainable development that proposals on 'which of them can do what best' can be worked up and agreed. CCW has started its internal operational scrutiny – with a view to submitting an action plan to the Assembly by next spring setting out how it proposes to integrate sustainable development into its work.

7.2.10 Subject to only a few areas of work where socio-economic duties are inappropriate (for example, in putting forward proposals for Special Protection Area status), the Council and senior management in CCW recognise that the vast majority of CCW's workCCW's work is subject to socio-economic duties; and that such duties apply just as much to work undertaken through its own volition (in managing National Nature Reserves, for instance) as to work involved in responding to and collaborating with, external organisations or individuals.

7.2.11 In developing its action plan response to the Assembly, CCW is developing a position statement on sustainable development, setting out how its work contributes directly or indirectly to socio-economic well-beingwell being. Whether the position statement will follow the exemplary lead of the Welsh Development Agency's policy, 'Learning to Work Differently' is, at the time of writing, unknown.

7.2.12 In addition, CCW is also working up improved in-house procedures for responding to planningto planning applications. New documented procedures will be designed to ensure that, in coming to a view on proposed planning developments, CCW's attention to socio-economic considerations are being handled in a consistent and demonstrable way.

Doing more on SD

7.2.13 There can be little no doubt that CCW is contributing to the Assembly's sustainable development agenda, as exemplified earlier in the chapter (Table X). However, what CCW is not doing is trumpeting enough to outside audiences that it *is* contributing to sustainable development *and* promoting the concept too.

Examples of such promotion may be found in CCW's publications that were issued over five years ago: 'Sustainable development: the reality' provided advice to local authorities in Wales on converting sustainable development into practice; while 'Towards a common vision', which reinforced CCW's commitment to community action, had sustainable development as its underlying theme.

7.2.14 While CCW, through its forthcoming position statement, will be marketing the sustainable development message again, it will need to do so internally as well. I am not certain that the concept of sustainable development is well understood by CCW staff across the board – despite the commitment of CCW's Council and senior management. . TThere are indications that some staff regard certain activities of the organisation as a distraction from what they perceive as CCW's core business. To spread the message that the environment does not exist in its own right and that the biodiversity and landscape of Wales is shaped by the policies and practices influencing Man's use of the land surface. ,

Recommendation

CCW, in conjunction with the Assembly, should embark on a programme of staff training on the values and practicalities surrounding sustainable development as a key component for developing its sustainable development action plan. staff training (with a dedicated budget) on sustainable development, through joint seminars with other bodies, including the Assembly, will need to be an important component of CCW's action plan.

7.2.15 The Assembly's own draft action plan could be used by CCW as an overarching framework for developing its own sustainable development action plan; but other components of the action plan that I suggest could be incorporated, include:

- a redefinition of CCW's aims and objectives that embraces all three strands of sustainable development (as proposed in Chapter 4) and in terminology that readily conveys the message;

- the production of 'a compliance statement' within all papers presented to CCW's Council that outlines the impact on sustainable development of the advice and recommendations contained in the papers;
- the recasting of 'memoranda of understanding' between CCW and local government, the voluntary sector and all other ASPBs, that identify areas for specific joint action which support sustainable development;
- the development of sustainable development-based appraisal criteria (along similar lines perhaps to those developed by Environment Wales) for CCW's own grant aid and technical support and research programmes;
- the development of exemplar sustainable development projects within the catchments of each of CCW's Aarea office locations;
- working up proposals for a 'Sustainable Development Challenge Fund', set up in conjunction with other ASPBs – with match-funding from the Assembly, to provide an incentive whereby the relevant bodies find it in their own interests to develop working partnerships – for steering jointly sponsored grant aid towards sustainable development projects and schemes; and
- targeted implementation of recommendations emerging from CCW's greenCCW's green transport and housekeeping projects that are currently in train.

Recommendation

CCW should consider incorporating the proposals described above into its planned sustainable development action plan

7.3 CCW's advice on future countryside, maritime and conservation policy

7.3.1 Consultations with National Assembly officials from various divisions confirm that relationships with CCW staff are generally good, with positive indications of support for the responsiveness of CCW in helping to contribute to various initiatives, such as planning policy and the Sustainable Development Scheme and in providing advice during the passage of the CROW Act. This attitude, however, is not as widespread as it might be; and it is difficult to pinpoint whether the lack of dialogue between Assembly officials and CCW staff in some areas of work is a problem that lies predominantly with one party or the other. (Officials in CCW's sponsor division in the Assembly, Countryside Division, would certainly welcome slicker reactions from CCW in meeting some of the set deadlines. But even here, critics praise CCW for the quality of advice submitted on conservation and biodiversity issues. While for their part, there is some indication that CCW has a general grouse about Assembly's own deadlines for consultation.

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The sponsor division needs to ensure that it continues to work with CCW in helping and guiding the organisation to shape and meet its planned activities.

7.3.2 It is important that CCW's sponsor division in the Assembly ensures that it continues to work closely with CCW in helping and guiding the organisation to shape and meet its planned activities. The sponsor division former could take more of a role of a "CCW proofer" in acting as a conduit through which CCW and other divisions within the Assembly are kept abreast of developments that may impact upon their respective areas of responsibility. The division , needs to continue and in looking out for opportunities whereby CCW can develop better linkages with officials in other divisions for joint work across the whole spectrum of the Assembly's responsibilities. . By the same token, CCW also needs to keep the sponsor division closely in touch with developments that are in the pipeline.

7.3.3 However, with more resources at its disposal compared with earlier years, CCW will be in a stronger position to play a wider role in responding to Assembly initiatives such as the Rural Recovery Plan under which CCW will play a key role alongside the Wales Tourist Board in promoting integrated tourism, leisure and environmental projects.

7.3.4 CCW's expertise is highly respected by external organisations; and there is widespread support and confidence amongst them that CCW is able to advise the Assembly effectively on countryside, maritime and conservation policy. A number of consultees, however, feel that they too can play a more positive role in helping to frame future advice to the Assembly if CCW were as to consult more widely with them and outside bodies, to access their respective expertise. , and within the organisation, to draw upon the knowledge of certain operational area staff outside HQ who feel that the expertise that they have to offer is sometimes overlooked.

7.3.5 An aspect area that may pose difficulties for both CCW and the Assembly in due course arises from CCW's position as an Assembly-sponsored organisation on the one hand and an organisation that has UK conservation responsibilities and a role as independent advised to Government on the other. As the Assembly's actions and policies in Wales become more distinctive from those in other parts of the UK over time, CCW may find itself pulled in directions with which it is uncomfortable or where it may be seen to be acting inconsistently with Assembly policies. Similarly, the Assembly may not value advice which CCW feels ought to be given.

7.3.6 The Management Statement (in Annex 1, para 10) that sets out the relationship between the Assembly and CCW states that CCW is "responsible for providing independent advice on appropriate matters to Ministers and Government Departments, local authorities, landowners and occupiers, specialist agencies and, where appropriate, other interested bodies".

7.3.7 However, CCW's independence, highly prized by the organisation and external bodies alike, may be compromised is at risk if the Council is expected to ensure "that its policies are compatible with those of the Assembly" – a personal duty that currently rests with the Chairman of CCW (para 2.4.3 of the Management Statement). This potential risk may be compounded even further if the Assembly's policies start to diverge from UK policies, when, at the same time, CCW is still "expected to play a full role in the development of policies which have a UK or international dimension through the machinery of the statutory JNCC" (Annex 1, para 10 of the Management Statement).

CCW's stance, earlier this year, that GM trials should go ahead in Wales as part of field studies throughout Britain provided an illustration of CCW appearing to run counter to Assembly policy on the matter.

Recommendation

CCW and the Assembly should put in place mechanisms There need to be mechanisms in place for avoiding potential policy incompatibilities or contentious issues between the two parties, recognising the former's statutory independence. CCW and the Assembly.

7.3.8 Such mechanisms might include, for example:

- better lines of communication between the two organisations that trigger 'early warning signs' for alerting both parties of emerging sensitive issues;
- more emphasis by Countryside Division, CCW's sponsor division in the Assembly, in fulfilling its function "to communicate the Assembly's policy" ….to the full Council…"and advise on the interpretation of policy" (para 2.3 of the Management Statement);
- early engagement of Council Members and of Assembly officials by those CCW officers working up CCW policies;
- the responsibility for approving and issuing position statements being vested in CCW's full Council, rather than the Chairman alone.

7.4 Reporting arrangements between CCW and the Assembly

7.4.1 Very few consultees felt able to convey views on whether the reporting arrangements between CCW and the National Assembly provide an adequate framework for relationships between the organisations. The two most significant issues for respondents are:

- their perception that CCW needs to develop a far closer working relationship with Assembly; and
- that the arrangements whereby CCW is accountable to two Assembly Committees may not provide the most effective reporting mechanism. With CCW reporting to the Agricultural and Rural Development (ARD) Committee on the Tir Gofal scheme and to the Environment, Planning and Transport (EPT) Committee more generally, some question whether such arrangements tend to reinforce sectoral, rather than integrated, thinking on countryside issues generally.

7.4.2 The latter view is not one that which I entirely share; , for two reasons. In operational terms, lead responsibility for policy and accountability for Tir Gofal rests with the National Assembly for Wales Agriculture Department (NAWAD). Because the scheme is co-funded by the EC, NAWAD retains the budget line for Tir Gofal – funding that is quite separate from the general Grant In Aid budget administered by CCW's sponsor division (Countryside Division of the EPT Group) for its other mainstream activities. Secondly, in presentational terms, by reporting to the ARD Committee, CCW has the added opportunity of reinforcing the key messages that Tir Gofal is an integrated scheme that brings together environmental and socio-economic benefits to rural Wales and that CCW has an important advisory role to play on more general developments that impact upon agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Besides, CCW does report to the EPT Committee on progress in meeting Tir Gofal targets, as well as other key biodiversity and nature conservation targets, set by the Assembly.

7.4.3 I share the view aired by some consultees that CCW is not managing its relationship with Assembly Members, notably those represented on the Environment, Planning and Transport (EPT) Committee, as well as it perhaps might. : one detects, for instance, that the interaction between the two in Committee meetings could be a little more cordial.

7.4.4 This is not to say that CCW has not tried to encourage more effective liaison with the Assembly. It has, for instance, held a small programme of presentations for Assembly Members (AMs) - on the EU Habitats Directive, marine issues and on the CROW Act) - but these were quite poorly attended by AMs. Moreover, CCW has a dedicated Assembly liaison officer, whose role includes not only providing information and briefing to Assembly Members and their staff but also advising CCW's senior management of issues raised by the Assembly that may require action by Council Members or the staff of CCW.

Nevertheless…..,

Recommendation

CCW and the Assembly should consider better ways might wish to consider some potential ways of developing a closer understandingcloser understanding between them., for example, by:

7.4.5 Potentially, these might include:

- CCW Council Members *re-exploring* ways in which Assembly Members can see at first hand, the work of CCW at local and regional levels. (The offer from Council Members of field visits to Assembly Members when they were appointed was not widely taken up);
- opening up opportunities for Assembly Members to forge links with staff at CCW's local offices within their constituencies;

;

- CCW staff developing a concise information service, regularly beamed at Assembly Members, that provides a wider picture of CCW's activities to supplement the mostly ad hoc, 'single issue', briefing currently issued;
- more time being allotedallotted (than has generally been the case in the past) the present thirty minutes or so) to the Assembly's EPT Committee's consideration of CCW's biannual performance monitoring reports. This might provide a better opportunity for raising awareness among AMs of CCW's aims and activities as well as greater probing of CCW's progress in meeting a wider range of targets than the few that are currently scrutinised at Committee meetings;
- CCW, together with appropriate ASPBs or other relevant bodes, reporting to the Committees on a thematic, rather than organisational, basis. Such joint reporting, on themes like countryside access or community regeneration, might enable a better opportunity for Members to become more acquainted with the individual contributions of each organisation, and the inter-relationships between them, in delivering the Assembly's objectives

7.5 Compatibility of Tir Gofal with the core sponsorship relationship between CCW and the Assembly

7.5.1 CCW administers Tir Gofal - an integrated all-Wales agri-environment scheme – on behalf of the National Assembly. The scheme is a key element in implementing the strategy of increasing the environmental and ecological sustainability of Welsh farming. Tir Gofal integrates a number of former agri-environmental schemes and thereby provides a more comprehensive and more comprehensible approach to whole-farm environmental action.

7.5.2 Despite the difficulties that CCW has experienced in managing Tir Gofal during its inception and the concerns that have been expressed about the scheme – its complexity; its impact upon CCW's core activities; and perceptions about the inexperience and responsiveness of CCW staff in administering it – the interim report recommended that Tir Gofal should not be transferred from CCW.

7.5.3 The report concluded that Tir Gofal offers clear environmental gains in terms of habitats, flora and fauna and will have the effect of conserving historic landscapes and enhancing the visual impact of the Welsh countryside; and that these are core aims which are entirely consistent with those of CCW as an organisation with statutory environmental land management objectives. The report also pointed out that the added dimension for CCW, in sustainable development terms, is that the scheme has much wider impacts derived from, but separate to, the achievement of those core aims. Although Tir Gofal is related to the provision of environmental goods and services, it contributes to social sustainability by helping to safeguard the viability of some family farm holdings in Wales and slow the decline in their number.

7.5.4 By the end of March 2001, CCW had completed close to 500 first year farm agreements involving some 50,000 hectares of land, with higher than anticipated environmental outputs (such as broadleaved woodland, fens, marsh and coastal habitats), being brought under conservation management. In socio-economic terms, a programme of farmer training has been developed that embraces events to explain the requirements of the scheme; habitat management courses; and practical training such as stonewalling. In the current financial year alone, some £9 million is budgeted to be paid directly to farmers included in Tir Gofal.

Stocktake

7.5.5 The interim report recommended that Tir Gofal should be periodically reviewed in order to ensure that the continuation of CCW's agency role does not adversely affect its other responsibilities and that the scheme is administered effectively and efficiently. As a useful first step in that process, the Assembly has recently conducted a 'stocktake' of the Tir Gofal scheme. The stocktake examined whether Tir Gofal could be simplified without compromising environmental gains; whether its administration could be improved; whether options could be identified to enable a greater number of farmers to benefit from the scheme; and whether the pattern of take-up under the scheme should be amended.

Stocktake

7.5.6 The stocktake concluded that there were a number of possible changes that could be developed to ease the application process for farmers and allow for efficiency savings in administering the scheme. The changes - ranging from revisions to the scoring systems to the abolition of ranking Tir Gofal applications in favour of a 'first come - first served' basis – will require EC blessing and will not come into effect until Spring 2002. A number of changes, including the abandonment of ranking of applications, have already been implemented and others will be implemented quickly. Some of the more fundamental alterations to the scheme will require the EU to approve a modification of the Rural Development Plan and cannot therefore be introduced until 2002.

7.5.7 Although not falling within the terms of reference of the recent stocktake, it is important that similar exercises in the future examine:

- the interface between CCW and NAWAD's cartographic section, where the transfer of information appears to be causing procedural delays and friction between the two parties. This operational issue needs to be tackled and resolved by both parties in the immediate future;

- the administration costs of Tir Gofal. In 2001/02, administration will account for some £2 million of the total budget of 10.9 million - the equivalent of roughly £1 for every £4.50 paid to farmers. The proportion will inevitably fall as increasing numbers of farmers enter the scheme in future and as programme expenditure on Tir Gofal grows. However, both CCW and NAWAD need to agree on an achievable series of ratios that will bring the proportion of administrative costs of Tir Gofal closer to a figure approaching the 10 per cent that applies to the Tir Cymen scheme;

- the impact of Tir Gofal in environmental and socio-economic terms. Now that the scheme has started to bring in a series of habitats under conservation and access management, it is important that the quality of these habitats and the species on which they depend are monitored so that the success of the scheme can be evaluated. The number of successful applicants, and the land area involved, in themselves, are not good indicators of positive environment change. Measurable changes in water quality; diversity of farmland birds; and in habitat and species richness will also be necessary. These are qualitative data of the kind urged earlier in the report (Chapter 3). Similarly, as was the case with the Tir Cymen scheme, an assessment will be needed of the socio-economic benefits accruing from Tir Gofal;

- internal monitoring of Tir Gofal within the Assembly. It is reassuring to see that there are improved arrangements, within the Assembly, between Countryside Division dealing with CCW in their general sponsorship capacity and Food and Farming Development Division which deals with CCW in sponsoring Tir Gofal. It appears that, until very recently, each party had assumed that the other was monitoring Tir Gofal, with the net effect that neither was doing so rigorously. . According to CCW's Management Statement, it is NAWAD's responsibility to formally monitor Tir Gofal information received from CCW; and improved mechanisms, particularly on financial monitoring and control, are now in place for doing so. These mechanisms need to be kept under review;

- the views of stakeholders. Consultees were divided in their opinions as to whether the executive nature of the relationship between the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Assembly over Tir Gofal was compatible with the core sponsorship relationship. Some felt that the current arrangements afforded a good opportunity for increasing harmony between the aspirations and needs of the agricultural and environmental 'sectors' within Wales. Others, on the other hand, felt that alternative arrangements needed to be explored. Local authorities, in particular, felt excluded over the level of their involvement in shaping and delivering the scheme, which suggests that wider consultation by the National Assembly is required in any proposed restructuring of the Tir Gofal programme; and moreover,

- the role of CCW's Council itself requires clarification. The organisation is responsible for delivering Tir Gofal and is accountable to the Assembly for it, but is not responsible for setting the scheme's criteriathe design of, and potential future amendments to, the scheme. CCW's officers are closely involved in advising NAWAD officials both in relation to the scheme's content and management. However, even though CCW's officers report to their Council on the scheme's operation and developments, there is a feeling that Council Members are not fully engaged at a political level as NAWAD takes all decisions of significance. The Assembly should clarify what it expects of the Council.

Recommendation The Assembly should issue guidance about how it will engage with CCW's Council about offering up advice on the future shape of Tir Gofal.

The Assembly should periodically review CCW's agency role in respect of Tir Gofal. The next 'stocktake' should review: the interface between CCW and NAWAD's cartographic section; the administration costs of the scheme; its impact in environmental and socio-economic terms; the monitoring arrangements for the scheme within the Assembly; the views of other stakeholders; and the role of CCW Council Members in providing advice on the future shape of the scheme.

7.6 Different freedoms and flexibilities

7.6.1 Of the very few comments made by consultees on whether CCW needs different freedoms and flexibilities to improve the delivery of its functions, the most significant came from within CCW itself, whose staff called for greater flexibility in carrying forward unspent funding from one year to the next.

The financial rules of the Assembly have been relaxed slightly in recent years.

7.6.2 As is the case with other ASPBs, CCW can may now carry over unspent cash balances from one financial year to another, of normally no more than the equivalent of 2 per cent of its agreed gross budget. Any carryover in excess of that figure will be taken into account in the payment of the following year's grant in aid. Although carryover is not automatic and has to be agreed on a case by case basis, there are no plans to increase the current limit (it although this is under review by the Assembly) is highly unlikely that the Assembly will increase the current limit**,** despite the fact that much of CCW's work programmes are weather-dependent. of long-term duration. The current carryover limit is, quite rightly, designed to impose a discipline on internal project planning and management within CCW, but without the straitjacket of the previous accounting regime that may have encouraged a rush of expenditure towards the very end of each financial year.

7.6.3 On a different, but closely rerelated issue, the Assembly should consider a relaxation in the rules whereby it exercises control over the staffing complement structure of CCW as well as controlling the organisation's annual running costs. It also monitors CCW's staff numbers through a series of quarterly returns.

7.6.4 The running costs of CCW are determined by the Assembly each year – costs that are incurred for meeting targets that are set by the Assembly.

It seems curious, therefore, that the Assembly should want to exercise additional control mechanisms whereby it gives prior approval to changes in the complement of CCW, even though the cost of such changes (involving, for example, "substantive changes of duties among existing posts", or the creation of posts at levels which are "not already represented in the staff structure") are still subject to the overall running cost limit set by the Assembly.

Recommendation

The Assembly should consider giving Consideration should be given as to whether CCW should have complete freedom – within its annual running cost limits – to appoint, and vary, the staff it employs.employed to reflect the scale of the organisation's operations for meeting the Assembly's aims and objectives.The Assembly's need to monitor staff numbers should also be reviewed.

7.6.5 This, ese and related issues are covered again in the following chapter. that follows.

CHAPTER 8: CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Corporate governance may can be defined as the system by which an organisation is directedis directed and controlled. Members of the Council, and senior management, of CCW are responsible for the governance of their organisation. These responsibilities include setting the strategic aims of CCW; providing leadership to put themn into effect; supervising the management of the business; and reporting to stakeholders oin their stewardship.

Views relating to some of these aspects appear earlier in this my report; and but while they are also applicable here, the comments in this chapter focus attention on some key issues arising from the review's terms of reference, including:

- financial and managerial control arrangements between CCW and the National Assembly;
- audit reporting and follow up action;
- financial management and value for money;
- control and scrutiny of operating costs and staffing levels;
- quality and efficiency of service delivery; and
- improvements in efficiency of operations.

8.1 Financial and managerial control arrangements between CCW and the Assembly.

8.1.1 The financial and managerial control arrangements between CCW the Agency and the Assembly are set out in a the CCW's Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, which are issued by the Assembly following discussion with CCW. These documents are fundamentally important in underpinning the relationship between CCW and the Assembly. They define the framework within which CCW operates and they provide the terms and conditions under which the Assembly provides funding to CCW in the form of grant in aid. They set out the delegations, regulations and guidelines relevant to CCW's duties, powers and functions, and describe how CCW is held to account for these. The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum are reviewed regularly by both parties, and a re-cast version was issued to CCW by the Assembly in September 2000.

8.1.2 The Management Statement covers the following broad areas: the respective responsibilities and accountabilities of the Assembly and of CCW; general issues regarding CCW's policies and priorities; CCW's arrangements for compliance and monitoring; and matters impacting on staffing and personnel management. The Financial Memorandum supplements the Management Statement and sets out in greater detail the arrangements for financial management and control; the conditions attaching to the payment of CCW's grant in aid or other funds; submission of reports and returns by CCW to the Assembly; and the arrangements covering financial delegations and authorities, write-offs and losses.

8.1.3 Flowing from the Financial Memorandum is CCW's own, internal, Finance Manual, that consists consisting of financial instructions and guidance and other relevant financial information for CCW staff to observe. It was fully updated following recommendations arising from a report on financial management prepared by CCW's Internal Audit Unit. The Manual sets out, in a single volume, comprehensive guidance on principles, regulations and procedures for all staff. It describes the roles and responsibilities of all grades and financial posts; the controls on expenditure and income, including the arrangements for EU funded programmes and audit. The Manual is more usable as a day to day reference document for CCW staff than the Assembly's Financial Memorandum.

8.1.4 There are indications that some of the terms and conditions within *the* Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, and the processes for reviewing the documents, have generated some tension in the relationship between CCW and its sponsor division within the Assembly. CCW feels that it has too little input to the formulation and agreement of the documents and that its requests to the Assembly for proposed changes to the guidance have gone unheeded. But action is now in hand within the Assembly to follow these up. CCW It is also perplexed by the plethora of financial limits that apply to expenditure proposals of different kinds and sizes that require Assembly approval before CCW can begin entering financial commitments with third parties. (On the other hand, anecdotal evidence suggests that CCW managers could also improve their own managerial oversight by building into their project plans sufficient time to allow for Assembly approvals to come through.)

8.1.5 Delegations are rigorously operated by CCW and there have been no recent instances of retrospective approvals being sought from the Assembly. Nevertheless, there is at least a the perception within CCW, with which I have some sympathy, that the delegation regime imposed by the Assembly is over elaborate and onerous, particularly as CCW has its own Accounting Officer (the Chief Executive) responsible for proper financial control and efficiency. On the other hand, somewhat more puzzling are the delegation limits which CCW operates for allowing its staff to take decisions to commit CCW to expenditure. The range of delegations is based on a 'cascaded' approach that differ according not only to the various grades of staff but also the Groups to which CCW staff belong. And the competitive limits that CCW applies to the contracts that it lets are actually lower than those contained in the Assembly's Financial Memorandum, which must inevitably result in some added, but unnecessary, administrative burdens.

There is some feeling within CCW that in the past delegated authorities have not been passed "down the line" within CCW in an even-handed manner. Some Group Heads in particular (e.g. those running research programmes and projects) have very limited delegations, which has reportedly resulted not only in staff friction but also relatively minor aspects being referred upwards to the Chief Executive's Advisory Group (CXAG) for approval instead of giving Groups Heads the responsibility.

Recommendation

CCW should consider whether tThe financial delegation limits that are currently appliced by the Assembly able to the organisation as a whole should also be cascadedapplicable, on an equitable basis, to CCW's own managerial staff. internally.

This could help to increase staff morale; reduce layers of bureaucracy; and minimise the risk of diluting the strategic effectiveness of CXAG.

8.1.6 CCW is also bemused by the number of financial and non-financial returns required by the Assembly – 38 of them during the current financial year alone. It is not always sufficiently clear to CCW why this information is needed by the Assembly or how it is used. This may account for the reason why CCW's returns to the Assembly sometimes fail to be submitted in a timely manner, or are not presented in the format or quality required. CCW has recognised its weakness in providing prompt information and has recently tasked a designated officer to be responsible for co-ordinating returns to the Assembly.

Recommendation

The Assembly shouldIt is recommended that the staff in CCW's sponsor division (Countryside Division) should exapmine the scope lore with their colleagues in the Assembly's Finance Group the possibility of for streamlining the various financial delegation limits that are applied to CCW; ; and for clarifyingto do more in helping to explain the rationale underpinning the Assembly's existing financial requirements.

8.1.7 This would help to improve mutual understanding; smooth out potential sources of irritation; and speed up the supply of appropriate information into the Assembly.

Consideration might should also be given, for example, to agreeing a 'common dataset' so that informationthat information supplied once can satisfy many needs. For instance, only a proportion of the data that CCW supplies to the Assembly is considered or seen by Council Members or made available to the general public.

8.1.8 Generally, relations between CCW and the Countryside Division in the Assembly are good. Having only been created in summer 2000, this is a relatively new division but one with a remit that more closely mirrors CCW's own fields of activity than was the case with the previous sponsor (Environment Division) and with greater staff resources for fulfilling the sponsorship role. Countryside Division has made a positive start in this role, but the officials there are fully aware that that they need to get up to speed with the internal workings of CCW, including corporate governance issues.

Recommendation

The Assembly should consider an An interchange of staff sponsor division officials between and CCW and the Assembly's sponsor division, and other relevant policy divisions,HQ and area office staff, possibly through a programme of periodic short-term secondments,, in order to generate would enable both parties to gain a deeper understanding of each others's work.

8.2 Confidence provided by audit reports and follow-up action that CCW is managing its finances in line with the Assembly's expectations of public bodies.

8.2.1 Evidence from CCW's Internal Audit Unit and from its external auditors, the National Audit Office, shows that there are no major unresolved issues in this regard. CCW's sponsor division in the Assembly is also content that CCW complies with the requirements of the Assembly's Financial Memorandum.

National Audit Office

8.2.2 The National Audit Office (NAO) undertakes audit work in respect of CCW on behalf of The Auditor General for Wales. The Auditor General has a statutory responsibility to report to Members of the National Assembly on whether the financial statements give a true and fair view, whether they have been properly prepared and whether they have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly.

8.2.3 The NAO is required to report to the National Assembly and Council Members of CCW on a number of matters in addition to expressing an opinion on CCW's annual accounts. In 1998-99, for example, the NAO's review revealed no instances where the Council had not complied in full; no instances where Members and staff had fallen short of public standards of financial integrity; no instances where extravagance or waste had occurred; or instances where procurement practices had been inadequate. The NAO Management Letter on the 1999-2000 Accounts, however, contained three issues – that had already been identified by CCW's Internal Audit Unit – to which senior management was regarded, at the time, as responding in a practical and timely manner. **(Check with NAO that this can revealed**) However, as far as one of these issues is concerned, there is still no systematic programme of post-payment grant monitoring reviews although plans are in hand within CCW to tackle the issue in the coming autumn.

Recommendation

It is important that CCW should ensure that it fulfils, this year, its this long-standing obligation to implement fully this year. a systematic programme of post-payment grant monitoring reviews.

8.2.4 Further recommendations relating to CCW's administration of its grant aid programme to other bodies are made in Chapter 9.3.

CCW Internal Audit

8.2.5 CCW established its Internal Audit Unit in August 1998, the function having previously been outsourced to private contractors. The decision to set up the Unit was taken not only on value for money grounds but also in recognition that the audit function would enhance greater continuity of knowledge about CCW, and that audits could be more broadly based than was sometimes the case with narrowly defined external audits. The Unit is independent of the functions and activities in CCW that are audited; and it has no executive responsibilities. The NAO were satisfied at the time of setting up the Internal Audit Unit that CCW's arrangements complied with central guidance, notably those laid down in the Government Internal Audit Manual and in 'Government Accounting', and that the scope and standard of its work was satisfactory.

8.2.6 The role of the Unit is to provide senior management with objective assurance of whether systems and internal controls are working properly. The scope of its work covers the entire control systems at CCW established to: achieve CCW's objectives; ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations; safeguard CCW's assets and interests for losses of all kinds; and ensure the integrity and reliability of information, accounts and data.

8.2.7 The Internal Audit Unit produces an annual 'Corporate Governance Statement' that provides the Chief Executive with assurances on regularity and propriety. This is reviewed by the NAO and which has given a clear certificate to CCW's accounts since 1992.

8.2.8 Internal Audit reports and CCW's Audit Committee papers show evidence of good liaison and working relationships with NAO. The Internal Audit function is taken seriously as a necessary in-house function and its is a well-respected part of CCW to which staff in other parts of the organisation respond positively.

8.2.9 CCW's current Internal Audit review programme for individual areas and functions within CCW is informed by an 'audit needs assessment' which applies a risk analysis to areas of CCW's work in order to determine priority areas to be audited. The systems audited are broad in their coverage, ranging from general examinations of protocols operating at Area office levels to more detailed investigations of the controls governing services such as payroll, banking, or travel and subsistence. The audit review programme, agreed by the Council's Audit Committee, prioritises 'high risk' categories but it also ensures that all areas of work are covered over a five yearfive-year period.

8.2.10 Internal Audit Reports are submitted to the Chief Executive, in his role as CCW's Accounting Officer, and reviewed quarterly by the Council's Audit Committee. Although Internal Audit is delegated on a day to day basis by the Chief Executive to the Head of Resource Planning and Efficiency GroupFinance and Personnel Group, the Unit has direct reporting rights to the Chief Executive.

8.2.11 Internal Audit Unit reports show a strong emphasis on control mechanisms and appear to be vigorous in pursuing continuous improvement. The evidence suggests that in general appropriate remedial action is carried out promptly by staff in those Groups whose activities are audited. The Unit keeps track of the implementation of their recommendations, and revisits previous reports whenever a new review is carried out.

8.2.12 Of the twenty or so reviews of systems and activities at CCW that have been carried out by the Internal Audit Unit in each of the last four years, all but one have been given a "good" or "satisfactory" classifications. (A "good" classification means that, in the judgement of the Internal Audit Unit, systems are fully adequate with compliance with all key systems; while a "satisfactory" score means that instances have been found of non-compliance with certain system procedures, or systems required improvement to achieve a "good" assessment.) The exception, where the report was classed as "inadequate" (where key elements of control are unsatisfactory and no reliance can be placed on the system of control) was in respect of the Tir Cymen scheme for 1999-2000. In this instance, management immediately began implementing a series of improvements to enable CCW to comply with EU reporting requirements, notably by improving the Tir Cymen database and by completing outstanding farm monitoring visits. A subsequent Internal Audit report later found the scheme to be fully compliant for the year 2000 reporting period.

CCW's Audit Committee

8.2.13 Under the terms of its *Management Statement*, CCW must establish an Audit Committee to advise the Accounting Officer on the adequacy of arrangements within CCW for internal audit, external and corporate governance matters. CCW's Audit Committee is a sub-committee of six Members of the Council. The Committee meets quarterly, normally with the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance and Personnel Group and the Head of Internal Audit. NAO representatives are also invited to Audit Committee all meetimeetingsngs and attend at least annually.

8.2.14 The Committee has an important role in assessing the development of corporate governance arrangements in providing independent and objective advice to the Accounting Officer.

8.2.15 The minutes and papers of Committee meetings show evidence of a thorough approach to corporate governance issues, and efficient tracking of issues and action taken. While the Committee will wish to review its terms of reference against the policy principles for audit committees set out in the Treasury's guidance, (DAO (GEN) 13/00) issued last December, there will be more fundamental matters for it to tackle as a result of requirements set out in the guidance.

8.2.16 The new Treasury requirements focus on the need for a Statement on Internal Control to be included in the accounts of public bodies, in line with best practice in the private sector and the recommendations of the Turnbull Report on internal control. The guidance requires that public bodies produce a corporate governance statement of assurance on all systems of internal control, including operational and compliance controls, and arrangements for assessment and management of risk, as well as the more traditional aspects of financial control.

8.2.17 The guidance requires bodies to develop a Statement on Internal Control for inclusion in the Accounts for 2001-2002, which CCW has undertaken to do. Commendably, the Council's Audit Committee had taken steps to prepare for this requirement in advance of the formal guidance being issued, through analysing the potential risk of new areas of work; improving training for Council members in risk management; increasing the emphasis on risk assessment and management in Internal Audit reports; and adding a section on assessment of risk in all papers to Council.

8.2.18 CCW now needs to build on this work to develop a full risk management strategy, including reviewing the risks of all existing operations and activities as well as new areas of work; framing risk assessment and management in terms of corporate objectives; and balancing risks against outcomes and objectives. As this is an issue that impacts upon all ASPBs….

Recommendation

The Assembly should consider issuing guidance and providing training to CCW to help inform its plans for developing a risk management strategy.

8.2.19 Although the CCW's Internal Audit Unit (, as an internal expert consultant) , will need to be involved in the process of developing this strategy, its role in the process will need to be clear to ensure that its independence is strictly maintained and that its ability to subsequently audit the actions arising from the strategy is not compromised. **[Does the paper /minutes of Council in March add anything more?]**

National Assembly audit

8.2.20 In addition to existing internal and external audit arrangements, the Assembly's Finance Group maintains a careful watch keeps an eye on the NAO's findings into CCW annually, and, where appropriate, highlights any appropriate action that needs to be taken by the Assembly. In addition, this year, the Assembly's Internal Audit Service Finance Group undertook a peer review of CCW's Internal Audit, examining its scope, independence and planning; the monitoring and reporting arrangements for the audit service and Audit Committee; and management's response to recommendations made. The peer review concluded that CCW's Internal Audit procedures complied with the requirements of the Government Internal Audit Manual, and that the quality of assurance it provided was satisfactory. The Assembly's auditors were satisfied with the audit process operated at CCW; the audit approach and control; reporting standards; and that the work was conducted with due professional care. The only recommendations emerging from the review were that CCW should consider producing an 'audit charter' to enhance the independent status and role of its Internal Audit Unit; and that formal reviews on fraud issues should be introduced, as an integral part of its audit programme, to strengthen the controls over safeguarding CCW's assets. Both of these recommendations are in hand within CCW.

8.3 Use of financial resources in meeting financial targets and management of budgets and expenditure. Pursuit of value for money issues, such as good procurement.

8.3.1 As described earlier in the report, CCW The Management Statement agreed between CCW and the National Assembly requires the Council to preprepares and submits annually its a Corporate Plan to the Assembly. Draft proposals are passed to the Assembly in May or /JuneJune of each year with a final Plan submitted in September. The Corporate Plan covers a three year period and is a bidding document to the National Assembly for grant in aid; a medium term strategic planning document; and a focal point for a number of underpinning in-house strategies such as its Information Management strategy or Accommodation strategy.

8.3.2 After the Plan has been reviewed by Assembly Members, the Assembly Minister informs CCW of its grant in aid allocation, normally in December. Following After Council has given approval, of the allocation of its grant in aid across Parliamentary heads, CCW's senior management team (CXAG) allocates budgets to the five budgetary Groups after a review of the bids from all operational Groups. Group Heads are formally notified of their budgets usually around May to June. Through their budget co-ordinators, each Group, as well as CCW's Finance Group, undertake monthly financial monitoring is undertaken, so as to give early warning to senior management (CXAG) of any possible overspend/underspend and to allow time for corrective action. Formal monitoring reports are regularly presented at each to Council meeting, some eight times a year. The data are presented to the Council, in the form of a Financial Statement, show for each expenditure head (total salaries, information systems, grants and on), the budget for the year, and spending to date against forecast profiles. The commentary accompanying the data is only very brief in highlighting any variations between budgets and expenditure, although . And while these Financial Statements are elaborated upon orally at Council meetings. The Financial Statements are important documents, indicating the financial health of the organisation; and it is important that Members have as much opportunity as possible to digest the information prior to each meeting.

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Recommendation

CCW should consideration should be given to presenting a more analytical written commentary on the data contained in the Financial Statements presented at each Council meeting. for Council Members to digest prior to each meeting.

8.3.3 Halfway through the financial year, and again in December, a major review of budgets and expenditure is undertaken by Council to assess the financial picture across CCW and to adjust budgets or work programmes accordingly.

Information on the budgets expenditure of CCW show that degree of over/underspend in recent years has been……**Data needed (incl. cash balances to illustrate)**

8.3.4 The outputs of CCW are also monitored by senior management and reported to Council regularly, with performance being monitored against targets. The Assembly's Countryside Division also monitors CCW's performance through its receipt of both Council meeting papers and the suite of returns submitted by CCW.

Both 8.3.5 Both the mechanisms for budgetary control and for monitoring of outputs against key targets appear sound within themselves – with the notable exception of adequate information on Tir Gofal not being available to alert both CCW and the National Assembly of the scale of a looming underspend by towards the end of 2000-01.

8.3.6 BBut, more generally, what is clearly missing – and this is an issue highlighted earlier in my review – is a mechanism linking together the two elements, of finance and outputs. Both the Assembly and the CCW's Council meetings would benefit from progress reports that align financial performance with aims and objectives of CCW and its non-financial performance (e.g. outputs on SSSI notifications). Financial monitoring is at present couched in corporate terms (e.g. total salaries, rents, rates, and so on), making it impossible to determine the cost of particular outputs or to compare these with plans.

8.3.7 However, a new resource accounting-based Management Information System (MIS) has been developed within CCW over the last two years which is aimed to rectify this and other anomalies. The first report from the MIS **[More info on MIS needed]** in respect of CCW's operations in the first quarter of 2001-02 will bring together

The first report from the MIS will emerge in July 2001 in respect of CCW's operations in the first quarter of 2001-02 and will bring together financial and non-financial information, enabling CCW's performance measures to be assessed in a far more coherent manner than before. There will inevitably be teething problems and the new system will take time to bed down to provide exactly the right high quality information. The new system represents a welcome step in the right direction in providing CCW with a more comprehensive information base to track its progress in-year.

8.3.8 Information from the MIS will, in turn, help to inform the composition of future Ccorporate Pplans and Ooperational Pplans and hence the composition and frequency of the monitoring reports submitted to the Assembly. The system will need to be adapted to CCW's decentralised Area Office structure which means that information will have to be co-ordinated to assess overall performance, as well as being maintained at individual cost centre level so that any areas for improvement or potential problems can be pinpointed.

Value for money considerations

8.3.9 CCW's Internal Audit Unit reviews do not encompass value for money (VFM) studies although many of the areas audited, for example, Ordering and Payments systems have clear VFM implications, for items such as pool car usage; office utilities; or the purchase of computer hardware and software. The responsibility for VFM studies rests separately within another Group in CCW, the Resource Planning and Efficiency Group. This recently formed Group took over responsibility for corporate planning and co-ordinates the process of translating corporate objectives into group operational plans. The Group has also driven forward recent positive changes including the development of the Management Information System.

8.3.10 Disappointingly, however, there have been no recent VFM studies on CCW's operations – despite the fact that CCW's Internal Audit Unit reports record VFM recommendations. This is a deficiency that needs to be rectified; and one that might be eased by the recent incorporation of the combining the Internal Audit Unit within and ththe e Resource Planning and Efficiency Group.

Recommendation

CCW should draw up an annual programme of Value for Money exercises, allied to its existing efficiency reviews, covering a range of its operations – a , so that a programme that should be of VFM exercises can be brought fully within the remit of the cycle of Internal Audit reviews currently conducted by CCW.

Procurement

8.3.11 The operational hub of CCW's purchasing function is its Contracts Section, but purchasing also takes place, within limited delegations, at decentralised teams at the five Area Offices and three HQ teams. The Contracts Section provides advice to the rest of CCW on purchasing issues.

8.3.12 The purchasing function accounts for some £10 million, or about a quarter of CCW's grant in aid settlement. CCW has an established set of Contracts and Purchasing Guidelines setting out purchasing principles including those to achieve Best Value; the process and requirements for different values of contract; and procurement delegations at various officer levels.

8.3.13 TTo ensure that CCW obtains best value for money in all its purchases of goods, services and research requirements, a competitive tendering policy exists bound by procedures set in the organisation's Finance Manual. There have been some recent instances of non-compliance with the policy and procedures, that culminated in an Internal Audit Unit report (on Ordering/Contract/Payments functions, January 2001) recommending a series of actions to remind staff of the relevant financial rules and to improve monitoring by management. While these instances did not amount to major issues of non-compliance; the findings do serve to illustrate the seriousness with which CCW tackles its financial management responsibilities.

8.3.14 CCW has been a member of the North Wales Purchasing Managers Consortium, with whom a joint IT equipment tender is being pursued. The Consortium has been highlighted in the Assembly's Better Value Wales report as an exemplar for public sector collaborative fora. In addition, CCW intends to develop a new purchasing strategy to take into account the Assembly's review of purchasing in Wales and ensure the best use of resources, including re-examining tendering limits. In April 2001, CCW drew up a specification for a strategic purchasing review to analyse CCW's purchasing function, ensure best practice is adopted and make recommendations for improving its efficiency and delivering savings. A contract of work on this review is about to commence. **[any progress?].** The development of the strategy provides an opportunity to look at fundamental issues such as CCW's future policies towards outsourcing as against providing functions in-house; the scope for making use of call-off contracts whilst recognising CCW's duty to support rural areas (and thus local suppliers); and for simplifying its processing of small orders (that currently account for about three-quarters of the volume of total purchases but only a quarter of the total value).

8.4 Control and scrutiny of operating costs and staffing levels.

8.4.1 As described above, CCW has well defined financial mechanisms, coupled with a focused budgetary control culture within the organisation, for controlling the running costs that are set each year by the Assembly.

8.4.2 CCW's running costs are notified by the Assembly at the same time that it allocates CCW's grant in aid. The running costs for 2001-02 are £13.7 million**[amount]** and CCW cannot spend more than this without explicit authority from the Assembly. **(How many times exceeded/underspent?)** The Assembly monitors running costs from the monthly returns submitted by CCW.

8.4.3 Staffing levels are set by CCW and approved by the Assembly. CCW can vary the total number of staff employed to reflect changes in the scale of its operations or functions, on the proviso that the pay and related costs are contained within the Assembly's annual running costs figure. The staff of CCW (totalling some 460 full time equivalents at the end of 2000-01) are subject to levels of pay and terms and conditions of service that have been approved by the Assembly. Again, any changes to these must be authorised by the Assembly.

8.4.4 Evidence from the Audit Committee and from internal CCW papers show that running costs issues are monitored and discussed in-year as well as at the end of the year. In addition, the Financial Statement, including running costs, is presented to Council Members at each Council meeting.

8.4.5 The sponsor division requires CCW to complete a regular quarterly return on staff numbers, analysed by grade, despite running costs formally being controlled by budgetary parameters. **[How often does sponsor division challenge running costs or staffing numbers?]** This appears to be It is possible that this is anan example of unnecessary micro-management; by the Assembly's sponsor division, and consideration should be given to reviewing the need for the compilation and submission of such data in line with the general recommendation about the Assembly's control .made earlier in Chapter 7.3

8.4.6 After a period of general stability in total staff numbers since its inception, CCW has seen increases in its complement in more recent years: by about 10 per cent (to 372) between 1998-99 and 1999-00 and by nearly 25 per cent (to 460) between 1999-00 and 2000-01.

8.4.7 While CCW regularly reviews and reports its running costs and other financial results, it chooses not to make comparisons of its own running costs with other, similar agencies, arguing that such comparisons may not be particularly meaningful. I have recommended earlier in my report (Chapter 3.3) tthat CCW, together with related organisations, should explore mechanisms that *do* make meaningful comparisons. I believe the organisation could benefit from benchmarking individual functions or operations and analysing how and why costs might differ between one organisation and another in order to identify areas for potential improvement.

8.4.8 If only to provide a rough broad overview of how CCW's costs compare with other bodies, I have compared the salary costs and other running costs of CCW with those of English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). While extreme caution is needed when comparing staffing costs (owing to differences in grade mix, for example) or in comparing other costs (owing to differences in office coverage and locations, for example), the general comparisons for 2000-01 given below – based on data supplied by the organisations concerned – indicate that CCW's costs compare favourably, as was the case five years earlier, with its sister agencies:

Table 8a: Comparisons of salary and running costs

CCW English SNH(a)

Nature

Cost per head (£s) (b): -------- -------- ---------

Salaries and pensions 19,060 23,155 20,000

Other running costs 8,250 9,735 8,530

Total 27,900 32,890 28,530

a. Provisional data
b. Outturn data for 2000-01 divided by full-time equivalent staff number at year-end

8.5 Arrangements for monitoring the quality and efficiency of service delivery and for handling complaints.

8.5.1 CCW's main arrangements for monitoring the quality and efficiency of its service delivery are through the mechanisms, described above, of measuring performance against targets and through budgetary financial reporting. There appears not to be, as is noted later, a systematic programme of evaluating, either internally or externally, of customer feedback on services. Nor is there an overall plan for generating efficiency savings.

Standards of service

8.5.2 CCW has a *Statement of Standards of Service*, issued in 1997, setting out its approach to dealing with enquiries, requests and applications, including deadlines for responding to telephone calls and written correspondence. It also sets out its policy on access, consultation and complaints, including those about breaches of the Statement (see below).

The Statement needs to be revised to refer to, for instance, the advent of the National Assembly and the use of information technology as a means of communicating with CCW. It also needs to bring together, in one place, the different complaints procedures that operate within CCW. However, the principles underpinning the standards are sound.

8.5.3 On the other hand, there is no in-house monitoring of compliance with the Statement, (on, for example, CCW's response times in dealing with correspondence, or the regularity of its contact with SSSI occupiers). Therefore, there is no way of determining – with the exception of its procedures for dealing with complaints – whether the overall standards are being observed.

8.5.4 CCW has undertaken Additionally, there is no indication of CCW having undertaking any customer satisfaction studies to ascertain whether the organisation is meeting customer needs and whether there is scope for improving its services to different client groups. some small ad hoc surveys of customer satisfaction; and a wider An omnibus survey in 1999 (referred to in Chapter 6.1) gauged the general public's awareness of CCW's existence and activities. Whilst acknowledging that CCW's customer base is wide and varied, a systematic , but programme of gathering and evaluating customer feedback on service provision to ascertain whether the organisation is meeting customer needs and whether there is scope for improving its services to different client groups could prove beneficial.

Recommendation

CCW should consider undertaking a programme of regular surveys for gauging the satisfaction of customers with its services.

a more focussed and detailed customer satisfaction survey could prove to be far more beneficial.

Openness

8.5.5 Council meetings have been open to the public since 1998 (except where confidential issues are under discussion). Dates and venues are on CCW's website and notices of forthcoming meetings are is advertised in the press. Agendas are available on request, papers are made available to the public at the meeting, and minutes are available afterwards on the website. A review of arrangements for open Council Meetings in June 2000 recommended ways of encouraging greater attendance and facilitating communication with the public, including re-examining the choice of venue and timing of meetings, and providing papers in advance, and Council agreed to these recommendations.

Recommendation

CCW should publish, on a routine basis, the agendas and non-confidential papers of Council meetings on its website.

Consideration should also be given to routinely placing on the website agendas and, following the meeting, all non-confidential papers.

More generally, CCW might draw up a statement of policy on openness including a policy on which papers are released published on the website.

Complaints

8.5.6 CCW's current complaints procedure, issued in 1997 and referred to in the Statement of Standards of Service, encourages complainants to contact the local office initially. If this does not solve the problem they are advised to contact the Head of Finance and Personnel Group, and as a last resort to write to the Chief Executive.

8.5.7 In addition, CCW's Welsh Language Scheme and the Tir Gofal scheme, which were both developed after the Statement of Standards of Service was issued, and each have s a slightly different complaints procedures with separate registers of complaints maintained. Complaints in respect of the Tir Gofal scheme are reviewed by an independent panel.

8.5.8 Complaints of a general nature are recorded on a centrally held complaints file, which also records the action taken. A summary of complaints and follow up action is put to the Council once a year; and recent reports suggest that the overall levels of complaints are relatively small.

8.5.9 The last internal audit review of the complaints system (in April 2000) reported that the system was "good", although it recommended that Area and Group registers be maintained according to agreed procedure and that outcomes be monitored more rigorously to ensure that opportunities for improvement were identified and actioned.

8.5.10 Senior management has accepted, but not implemented, an Internal Audit recommendation to rationalise this situation and include all procedures in a revised Statement of Standards of Service. And in view of the necessary changes indicated earlier…..

Recommendation

CCW should revise its current 'Statement of Standards of Service'.

Complaints of a general nature are recorded on a centrally held complaints file, which also records the action taken. A summary of complaints and follow up action is put to the Council once a year; and recent reports suggest that the overall levels of complaints are relatively small. **Data needed of numbers of complaints**

The last internal audit review of the complaints system (in April 2000) reported that the system was "good", although it recommended that Area and Group registers be maintained according to agreed procedure and that outcomes be monitored more rigorously to ensure that opportunities for improvement were identified and actioned.

8.6 Progress in improving the efficiency of operations; and the exploitation of information communications technology.

8.6.1 CCW has a 5-yearno formal, overall, efficiency plan, which was prepared last year. The plan but plans are underway to identifies commission one later this year. There is instead a range wide variety of ad hoc, of internal reviews or actions that are underway or earmarked studies being carried out (for example, on accommodation, or other initiatives on personnel, and travel) matters) and which that are geared towards identifying and securing the best use of available resources.

8.6.2 Over recent years, CCW has been proactive in in pioneering the use of videoconferencing in Wales, especially between its offices Bangor, Cardiff, Mold and Aberystwyth, which reduces travelling costs and increases the efficiency of use of staff time. Consideration is being given to increasing the scope of these facilities. With the expansion of staff, there has been pressure on existing CCW accommodation, but new office space has been rented and CCW should consider offering up space available for other bodies to use (Chapter 5.2). In addition, CCW should CCW could also consider making use of the accommodation facilities of other organisations. for meetings and events – more than it does already – as well as offering up its own office space for other bodies to use.

8.6.3 On the personnel front, CCW is working towards a position where it can bid for Investor in People status (with a 3 year target for achievement). As part of this effort and a general wish to improve personnel practices, CCW is currently working on several initiatives in the field of personnel to be achieved by the end of next year.. It has already carried out a survey ofa 'staff attitude survey' to address issues relating to training and development; and it is developing a new training and development strategy beamed towards a competency based system for training needs assessment. A new integrated personnel computer system with a training administration module has recently been installed and populated with data. [**was due April 2001 - how is it going?].** Senior management also recognises that there is a need to improve evaluation of training by analysing data from course feedback and evaluations, and to produce an annual report on training and development, T&D, linking training objectives to corporate objectives. Induction has been noted as a weakness and CCW has now produced a thorough, well presented, basic induction pack that fulfils some of the role of a 'staff handbook'.

8.6.4 Quite apart from projects targeted at internal efficiencies, the CCW's efficiency plan also contains some that have a more direct bearing on service delivery, such as a review of the efficiency of SSSI notification procedures. As the plan is to be updated and revised on an annual basis, it is important that.…

Recommendation

The Assembly should ensure that CCW's plans for improving productivity are managed in such a way that they deliver tangible results, on time and within budget.

Efficiency targets

8.6.5 Efficiency targets are now being included in the CCW's Corporate Plan. The objectives set by the Assembly for 2001-02, include the target that 97 per cent of CCW's invoices should be paid within trading terms (normally 30 days); and that a purchasing strategy should be commissioned aimed at reducing running costs by £60,000 per year. While these specific targets are sound on face value (and mean that some of the business support staff in CCW can see, for the first time, that their work is being recognised) they illustrate two *general* issues that CCW *and* the Assembly need to bear in mind in future rounds of target- setting negotiations.

8.6.6 The first of these centres on the extent to which the targets set are considered by both parties to be sufficiently achievable and challenging. In the case of invoice payments, the target set for the current year, was already being achieved, according to figures from the last Internal Audit Unit report on payments systems in CCW. (The target of 97 per cent would have been more appropriate, perhaps, for HQ-handled invoice payments, where just 89 per cent of invoices were paid within trading terms.)

8.6.7 Secondly, there may be instances where CCW's actions are in hand iin any given year are either failing to emerge as planned or failing to produce material outcomes – and which may, therefore, require further vigilance and probing by the Assembly or explanation by CCW. As far as the target for 2001-02 on purchasing, for instance, CCW's had signalled in its Corporate Plan, *two years previously*, that a purchasing strategy was in the process of revision, "with a target of achieving savings of at least £60k per year". Similarly, an internal 'Greening Group' was reported in 1999 to be drawing up specific targets to reduce the use of consumables, energy and water. And yet, such work seems set to continue in 2001-02 and beyond. And a further group has reviewed CCW's use of transport, with the aim of decreasing car usage e as much as possible and encouraging more use of public transport. Progress on both of these projects, and the delivery of identifiable targets

emanating from them, is unclear.

Recommendation

The Assembly and CCW should continue to devise annual sets of efficiency targets, to be set out in the remit letters issued by the Assembly, that are challenging and realistic – with both parties monitoring the outcomes.

8.6.8 Quite apart forom its own operations, there must be scope for CCW to derive efficiencies to be derived from sharing common systems with other bodies. Quite apart from office accommodation, ASPBs have separate payroll systems, separate legal advisors, and separate Geographic Information Systems, for instance.

The Assembly could play a key role in encouraging co-operation between these organisations to contract together for joint purposes.

CCW could also look at ways of outsourcing some of the survey and monitoring work currently undertaken by in-house staff with a view to relieving workload pressures in other areas; reducing overhead costs; and generating capacity-building within other organisations.

I suggest that CCW needs to wrap up the various strands of action described above, together with evaluations of other functions or operations (such as value for money studies of CCW's grants operations) into a coherent, overall, efficiency plan. This would enable a wide range of audiences, within and outside the organisation, to readily track CCW's progress in contributing, on a number of different fronts, towards 'better government'.

Information Technology

8.6.9 CCW is committed to providing comprehensive IT facilities to all its offices; and as result 16 main office locations, 2 partner organisations (FRCA and Snowdonia National Park and NAWAD, in respect of Tir GofalNP), 9 warden bases and some 25 or so home workers are connected to CCW's wide area network. The budget for IT in 2000-01 was £1.6 million which allowed for the development of specific central systems (such as Tir Gofal and the finance system) and the introduction of generic desktop software. All staff now have Microsoft Office products (Word, Excel, Powerpoint), which were rolled out towards the end of last year, but with a low training budget (the equivalent of some £50 per head) which impacted adversely upon the speed with which staff became familiar with the new suite of software.

8.6.10 Despite improvements, there is no intranet in CCW; and staff access to the internet is restricted only to those who can demonstrate that it is required in the course of their official duties. The email system is adequate; but in the absence of an intranet the efficiency of the email system is impaired by often being populated with "all staff" office messages that are inappropriate for many users.

8.6.11 The IT system, overall, is not generally regarded as particularly user-friendly by staff. They feel that there is insufficient information readily available about CCW (ranging from its policies and position statements to basic information and advice) that can quickly retrieved and disseminated to external organisations or members of the public. To rectify this, there is a need for speedy access by staff to information that should be stored, where appropriate, on either CCW's existing web site or a dedicated intranet system.

8.6.12 The need to improve information systems has been recognised by senior management leading to an Information Technology strategy that was updated recently.updated recently. The strategy addresses some fundamental IT issues associated with a widely distributed organisation; reliability; staffing and resources; and corporate applications. Some important central themes can be detected from the strategy, viz, recognition of the need to provide tools for everyday use by staff; the integration of a wide variety of database applications; web-base development; and data sharing with others.

8.6.13 New work in the coming year or so will involve the establishment of a corporate intranet; the building of a biodiversity data warehouse; and the development of business applications covering CCW's work on grant applications; open access under the CROW Act; and casework tracking. These developments are to be welcomed; provided, however, they will be accompanied by appropriate training to enable staff to exploit the new tools.

CHAPTER 9: OTHER ISSUES

The Interim Report highlighted certain aspects of CCW's work that should be followed up as part of the second stage of the quinquennial review. These included further exploration of

- a proposal for amalgamating the warden services of CCW, Forest Enterprise, National Park Authorities and unitary authorities to provide an integrated all-Wales 'ranger service';
- the possibility of contracting out CCW's management of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) to local authorities or voluntary organisations; and
- alternative arrangements to CCW's administration of grant aid to local authorities, voluntary organisations and others.

My findings and comments comments and recommendations on these three aspects are outlined below.

Closely allied to CCW's grant aid work is the technical support and scientific research work that it commissions; and my brief comments on the administration of that aspect of CCW's work are also contained here.

In addition, emerging issues from the quinquennial reviews of other organisations with close links with CCW are also presented in this chapter. further information is given in response to the National Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee request for a note on the implications of the Human Rights Act for some of the options, regarding CCW's future structure, that had been presented in the interim report.

Finally, further information is given in response to the National Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee request for a note on the implications of the Human Rights Act for some of the options, regarding CCW's future structure, that had been presented in the interim report. emerging issues from the quinquennial reviews of other organisations with close links with CCW are also presented in this chapter.

9.1 All Wales warden and ranger services

9.1.1 The Interim Report recommended that a proposal for amalgamating the warden and ranger services of CCW, Forest Enterprise, National Park Authorities and unitary authorities to provide an integrated all-Wales 'ranger service' should be examined in stage two of the review. The Interim Report suggested that warden and ranger services provided an opportunity for promoting joint working between the various organisations in discharging their respective responsibilities.

9.1.2 The current warden and ranger service is a patchwork of coverage provided by organisations from different sectors, ranging from local authorities countryside rangers and wardens (covering, for example, AONBs, heritage coasts and country parks); the National Parks; Forest Enterprise; a few large voluntary and commercial organisations; and, of course, CCW itself. All of them play a role, to varying degrees, in the provision of countryside management services that, for example, include, for example: :

- developing and implementing access routes to open countryside;
- raising understanding of the countryside, the sea and of the environment;
- establishing local nature reserves, especially those close to more urban areas;
- implementing Biodiversity Action Plans for declining species and Habitats;
- developing and implementing nature conservation management schemes;
- working to protect special landscapes;
- encouraging responsible outdoor recreational activities; and
- promoting the appreciation and enjoyment of the countryside and the sea;;

all of which require different skills, expertise and modus operandi. (By way of illustration, CCW wardens spend, roughly speaking, about two-thirds of their time on site conservation management, while National Park wardens spend hardly any. National Park wardens spend about two-fifths of their time on people management issues, patrolling their areas and liaising with land occupiers and other parts of their communities; while CCW wardens spend less than ten per cent of their time on such activities).

Options

9.1.3 In considering action for joint working between the various organisations, I have considered three options:

- Option 1: Maintaining the status quo – but with CCW forging closer working relationships between itself and other organisations;.
- Option 2: Establishing a federated system of wardens and rangers – with staff still employed by their current employers but contracted out to work on regional area action plans jointly agreed by all constituent organisations; and
- Option 3: Setting up a new umbrella organisation – embracing all current statutory sector staff, with opportunities for participation by voluntary and commercial organisations.

9.1.4 Consultations with organisations and individuals with a direct interest generated a mixture of views, leading to my conclusion that while there is scope for more joint working and training (Option 1), and for pursuing Option 2, there are some serious disadvantages with the proposal for amalgamation (Option 3) that outweigh some potential merits, and which are summarised in Table 9aFigure X below.

These issues, however, are not clear-cut – and they are still under active consideration by CCW and others. At the time of writing, a consultative seminar of organisations currently employing or engaging wardens and rangers to help manage their estates for public access, outdoor recreation and nature conservation purposes, was being organised to explore the scope for combining resources to assist in joint training, career development and common citizen agreements. If there is a positive outcome from the consultation for such partnership work, it will require a solid platform of intra- and inter-organisational consensus and long-term commitment to drive forward.

TableFigure X 9a: Potential advantages and disadvantages of options for joint working on warden and ranger services

Potential advantages	Option 1 (Status quo)	Option 2 (Federation)	Option 3 (New body)
Greater co-operation between organisations in service provision	ü	ü	ü
Better exchange of ideas and information between organisations	ü	ü	ü
Co-ordinated objectives of various constituent organisations and clearer Wales-wide focus on countryside management issues		ü	ü
Potential removal of overlapping activities		ü	ü
Improved service development in local areas with weaker countryside management services		ü	ü
More consistent standards and approaches in providing public services and in meeting public expectations		ü	ü
Provision of a more easily identified focus for visitors to countryside and seascapes			ü
Improved sense of common purpose among staff	ü	ü	ü

Better opportunities for staff development and career progression		ü	ü
No significant additional cost	ü		
A unique 'Made in Wales' service			ü

Potential disadvantages	Option 1 (Status quo) Option 1	Option 2 (Federation) Option 2	Option 3 (New body) Option 3
Lack of real commitment to the remit underpinning the new arrangements threatening their successful implementation from the outset		ü	ü
Difficulties with balancing the competing priorities of national and local bodies not wishing to see sectoral interests of others dominate; and with balancing EU, national and local priorities*		ü	ü
Increased remoteness of existing organisations from community and local partnership work			ü
Inflexibility in service provision owing to entrenchment of existing organisational differences in staff skills, backgrounds and culture		ü	ü
Investment in time and money required for developing, negotiating and influencing staff and partners on new arrangements		ü	ü
Additional financial set-up costs and maintenance costs of a new umbrella organisation			ü

* For example, threats of diluting the necessary scientific skills required for National Nature Reserves designated under the European Habitats Directive; and to CCW's ability to provide an advisory role on practical conservation management elsewhere in Wales.

9.1.5 Allied to these considerations are the implications, for local authorities in particular, of the provisions set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act). The Act enhances the contribution local authorities can make in the management of access by extending responsibilities beyond rights of way and country parks to include common land and open countryside that amounts to around a quarter of the land area of Wales. The Act allows authorities to appoint wardens for access land in their respective areas.

9.1.6 In assessing the impact upon the authorities of the provisions under the Act, a study* earlier this year concluded that there was an overwhelming case for establishing ranger/warden services to help administer the new legislation throughout Wales. It also concluded that the role of the rangers/wardens should be to work at the interface between landowners and members of the local community and countryside users to ensure that their respective interests are safeguarded.

9.1.7 The issues surrounding all of these issues, however, are not clear-cut – and they are still under active consideration by CCW and others. A consultative seminar of organisations currently employing or engaging wardens and rangers to help manage their estates for public access, outdoor recreation and nature conservation purposes, was held in the summer to explore the scope for combining resources to assist in joint training, career development and common citizen agreements. The seminar supported the call for a 'Countryside Management Concordat' for Wales whereby unitary authorities, National Parks and other providers of ranger and warden services would enter into a service level agreement with the National Assembly, via CCW, for running countryside management services on a harmonised, more cohesive basis.

9.1.8 If there is a positive outcome from the consultation for such partnership work, it will require a solid platform of intra- and inter-organisational consensus and long-term commitment to drive forward.

*The role of rangers/wardens in implementing the new right of access to open countryside in Wales: a report to the Countryside Council for Wales (R. Elwyn Associates)

Recommendation

CCW and other bodies providing warden and ranger services should draw up proposals for joint working and training.

9.2 National Nature Reserves

9.2.1 The Interim Report recommended that stage two of the review should examine the possibility of contracting out CCW's management of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) to local authorities or voluntary organisations.

9.2.2 There are 65 National Nature Reserves in Wales. These Reserves contain the best of Wales' natural heritage, with some of the finest examples of wildlife habitats and geological features. All are protected areas, some for their general value, others for the preservation of examples of rare features or species. Some reserves are owned, on behalf of the public, by CCW but the majority of them are leased. Most reserves are managed by CCW, but about one-third some (**how many?)** are are managed by other conservation organisations or other bodies.

9.2.3 Consultations with parties with CCWa staff and others direct interest revealed some disquiet about the possibility of CCW contracting out its NNR work. There are concerns about the lack of experience and expertise of potential organisations to take this work on. There are worries too about the possibility of funding for the work being siphoned away from NNRs towards other activities. The attitude of some planning authorities to absorb the work does not appear to be sufficiently enthusiastic for tackling what would be a long-term commitment. They would instead prefer to see stronger partnership working with CCW at a local level.

1. **Proposals**
2.

9.2.4 On the other hand, there seems to be no reason why, with CCW support, the capacity of some voluntary organisations cannot be enhanced over time. There are Reserves adjoining, or in close proximity, to other special sites that are owned or managed by voluntary organisations, and planning authorities, that seem to offer opportunities for a more integrated 'wide area' management approach for enveloping both the NNRs and the sites concerned.

9.2.5 It could be argued that it does not matter which organisations manage NNRs. The importance lies in whether the work is carried out according to appropriate quality standards. Irrespective of whether Reserves are owned by CCW or owned by other organisations, CCW has an obligation to conserve and report on all the features for which the Reserves are designated. If CCW were to pass on more management work of NNRs to another body, both parties would need to agree on a site management plan which identifies, safeguards, and sets out the arrangements for monitoring, those features. Other aspects, including on–site education, access, and health and safety issues, would also need to be enshrined within the plan.

Recommendation

CCW should continue with its plans to look for appropriate opportunities for contracting out more of its management work on National Nature Reserves.

9.2.6 By devolving more of its NNR work to other bodies – and provided such bodies have the resources necessary to meet the required standards – CCW canould help to relieve the work pressures upon its wardens and help capacity-building of the other bodies involved through CCW-led staff and volunteer training and development. CCW could then concentrate more on arrangements relating to site planning, inspection and evaluation, as opposed to on the ground restoration activity.

9.2.7 CCW has recently taken forward the proposal for contracting out more of its NNR management work. It has conducted a review of all its NNRs with a view to identifying a number of Reserves where the potential for joint partnership agreements between CCW and other bodies is greatest. **[What's the latest news on this?]**

9.3 Grant aid administration

9.3.1 The Interim Report recommended that alternative arrangements to CCW's administration of grant aid to local authorities, voluntary organisations and others should be explored.

9.3.2 Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Section 9 of the Local Government Act 1974, CCW is empowered to make available grants to public and non public organisations towards projects orf programmes of work which help to achieve CCW's corporate objectives. CCW currently works in partnership with more than 100 organisations, via some 300 agreements, on projects and schemes aimed at improving environmental understanding; access; landscape; and biodiversity.

9.3.3 The grant aid programme has fluctuated in recent years, but the £2.6 million distributed in 2000-01 was the lowest level of grant allocated (in real terms) since CCW's inception. However, as a result of enhanced funding from the Assembly, CCW has bolstered its grant budget for 2001-02 to £3 million**.** Budget responsibility (of £1.0 million) for all-Wales grants resides with the Senior Director of CCW and responsibility for local area grants with the Director of Conservation. Potential partners apply for grant aid to HQ groups in CCW for all-Wales grants or to individual Area Offices. It is the responsibility of the lead officers to appraise applications, identify outputs and measurable targets and to ensure that these are in line with CCW's own corporate objectives. Monitoring of projects is the responsibility of the lead officer who authorises the payment of grant aid on achievement of the project targets; while the responsibility for budget management, procedures, guidance, and offers of grant aid grant aid rests centrally with the Resource Planning and Efficiency Group.

9.3.4 CCW's Internal Audit Unit has investigated the controls in place for administering CCW's grant in aid and has registered its concerns:

- that CCW has not systematically carried out post payment monitoring of the projects which it has grant aided, other than through spot checks of a sample of schemes by CCW project officers and Internal Audit staff. (Staffing levels and related workloads have been the factors put forward by CCW as the reasons why such monitoring - to ascertain whether the works that had been funded still exist - has not been undertaken. However, with additional funding available, plans are afoot for contracting out the task to private sector contractors in the coming autumn);
- there are a number of projects and schemes that are funded which predate CCW and whose effectiveness is unknown because there has been no fundamental review of the these long-standing projects/schemes despite the considerable changes in corporate objectives in recent years;
- thathat grant schemes are not assessed for value for money to CCW. Nor are there procedures in place to enable project officers to undertake such exercises.

9.3.5 The grant system operates on a 'planned partnership' basis, whereby projects and schemes are worked up by CCW and the applicant together. While this approach has its merits in cementing working relationships between the two parties and in attempting to overcome potential tensions between the priorities of local organisations and CCW's national priorities, the system in the past has not generally does not allowed for 'unplanned' applications. This madekes it difficult for new applicants to break into the current regime. In the face of falling grant aid, CCW was reluctant to encourage new partners at a time it was scaling back planned commitments with existing partners.

Recommendation

CCW's grant The application system should needs to be more transparent and accessible to encourage if mmore community-based organisations are to be encouraged to participate.

9.3.6 CCW delegates that part of its grant support that goes from Headquarters to the Area Offices is throughout Wales from the centre by way of a 'block allocation', to Area offices,which is largely based on a pro rata share of the previous year's allocation. Given that the supply of applications meets demand for any given Area's block allocation, and because there is no competitive element in the grant system – other than a relatively small amount earmarked this year as the Species Challenge Fund – the scope for redistributing grants from one Area to unsuccessful projects (but offering better value for money) based in another Area is limited. Funding thus seems to be directed by the capacity of a given Area's ability to distribute the funds rather than considerations of need and value at the all-Wales level.

9.3.7 CCW could might wish to consider a different approach to funding organisations where instead of dealing with project applications on a piecemeal basis from particular organisations, it could encourage local partnership work by entertaining single bids from different consortia of local authorities, voluntary bodies and others.

Recommendation

CCW should make improvements to derive management information about its grant aid regime.

9.3.8 There is lack of information, on a collective and strategic basis, about what CCW's grant aid is actually supporting. It is only recently that data on the outputs from the projects being supported has started to be collated (despite the fact that the grant application form, which needs overhauling, is not fit for the purpose). The paucity of management information on CCW's grant aided programme could be improved through the development of a relatively simple database holding a clearly defined set of core output indicators for each project that is funded . This would enable a more comprehensive picture of CCW's performance (and that of its partners) to be portrayed and clearer linkages between the grant programme and CCW's aims and objectives to be established.

9.3.9 The grant payments cycle, which, generally speaking, involves the payment of 75 per cent of grant claims in one financial year (31 January) and 25 per cent in the next financial year (30 April) gives rise to an administrative congestion of payments in the spring of each year. A more even distribution of payments would not only ease this blockage but also help recipients, smaller voluntary sector bodies in particular, with a more even spread of income during the course of a given year.

Recommendation

CCW Council Members Members should could play a far more active role in overseeing CCW's grant aid programme.

9.3.10 While Council approves the strategic priorities of activities to be supported by the grant system, it should also consider reviewing how those priorities are being met. This does not suggest that Council Members should get involved in intervening in, or making decisions on, individual project applications, but a synopsis of proposed awards, and the outputs emerging from such awards, should at least be put forward to the Council. CCW is currently considering the role that the Council might perform in relation to its grant aid and technical support and research budgets.

1. **Proposals**

9.3.11 Despite some of the concerns highlighted, they do not in themselves warrant a need for CCW's grant aid function to be transferred out to another organisation. Such an event would involve an administrative upheaval and added costs associated with the replacement of one system by another. There would be serious repercussions for CCW in its efforts to foster better working partnerships with others. Besides, if another organisation were to administer the system, it would be unlikely to have the necessary expertise and the local knowledge to make better-informed decisions on individual schemes than those which are made under the present arrangements. The specialist expertise that CCW can offer in advising on projects is valued by some consultees.

9.3.12 While Although CCW should not rule out the possibility the possibility of contracting out its the grant administration system in the longer-term, the more immediate requirement is for CCW to improve its current regime through a concerted effort to tackle the concerns described above. should not be ruled out altogether in the longer term, the more immediate requirement is for CCW to improve its current regime through a concerted effort to tackle some of the concerns and suggestions described earlier.

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9.4 Technical support and research

9.4.1 Closely allied to its grant aid function, is the technical support and scientific research work which CCW commissions through a separate annual budget that is overseen by a sub-committee of Council Members. (The Technical Support and Research Committee is one of three sub-committees set up by the Council; the two others being the Audit Committee, described earlier in the report, and the Site Protection Committee, which deals with SSSI designations.)

9.4.2 Expenditure on technical support and research in 2000-01 was £1.4 million, representing some 4 per cent of CCW's total grant in aid. The 2000-01 programme attracted 180 projects proposals, roughly half of which could be less than half of which could be fundedinancially supported. The Committee identifies research priorities that are translated into *thirteen* broad themes. CCW staff prepare project proposals lying within these themes for consideration by the Committee, which either approves or rejects them according to a variety of criteria. Individual project officers are responsible for the execution of projects and administrative staff provide day to day management of the programme.

1. **Proposals**

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9.4.3 The Technical Support and Research Committee Committee provides a quality assurance check on the research proposals submitted by challenging the potential impact and duplication of such work. But, in sharp contrast to the practice that applies to grant aid allocations – on which Council Members spend virtually no time in considering project details (or for that matter, the distribution of grant to various types of recipient or to priority areas, for example) –

Members represented on the Technical Support and Research Committee spend a considerable amount of effort in debating the merits and demerits of individual research proposals.

9.4.4 The Council might wish to explore whether the The Committee could strike a happier medium between these two approaches: by maintaining its current overview of research projects, but with far less detailed intervention in dealing with individual proposals, and by taking on a new, hitherto unfulfilled, responsibility for overseeing projects that are funded from CCW's grant programme.

9.4.5 While the Technical Support Committee reports to the full Council, through the presentation of minutes of Committee meetings, the Committee does not provide feedback to the Council on the outcomes of the research that CCW has commissioned. A synopsis of the research projects awarded, as well as their eventual outcomes, should be reported to the full Council – and in ways that make far more explicit linkages between the research that is funded and CCW's corporate objectives.

Recommendation

The Technical Support and Research Committee of Council Members should operate in a more strategic manner in overseeing the awards of, and outcomes from, CCW- commissioned research *and* CCW's grant aid programme.

9.5 Other quinquennnial reviews

9.5.1 There have been quinquennial reviews carried out on organisations with which CCW has close links and whose outcomes may have a material impact upon CCW and its work. Three reviews, which are of particular significance, are:

- the review of the Joint Nature Conservancy Council;
- the review of the Environment Agency; and
- the review of Forest Enterprise.

The position on each of these is summarised below

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee

9.5.2 The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), established under s128 of the Environment Protection Act 1990, is the forum through which the three conservation bodies (English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, and CCW) discharge their special statutory responsibilities for nature conservation across Great Britain as whole and internationally. The Committee is staffed and funded by the three bodies.

9.5.3 A report on the first stage of the quinquennial review of the JNCC, setting out an appraisal of the JNCC's functions and recommending ways that these might be discharged in the future, was published for consultation in March 2001. The report, an executive summary of which was circulated to EPT Committee members, concluded that the JNCC should be abolished as a joint committee of three conservation bodies and replaced by a 'UK Nature Advisory Council' in the form of a new, independent Non-Departmental Public Body, financed by the then DETR.

9.5.4 However, there was a clear consensus, from the responses to the consultation on the first stage report, against setting up a new NDPB. Instead, the responses highlighted the need to adapt and build on existing arrangements to improve service delivery of advice to Government and to address issues such as the direction, funding and staffing of the JNCC's work. These aspects are being examined in the second stage of the review, due to be submitted to Ministers in October.

Environment Agency

9.5.5 The first stage of the review of the Environment Agency (EA), conducted by a team based in DEFRA, was published in August 2001.

9.5.6 From the Assembly's standpoint, the main interest focuses on the issue of a separate agency for Wales. As indicated in a paper considered by EPT Committee in May, the report comes down against a separate Welsh agency, or rather, in favour of the agency in Wales retaining its current status as an integrated part of the Agency as a whole.

9.5.7 Apart from the issue of a separate agency, the report makes proposals as to the ways in which some of the more general recommendations of the report might be applied in Wales to improve the EA's Welsh focus. Specifically it proposes that:

- a separate and formal statement of the Agency's accountability to the Assembly is included as part of the revision of the Agency's Management Statement;
- new and separate objectives for Wales should be included as part of revised statutory guidance to the Agency under section 4 of the Environment Act 1995 (a guidance power which has been devolved to the Assembly);
- the Assembly should be part of a high level group/structure which will be developed to prioritise objectives for the Agency and their delivery through the corporate planning process.

9.5.8 The main conclusions of the report in relation to Welsh aspects, and in particular the question of a separate agency for Wales, were largely foreshadowed at the time the DETR team presented its FMPR paper to EPT Committee. The arguments put forward by the review team against separation focus on structural issues, such as the possibility of separate charging regimes and policies in relation to environmental regulation in England and in Wales; separation from national services, such as flood defence warning; and the loss of integrated management of key catchments. Among other issues brought out in the report is the lack of any support from some of the most informed and affected bodies (e.g. other environmental organisations and the business community) to the concept of a separate Welsh agency. Another key factor is that the EA is still a relatively young body and, as the report says, breaking it up could weaken both sides. On top of these arguments, the report brings out the issues of the costs and practicability of creating a separate Agency.

9.5.9 The report acknowledges that it considered the issue of separation from the perspective of what was best for the EA as a whole. It accepts that there are political judgements to be made and wider considerations to be addressed in relation to a range of bodies. These wider considerations arise principally from the concurrent review of CCW and remaining questions as to whether some form of combined CCW/EAW body should be created in the longer term. These are considerations Ministers intend to return to following the second stage of the CCW quinquennial review.

9.5.10 The second stage of the EA review is due to be completed in October**.**

Forest Enterprise

9.5.11 Forest Enterprise (FE) was established in 1996 as an executive agency of the Forestry Commission, responsible for managing the one million hectare public forest estate in England, Wales and Scotland.

9.5.12 The quinquennial review of FE was announced in May 2000 and the first stage of the review considered whether FE should continue as an executive agency of the Forestry Commission; whether other organisational options were preferable; and whether there should be one GB body or three 'country' bodies. The second stage of the review of FE was completed in July 2001.

9.5.13 The first stage of the review, carried out by a team from the Forestry Commission and Forest Enterprise, recommended that FE should retain its status as an executive agency of the Forestry Commission. Ministers in the National Assembly, together with their colleagues in the UK Government and the Scottish Executive accepted this conclusion as the most practical way forward in the medium term. They intend, however, to review options for further decentralisation of the handling of forestry policy and management, in the light of continuing experience of the devolved structure.

Overview

9.5.14 There are a number of bodies and agencies with direct and indirect land and water use interests, some of which have been, are, or will be, subject to individual quinquennial reviews. These reviews – covering the Welsh Development Agency; the Wales Tourist Board; CADW; the Environment Agency; Forest Enterprise; and Countryside Council for Wales – will generate a wide range of baseline information that can be used in part as a basis for assessing whether the entire organisational framework in Wales is best structured for meeting people's needs in the longer term. Such an assessment would be a major study; whose recommendations might well include far-reaching proposals that would require primary legislation.

9.5.15 In addition, a Cabinet Office and Treasury sponsored review of executive agencies has recently started work to examine ways in which agencies can be helped to become more effective. Key areas of interest will be: the capturing and sharing of best practice; how to improve the balance between agencies' freedom to operate and the controls exercised upon them; further improvements in target-setting; the integration of policy and service delivery; joining up services across government where appropriate; and effective reporting. The review aims to report by the end of the year – the findings from which may well be appropriate for ASPBs in delivering public services in Wales.

Recommendation

In view of Ministers' intentions to return to the question of a combined EA/CCW body, the Assembly should consider undertaking a wider review of the current structures and arrangements for delivering land use and water functions in Wales as a whole.

9.6 Implications of the Human Rights Act for options recommended in the interim report

9.6.1 During its consideration of the interim report on CCW's quinquennial review, the National Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee requested a note on the implications of the Human Rights Act for some of the options presented in the interim report regarding CCW's future structure. The note below has been cleared by the Office of the Counsel General.

9.6.2 In evaluating various options to CCW's current organisational framework, the interim report pointed out that the Human Rights Act affected two of those options. The two options (options A2 and A3, respectively, in the interim report) were:

- the abolition of CCW and the transfer of its functions to the National Assembly; and
- the abolition of CCW and converting it to an executive agency;

on which the interim report had concluded that:

> "under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, new powers have been given to CCW, in relation to both its countryside and nature conservation functions, concerning which there is a right of appeal by aggrieved landowners and occupiers to the Assembly. Without, it seems, rewriting the Act, the Assembly could not carry out CCW's functions under the Act, as well as its own, without breaching the provisions of the Human Rights Act"; and that
>
> "making the CCW an executive agency would create similar legal conflict issues, regarding impartiality, as taking the body into the Assembly…."

The Human Rights Act

9.6.3 Article 6[1] of the European Convention on Human Rights, which relates to a person's right to a fair hearing, states that:

> "In the determination of his civil rights and obligations or of any criminal charge against him, everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law."

9.6.4 The House of Lords has recently concluded that the determination of applications and appeals by the Secretary of State (and, therefore, by extension, the National Assembly) in relation to planning, highways and Transport & Works Act matters, does conform in principle with Article 6. This was because of the existence of a right of appeal to the courts. The court (Lords) noted, however, that while there was no problem in principle, in that the Secretary of State's (and hence the National Assembly's) independence and impartiality could still be challenged on the basis of the circumstances of an individual case. It was confirmed that the planning system did involve the issues affecting the civil rights of the landowners.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ("the CROW Act")

9.6.4 The CROW Act provides CCW with new powers of intervention both in relation to its nature conservation and countryside functions. The exercise of these powers is balanced by creating a right, for those affected, to appeal to the Assembly. For example, under S.4 of the Act, CCW has a duty to prepare draft access maps showing all open country. Any person with an interest in land shown on a draft access map can appeal to the Assembly to have the land removed from the map.

9.6.5 Similarly, new provisions added by Schedule 9 of the CROW Act to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1982, in relation to SSSIs, give CCW new powers to control potentially damaging operations. Section 28F provides a right of appeal, by owners and occupiers of land, to the Assembly, against various decisions taken by CCW in relation to that land.

The position

9.6.6 In both cases above, the system has been devised to provide a safeguard for the rights of landowners. Under both provisions, CCW is given powers to affect the property rights, and thus the civil rights, of others. In order to ensure these rights are not misused, a right of appeal is created to the Assembly.

9.6.7 If the Assembly were to take on the powers and duties of CCW itself, that right of appeal would no longer be effective because the Assembly would be having to consider an appeal against its own decision.

9.6.8 Even without having regard to the Human Rights Act, a body cannot be regarded as independent or impartial when considering an appeal against one of its own decisions: that would amount to being a judge in one's own cause. Such a decision-making process would not provide the appellant with a fair hearing and would appear contrary to the rules of natural justice. This would be the case even if the actual individuals making the original decision were different to those considering the appeal.

9.6.9 The Human Rights Act now obliges the need for an effective appeal mechanism where an individual's property rights are interfered with. Under S.107 of the Government of Wales Act 1998, the Assembly has no power to do any act that is incompatible with the Convention rights.

The implications

9.6.10 If it were decided that the functions of CCW under the CROW Act should be merged with those of the Assembly, the Assembly could not determine appeals against its own decisions. At the very least, this would mean in the case of the CROW Act, that landowners in Wales would be denied a right available to a landowner elsewhere in the UK. Therefore, it would be essential to devise an alternative appeal mechanism from the one presently provided under the Act in order to comply with the requirements of natural justice and the Human Rights Act. The necessity of creating a body (other than a court) to whom decisions of the Assembly can be appealed might be considered an unfortunate precedent.

9.6.11 The current position of the Assembly and CCW as two separate bodies provides an effective mechanism for individuals' rights of appeal to be heard. Dismantling that mechanism would result in that safeguard being preserved in the rest of the UK, but not in Wales.

9.5 Implications of the Human Rights Act for options recommended in the interim report

During its consideration of the interim report, the National Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee requested a note on the implications of the Human Rights Act for some of the options presented in the report regarding CCW's future structure. The note, below, has been cleared by the Office of the Counsel General.

In evaluating various options to CCW's current organisational framework, the interim report pointed out that the Human Rights Act affected two of those options. The two options (options A2 and A3 in the interim report) were:

- the abolition of CCW and the transfer of its functions to the National Assembly; and
- the abolition of CCW and converting it to an executive agency;

on which the interim report had concluded that:

> "under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, new powers have been given to CCW, in relation to both its countryside and nature conservation functions, concerning which there is a right of appeal by aggrieved landowners and occupiers to the Assembly. Without, it seems, rewriting the Act, the Assembly could not carry out CCW's functions under the Act, as well as its own, without breaching the provisions of the Human Rights Act"; and that
>
> "making the CCW an executive agency would create similar legal conflict issues, regarding impartiality, as taking the body into the Assembly…."

1. **The Human Rights Act**

   Article 6[1] of the European Convention on Human Rights, which relates to a person's right to a fair hearing, states that:

   In the determination of his civil rights and obligations or of any criminal charge against him, everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law.

   The House of Lords has recently concluded that the determination of applications and appeals by the Secretary of State (and, therefore, by extension, the National Assembly) in relation to planning, highways and Transport & Works Act matters, does conform in principle with Article 6. This was because of the existence of a right of appeal to the courts. The court (Lords) noted, however, that while there was no problem in principle, in that the Secretary of State's (and hence the National Assembly's) independence and impartiality could still be challenged on the basis of the circumstances of an individual case. It was confirmed that the planning system did involve the issues affecting the civil rights of the landowners.

   The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ("the CROW Act")

   The CROW Act provides CCW with new powers of intervention both in relation to its nature conservation and countryside functions. The exercise of these powers is balanced by creating a right, for those affected, to appeal to the Assembly. For example, under S.4 of the Act, CCW has a duty to prepare draft access maps showing all open country. Any person with an interest in land shown on a draft access map can appeal to the Assembly to have the land removed from the map.

   Similarly, new provisions added by Schedule 9 of the CROW Act to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1982, in relation to SSSIs, give CCW new powers to control potentially damaging operations. Section 28F provides a right of appeal, by owners and occupiers of land, to the Assembly, against various decisions taken by CCW in relation to that land.

   1. **The position**

      In both cases above, the system has been devised to provide a safeguard for the rights of landowners. Under both provisions, CCW is given powers to affect the property rights, and thus the civil rights, of others. In order to ensure these rights are not misused a right of appeal is created to the Assembly.

      If the Assembly were to take on the powers and duties of CCW itself, that right of appeal would no longer be effective because it would be having to consider an appeal against its own decision.

      Even without having regard to the Human Rights Act, a body cannot be regarded as independent or impartial when considered an appeal against one of its own decisions: that would amount to being a judge in one's own cause. Such a decision-making process would not provide the appellant with a fair hearing and would appear contrary to the rules of natural justice. This would be the case even if the actual individuals making the original decision were different to those considering the appeal.

      The Human Rights Act now obliges the need for an effective appeal mechanism where an individual's property rights are interfered with. Under S.107 of the Government of Wales Act 1998, the Assembly has no power to do any act that is incompatible with the Convention rights.

   2. **The implications**

If it were decided that the functions of CCW under the CROW Act should be merged with those of the Assembly, the Assembly could not determine appeals against its own decisions. At the very least, this would mean in the case of the CROW Act, that landowners in Wales would be denied a right available to a landowner elsewhere in the UK. Therefore, it would be essential to devise an alternative appeal mechanism from the one presently provided under the Act in order to comply with the requirements of natural justice and the Human Rights Act. The necessity of creating a body (other than a court) to whom decisions of the Assembly can be appealed might be considered an unfortunate precedent.

The current position of the two separate bodies provides an effective mechanism for individuals' rights of appeal to be heard. Dismantling that mechanism would result in that safeguard being preserved in the rest of the UK, but not in Wales.

9.6 Other quinquennnial reviews

There have been quinquennial reviews carried out on organisations with which CCW has close links and whose outcomes may have a material impact upon CCW and its work. Three reviews, which are of particular significance, are:

- the review of the Joint Nature Conservancy Council;
- the review of the Environment Agency; and
- the review of Forest Enterprise.

The positions on each of these reviews, together with their emerging findings, are as follows.

Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC))

)

Environment Agency) to be completed

)

1. **Forest Enterprise)**

Appendix 1: Conclusions and rRecommendations from the first stage of theof the review

A summary of the main findings and recommendations emerging from the first stage of the review, given in the interim report on the quinquennial review of CCW in March 2001, are given below.

Organisational structure

- The complete abolition of CCW's functions would be inconsistent with the National Assembly's policies. There is a continuing need for each of CCW's functions to be performed – regardless of which body carries them out.
- There is considerable external support for CCW's retention as an independent organisation. It is recommended that CCW should continue to function as an Assembly Sponsored Public Body.
- Options for abolishing CCW and transferring its functions to the National Assembly for transforming CCW into an Executive Agency should be rejected.

- Merging CCW with a separate Environment Agency for Wales is not recommended. If the National Assembly wishes to see a single body emerge from combining the operations of EAW and CCW, this presupposes that it would be advantageous to break up the Environmental Agency and form separate Agencies for England and for Wales. The Environment Agency is the subject of a separate quinquennial review, which is looking, in part, at the question of whether there is a case for a separate Environment Agency for Wales.
- Abolishing CCW and the Forestry Commission in Wales to create a new merged body is not recommended. However, a proposal for amalgamating the warden services of CCW and Forest Enterprise (as well as the National Park Authorities, and unitary authorities) to provide an integrated all-Wales ranger service, should be examined in stage two of the review.
- Contracting out CCW's functions to the business sector should be rejected.

Functions

- Transferring some of the functions of the former Farming and Rural Conservation Agency to CCW should be rejected.
- The administration of Tir Gofal should not be transferred from CCW. However, Tir Gofal should be periodically reviewed in order to ensure that the continuation of CCW's agency role does not adversely affect its other responsibilities and that the scheme is being administered effectively and efficiently.
- Contracting out of CCW's management of National Nature Reserves to local authorities and voluntary organisations merits further investigation; and it is recommended that this proposal should be considered further as part of stage two of the review.
- Alternative arrangements to CCW's administration of grant aid to local authorities, voluntary bodies and others, should be explored in stage two of the review.

Consultation

The key points made by respondents to the consultation exercise are as follows:

- there is general agreement that CCW's current work programme reflects its statutory duties and powers;
- there is a clear need for the functions performed by CCW to be carried out – mainly in order to meet the Assembly's and UK Government's obligations and responsibilities for the environment. The large majority feel that CCW has a crucial role to play in nature conservation, landscape and recreation matters and are supportive of its existing functions;
- if CCW's functions were discontinued there would be potential for significant degradation in the Welsh environment, in the quality of life and in the expertise needed to ensure sustainability;
- CCW's functions generally fit well with those of other agencies according to the majority of respondents who addressed the issue. But a small number questioned the degree of overlap between CCW and other agencies, most notably the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission and a small number called for consideration to be given for some of CCW's functions to be devolved to other bodies;
- on the other hand, instead of rationalising CCW's functions so that they might be carried out by other organisations, a significant minority of organisations would prefer to see far greater liaison, integration and partnership working between CCW and a range of other bodies in order to formulate balanced policies and actions across all aspects of wildlife and countryside issues;
- there is broad support for not changing CCW's status as an Assembly Sponsored Public Body: CCW's independence from, but closely linked to, the National Assembly, is strongly valued by a large majority of responding consultees.

Generally speaking, the focus of most respondents' attention was not so much on whether CCW should continue to exist as an organisation per se, or whether its functions should be dismantled or allocated to other bodies. Many of their views were directed at the capacity and approach of CCW in carrying out its work. These views tended to be expressed, in the main, on the following issues; and it is recommended that further exploration of them should constitute an integral part of stage two of the review:

- whether CCW is paying too much attention to particular facets of work to the detriment of other priorities;
- whether its planning and operational framework is delivering the appropriate targets;
- whether it is engaging sufficiently and working closely with land users, other organisations and the public at large; and
- whether it is adequately organised, or resourced, to fulfil its remit across Wales.

Partnerships

- Ways of developing closer partnerships and joint working between CCW and other organisations should be followed up with interested parties during stage two of the review.

Sustainable development

- Like some other public bodies, CCW is wrestling with how it can more fully embrace the sustainable development agenda within its work. Quite how this will be achieved will be an evolving process, but recommendations on how it could do so should emerge from the second stage of the review.

Appendix 2: Terms of Reference for the review

The Quinquennial Review of the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is being undertaken in the context of the National Assembly's published Quinquennial Review Guidelines. The Guidelines set out the process for conducting Reviews. This includes self-assessment by the sponsored body, discussion with Members of Council and senior managers, inviting the views of major stakeholders including staff and their trade unions, partners and customers.

The Terms of Reference sets out the key questions which the Review has to answer. The issues common to all Reviews are contained within the Guidelines but the Terms of Reference also take account of issues specific to the Countryside Council for Wales. The Review will also take account of reviews of related bodies, such as the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, taking place.

There will be two parts to the Review: the Strategic Review and the Corporate Governance Review.

- **Strategic Review**

The context for the Strategic Review is the Assembly's strategic plan, *betterwales.com* and related policy documents.

Stage 1 of the Review: Functions

In the light of the statutory duties and functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, its remit in Wales and the UK and the National Assembly's objectives, is there a continuing need for all the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales and, if so, is the current organisational framework the most appropriate?

- What is the legal framework governing the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales in terms of primary, secondary and European legislation? Does CCW's current work programme reflect its statutory duties and functions?
- Is the Countryside Council for Wales still necessary and for how long?
- Do the functions need to be carried out by an Assembly Sponsored Public Body - are other options for governance likely to be more effective?
- Is there scope to rationalise the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales and other bodies working in the fields of recreation, access and terrestrial and maritime environmental conservation, such as the Environment Agency, the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency, the National Parks and the Forestry Commission?

Stage 2 of the Review: Strategic effectiveness

Are there improvements which should be made to the way in which the Countryside Council of Wales' functions are delivered, taking account of its statutory duties and the National Assembly's values and objectives, and to the functioning of its relationship with the National Assembly?

- What have been the main strategic achievements of the Countryside Council for Wales since its inception, has it met its objectives, what has been its performance against targets, how does its performance compare with that of comparable bodies, are there performance issues which need to be addressed?
- How effective is the corporate planning of the Countryside Council for Wales in developing clear strategic direction, setting targets and priorities? In addressing the full range of its responsibilities, how effective is the match between inputs, in terms of resources, and the objectives and targets it sets?
- Is the organisational structure of the Countryside Council for Wales fit for purpose? Does the structure of the organisation and membership of the Council enable regional needs to be fully recognised ?recognised?
- Is there an effective mutual understanding of the roles of Members and senior managers in setting corporate objectives and monitoring their implementation?
- Do the staff generally understand and feel a sense of ownership of the corporate objectives?
- To what extent do the Countryside Council for Wales' objectives, policies and conduct of business chime with the Assembly's objectives, guiding themes and values (sustainable development, tackling social disadvantage, equal opportunities, acting strategically, working in partnership and being inclusive). What needs to be done to build closer connections?
- Does the Countryside Council for Wales have productive relationships with its key partners in terms of policy, planning and implementation? How might these relationships be strengthened?
- Is the Countryside Council for Wales responsive to its partners and customers? ? Does it have their confidence as a body with which they can do business, are there ways in which relationships might be strengthened?
- Is the Countryside Council for Wales an accessible organisation to the public, does it promote its purposes and services effectively?

Relationship with the Assembly

- Is the Countryside Council for Wales able to advise the Assembly effectively on future countryside, maritime and conservation policy, and is it able to advise effectively on proposals for new primary and secondary legislation relevant to its work?
- Do the reporting arrangements between Countryside Council for Wales and the National Assembly provide an adequate framework for the relationships between the two? Is the executive nature of the relationship between the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Assembly over the operation of Tir Gofal compatible with the core sponsorship relationship?
- Does the Countryside Council for Wales need different freedoms and flexibilities to improve the delivery of its functions, and if so how might they be achieved while not weakening its overall accountability to the Assembly?
- **Corporate Governance Review**

Is the Countryside Council for Wales managing its finances effectively and in accordance with the requirements of regularity, propriety and value-for-money? What progress has the Countryside Council for Wales made in improving the efficiency of its operation?

- Do the financial and managerial control arrangements between the Agency and the Assembly meet established requirements?
- Do audit reports and the follow-up action provide confidence that the Council is managing its finances in line with the Assembly's expectations of public bodies ?bodies?
- Is the Countryside Council for Wales using its financial resources fully, are financial targets being met, is budgeting and expenditure being well managed, are value-for-money issues such as good procurement beingprocurement being pursued?
- Is there evidence that operating costs and staffing levels are being controlled and scrutinised?
- Does the Countryside Council for Wales have good arrangements for monitoring the quality and efficiency of its service delivery and for handling complaints ?complaints?
- Does the Countryside Council for Wales have an effective efficiency plan, is it making progress in improving the efficiency of its operations, is information communications technology being fully exploited?

Appendix 3: Consultations conducted during the review

Appendix 3: List of consultees interviewed

A major part of the quinquennial review of CCW involved a consultation exercise; and the interim report provided a list of some 100 respondents who submitted written comments to the consultation paper that was issued. In addition, the following individuals kindly agreed to be consulted on a face-to-face basis; and I am grateful for their co-operation and support.

Countryside Council for Wales (Council Members): group meeting with Members; and individually with the following:

Bryan Riddleston

John Lloyd Jones

Libby Andrews

Lynda Warren

Roger Lovegrove

Tom Jones

Countryside Council for Wales (Staff): 5 'workshops' held with various groups of CCW staff, including some Council Members; and individual meetings with the following:

Andrew Lucas, Nia Blackwell, Trade Union Side

Bob Lowe, North West Area Officer

Chris Gillmore, Head of Land Use and Landscape Policy

Chris Uttley, Maritime Policy and Advisory Officer

Colin Brown, Head of Resource Planning and Efficiency

David Parker, Director of Conservation

Gareth Roberts, Head of Access and Recreation

Gethin Llwyd, Community Officer

John Taylor, Director of Countryside Policy

Keith Davies, Senior Planner

Les Warmington, Head of Finance and Personnel

Louise Thornhill, Countryside Officer

Maggie Hill, Head of Maritime and Earth Sciences

Malcolm Smith, Senior Director

Martyn Evans, National Assembly Liaison Officer

Mike Henderson, Head of Internal Audit

Paul Green, Head of Information Management

Paul Loveluck, Chief Executive

Pete Williams, South Area Officer

Ray Woods, East Area Officer

Simon Bilsborough, Sustainable Development and European Officer

Steve Green, Head of Interpretation, Education and Communication

Terry Rowell, Head of Environmental Audit

Tim Blackstock, Head of Natural Sciences

Country Land and Business Association: group meeting with members of the North Wales region

Environment Agency: Roger Thomas, Jim Poole

Forestry Commission/Forest Enterprise: Simon Hewitt, Bob Farmer, Trevor Owen; and Huw Davies, Martin Giles

National Assembly of Wales:

Alan Starkey (Agri-food, Environment and Forestry Division)

Bob Evans (Planning Division)

Bob Macey (Environmental Protection Division)

Charles Coombs, Lisa Dobbins (Sustainable Development Unit)

Gerry Quarrell, Richard Thomas, Leon Rees and Chris Morgan (Countryside Division)

Glyn Perryman (Agriculture Policy Division)

Jasper Roberts (Rural Policy Division)

June Milligan (Countryside Division)

Lindsay Roberts (Planning Division)

Mike Dunn (Food and Farming Development Division)

Nicola Donlon and Jon Young (Countryside Division)

Phil Bishop (Environmental Protection Division)

Richard Avent (CADW)

Sue Essex AM

National Farmers Union: group meeting with Welsh Parliamentary and Land Use Committee members

UK agencies policy directors: group meeting with Sue Collins (English Nature), John Faulkner (Environment and Heritage Service), Jane Clark (Scottish Natural Heritage) Richard Lloyd (Countryside Agency), Deryck Steer (JNCC)

Wales Council for Voluntary Action: Graham Benfield, and Phil Jarrold

Wales Tourist Board: Nigel Adams

Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link: group meeting with members; and with Ruth Williams

Welsh Development Agency: Ann Watkin, Gareth Hall; and with Tom Bourne

Welsh Group of the Association of National Park Authorities: Iwan Huws, Nic Wheeler, Chris Ledbury, Martin Fitton

Welsh Local Government Association: Nic Wheeler, Steve Moon, Clive Williams; and with Victoria Winckler, Sian Davies, David Keast

Appendix 4: Comparisons of CCW's targets with outputs, 1997-98 to 2000-01 2000-01

	1997-98	
Targets in Corporate Plan	**Targets in Annual Report (if different)**	**Outputs in Annual Report**

Landscape			
Undertake pilot landscape assessments	3		3
Local authority adoption of LANDMAP	1		1
Biodiversity			
Management plans for pSAC	4	7	8
Monitoring baselines on terrestrial pSAC	12	7	6
Notify river SSSI	2		2
Commence plans for 12 habitats + 53 species	40%		95%
Prepare next tranche of BAP	100%		??
Management plans for SSSI	150		131
Increase area of SSSI under S15 (ha)	4,500	3,500	3,900
Complete Phase 1 habitat survey			Achieved
Phase 2 lowland grassland surveys (sites)		50	56
Phase 1 Intertidal survey		50%	22%
		by 2000	
Additional hedgerow under management (km)	370	350	452
Review NNR management plans	5		36
Agri-environment			
% of farmland in Tir Cymen pilot areas	43%	47%	47%
Access			
Agree work programmes with local authorities	22		
Length of PROW to be defined and publicised (Km)		1,500	1,583
Improving understanding			
Launch EECW	Yes		Grant aided
Up to date interpretation leaflets for NNRs	8		10
Signage and interpretation for NNRs	3		3
Work with LAs on Agenda 21	Yes		Yes
Training places for Environment Task Force	Yes	40	20
Sea Empress			
Implement agreed monitoring and research projects	Yes		46
			underway

1998-99

	Targets in Corporate Plan	Targets in Annual Report (if different)	Outputs in Annual Report
Landscape			
Local authority adoption of LANDMAP	4		11
Biodiversity			
Monitoring baselines on terrestrial pSAC	8		8
Commence implementation plans for 12 habitats + 54 species	90%		100%
Management plans for SSSI	150		93
Increase area of SSSI under S15 (ha)	3,500		5,609
Complete management plans funded by EU LIFE	6		6
Complete Phase 1 habitat survey	Analyse		Publication in
	And publish		preparation
Phase 2 lowland grassland surveys (sites)	50		52
Phase 1 Intertidal survey (% of coastline)	38%		36%
Additional hedgerow under management (km)	370		373
Review NNR management plans	5		5
Agri-environment			
% of farmland in Tir Cymen pilot areas	47%		??
Access			
Length of PROW to be defined and publicised (Km)	To be	1,500	1,444
	agreed		
	with LAs		
Improving understanding			
Launch EECW	Develop		CCW main
	EECW's		funder of EECW
	role		
Up to date interpretation leaflets for NNRs	8		12
Signage and interpretation for NNRs	3		3
Work with LAs on Agenda 21	Yes		Conference organised
Training places for Environment Task Force	40		3
Sea Empress			
Complete review and disseminate results of research	Yes		Reports
			Available

1999-00

	Targets in Corporate Plan	Targets in Annual Report (if different)	Outputs in Annual Report
Landscape:			
Local authority adoption of LANDMAP	3 new	13	13
		cumulative	
Develop method for seascape assessment	??		Studies contracted
Biodiversity			
Habitats and Species Action Plans for which targets for Wales can be identified	See table below		See table below
Monitor SSSI	10%		??
New cases of damage detected on SSSI	0%		??
Produce management plans for SSSI	150		??
New notifications and extensions of SSSI	45	55	44
Phase 1 Intertidal survey (% of coastline)	48%		48%
Undertake audits of NNR			??
	10		
Agri-environment			
Tir Gofal – holdings recruited	600		472
			7

Access			
Length of PROW to be defined and publicised (Km)	1,500		1,200
Support to implement Snowdonia traffic management plan	Yes		??
PROW networks serving communities and linked to public transport	??		Studies
Assist implementation of Gvmt proposals for access to open countryside	Yes	3 pilot studies	Completed Yes
Improving understanding			
Survey to establish baseline of understanding of environmental issues in Wales	Yes		??
Complete Environmental Field Interpretation Strategy	Yes		??
Efficiency			
Tir Gofal running costs	Reduce ratio of admin to payment costs eventually to 10%		??

Biodiversity Action Plan targets	**Targets** **3 year averages**	**Targets in Annual Reports (if different)**	**Outputs in Annual Report**
Notifications of additional hectares of:			
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	220		174
Fens, marsh and swamp	230		122
Dwarf Shrub Heath	1200	750	31
Neutral Grassland	750	100	81
Bogs	600	20	40

		2000-01	
	Targets in Corporate Plan	**Revised targets in-year(if different)**	**Outputs**
Landscape:			
Local authority adoption of LANDMAP	14	15	20
Schemes started under Tir Coed initiative	3		3
Biodiversity			
Habitats and Species Action Plans for which targets for Wales can be identified	See table below		
Monitor SSSI	15%	10%	4%
New cases of damage detected on SSSI	0%		??
Produce management plans for SSSI	100	50	12
SACs identified, surveyed and prepared	0	92	89 submitted to EU
New notifications and extensions of SSSI	)	)	24
Notify/renotify SSSI underpinning Natura sites	) 55	)40	7
	)	)	
Phase 1 Intertidal survey (% of coastline)	61%		58%
Undertake audits of NNR	20		14
Upgrade interpretation facilities at NNR			
Set conservation objectives for marine SACs	3		1
Complete draft management scheme for marine SACs	1		1
Agri-environment			
Tir Gofal – holdings recruited	600		500
- area	??	43,000 ha	49,000 ha
Access			
Length of PROW to be defined and publicised (Km)			Data awaited
			554km
Additional PROW within Tir Gofal maintained			Data awaited
PROW networks serving communities and linked to public transport			
Assist implementation of Gvmt proposals for access to open countryside			4 Local Access Forums set up; land data
			digitised
Launch Glyndwr's Way			Ready for launching
Improving understanding			
Implement Environmental Interpretation Strategy	Yes		??

Biodiversity Action Plan targets	**Targets in Corporate Plan**	**Revised targets in-year(if different)**	**Outputs**
Notifications of additional hectares of:			
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	220		145
Fens, marsh and swamp	230		262
Dwarf Shrub Heath	750		85
Neutral Grassland	100		50
Bogs	20		17

Appendix 5: Benchmarking data

(A) Sites of Special Scientific Interest

CCW English Scottish

Nature Natural

Heritage

Number of SSSIs, 2000-01 1008 4,115 1,450

Increase in number since 1991-92 167 440 100

% increase 20 12 7

Area of SSSIs (000 ha), 2000-01 225 1,098 958

Increase in area (000 ha) since 1991-92 26 288 142

% increase 13 36 13

% of total SSSI numbers under

Management Agreements:

1991-92 37 43 28

2000-01 54 68* 42

% of total SSSI area under

Management Agreement:

1991-92 1 7 6

2000-01 21 13* 11

Number of NNRs, 2000-01 65 208 72

Increase in number since 1991-92 16 73 3

% increase 33 54 4

Area of NNRs (000 ha), 2000-01 24 84 114

Increase in area (000 ha) since 1991-92 11 37 2

% increase 81 78 2

* Data for 1999-00

(B) Numbers and areas of different designations*, as at March 2001

CCW English Scottish

Nature Natural

Heritage

Number of designated areas:

SSSIs 1008 4,115 1,450

SACs 89 210 209**

SPAs 13 83 156

Ramsar 10 78 51

NNR 65 208 72

Area of designated areas (000 ha):

SSSIs 225 1,098 958

SACs 530 808 804**

SPAs 86 665 478

Ramsar 31 366 306

NNR 24 84 114

* In the case of overlapping designations, the numbers and areas are shown against each type of designation.

** Candidate SACs

(C) Planning proposals and other data, 1999-002000-01

CCW English Scottish

Nature Natural

Heritage

Comments on proposals)

affecting SSSIs or species) 10,706* 2,679*

) 1,284

Comments on proposals)

not affecting these) 1,799* -..

Total licences issued 288 1,730 650

Number of Nature

Conservation Orders 6 39 9

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* Data for 1999-00

(D) Biodiversity Action Plans, 2000-01

CCW English Scottish

Nature Natural

Heritage

Plans for which agency

is in the lead:

Habitat Action Plans 5 15 6

Species Action Plans 18 92 24

Plans implemented directly

or indirectly (e.g. via grant aid):

Habitat Action Plans 31 41 41

Species Action Plans 92 270 226

Total plans relevant to country:

Habitat Action Plans 37 42 41

Species Action Plans 184 348 226

(E) Grant in aid (£ million)

CCW English Scottish

Nature Natural

Heritage

1991-92 14.3 32.4 17.6

1995-96 18.7 40.4 38.6

1999-00 25.6 44.7 36.0

2000-01 34.5 49.9 ..

22001-02 (budget) 40.2 58.0 48.5

Grant in aid as % of total income 97% 94% 95%

40.2 58.0 48.5

(F) Percentage distribution of expenditure, 2000-01

CCW* English Scottish

Nature Natural

Heritage

Nature conservation, biodiversity 39 95 57

Agri-environment 42 .. 9

Landscape conservation 7 .. 1

Access and recreation 7 .. 21

Improving understanding 5 5 12

Total 100 100 100

* Budget allocation for 2001-02

(G) Staff numbers (fte) at 31 March 2001

CCW English Scottish Nature Natural

Heritage

Central services:

Central office 4.5 29 15.5

Finance & Personnel 37.5 57 44.2

Information Management 33.0 71 49.7

Resource Planning/Efficiency 13 9 28

Science Directorate:

Management 2 (8) 5.4

Natural Science 26.5 40 30.6

Maritime and Earth Science 25.5 28 21.3

Environmental Audit 12 30 6

Countryside Directorate

Management 2.5 (6) -

Interpretation/Community/Education 13 30 22

Land Use/ Landscape Policy 14.5 11 19.3

Recreation/Access/ European 14.5 25 26.4

Conservation Directorate

Management 7 * -

Land mgmt /site safeguard 14 * 25.5

Total Headquarters staff , above 220 330 293.9

Other Area Office staff 239.5 462 336.4

Total staff 459.5 792 630.3

( ) Figures in brackets are subsumed within the numbers shown for the directorate

*Functions based in Area Offices

Appendix 6: CCW targets for 2001-02 issued by the National Assembly

Designated Sites Designated Sites

1. Notify/renotify 93 SSSI underpinning Natura 2000 sites under the EC Habitat's Directive in support of NAW's legal obligations*.

2. Notify an additional 10 other SSSI*.

3. Secure appropriate management of land/sea using the following

mechanisms:

a. Management agreements on SSSI/SAC/SPA/Ramsar - 10,000ha*

b. Tir Gofal agreements 50,000ha (estimated to be c500 farms but

could vary significantly according to farm sizes)*

(CCW is currently reviewing options for alternative method not including

farm visits, prior to the conclusion of interim agreements, and will advise

NAW accordingly.)

Survey/monitoring

4. a. Undertake 20 NNR audits to ensure high management standards*.

b. Upgrade interpretation/education facilities at 5 NNRs, thereby supporting tourism and local economies*.

5. Complete 62% of intertidal survey of the coast (aiming to complete survey

work by 2005)

BAP

6. Through a new challenge fund support implementation of a further 10 Species Action Plans by voluntary sector partners*.

7. Support preparation of 12 new Local Biodiversity Action Plans during the

Year*.

Access

8. a. Through grant aid an additional 450km of Public Rights of Way close to population centres or linked to public transport to be managed, defined and publicised*.

9. b 500km of additional Public Rights of Way within Tir Gofal maintained

and unobstructed*.

10. a Complete pre-consultation draft of all maps of open country and common land for the whole of Wales as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

b Initiate consultation on 15% of mapped area (subject to Regulations being made by NAW by November 2001)

11. c Publish - best guidance practice for Local Access Fora

- guidance on how CCW will be consulting about the section 4 maps of open country and common land.

12. An additional 5 local authorities to commence LANDMAP assessments (bringing total to 20).

Sustainable development

13. To support key initiatives in Biodiversity, enhanced access, promotion of greater environmental understanding, and landscape enhancements with matching support of £3m to partners*.

14. Develop and issue guidance for the preparation and implementation of management plans for AONBs

15. Respond within timeframe to all planning application consultations (approx 1200 based on past 3 year average) with the aim of making developments more sustainable and environmentally sensitive*.

Modernising Government

16. 60% of managers to undergo training as part of gaining Investors in People status. (NAW suggest we revise to: Undertake structured training and other activity in order to work towards gaining IIP status by 2003).

17. Let a contract for an independent Grants Post Payment Monitoring System by 1 October 2001

18. Commission independent review of CCW's purchasing strategy and commence its implementation (aim to reduce running costs by at least £60k per year thereafter)

Targets that NAW suggest remain as internal targets only.

(i) Sea area subject to Regulation 34 management scheme - 194,000ha

ii. Produce Site Issue Briefings for 15% of Natura 2000 sites as part of Review of

Consents process (75% with additional funding) required of Government by

the Habitats Directive.

iii. Monitor 19,000ha of SAC/SPA to establish if it is in Favourable Conservation

Status as required by the Habitats Directive*.

iv. Grant aid 15 projects promoting the benefits of walking including the Walking

the Way to Health Initiative*.

v. Administer the Assembly's Environment Development Fund for

AONBs.

(vi) 97% of invoices paid within trading terms (normally 30 days)

***Targets annotated indicated those that could be affected by restrictions on land access due to foot and mouth and may need to be revisited during the year.**

Appendix 7: Proposed new framework for CCW's aims and objectives

CCW's KEY AIMS	1. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AIMS	BETTERWALES.COM THEMES AND OUTCOMES	CCW PROGRAMMES	OBJECTIVES TO BE SET USING PERFORMANCE MEASURES SHOWN
HELPING TO ENSURE THAT THE WELSH COUNTRYSIDE AND ITS SURROUNDING SEAS SUPPORT MORE WILDLIFE AND A GREATER DIVERSITY OF HABITATS ON WHICH SPECIES DEPEND	**An environment that is cherished and protected so that it remains healthy and biologically diverse**	**Better quality of life** Outcomes: Habitats and species protected, and Wales' contribution to the Natura 2000 network of sites of international nature importance completed Biodiversity enhanced Decline in UK wildlife and	• Nature conservation and biodiversity	• Number and area of priority habitats (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar) notified • Number and area underpinning

		habitats reversed; and declining populations of wild birds stabilised or increased Protection of special sites strengthened Enhanced landscape quality Proportion of agricultural land covered by agri-environment agreement or with organic status increased	• Landscape conservation • Agri-environment	Natura sites notified or renotified • Number and area of priority habitats (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar) secured under management agreements • Number and area of priority habitats identified but not yet designated • Number of NNR audited to ensure high management standards • Number of other SSSI monitored to ensure high management standards • Number and area of SSSI in unfavourable condition or destroyed • Number of Habitat Action Plans being implemented • Number of Species Action Plans being implemented • Number of Local Biodiversity Action Plans being supported • Proportion of coastal intertidal survey completed • Trends in numbers of wild birds and other species • Trends in habitat and plant diversity • Number of publications on AONB management plans published • Number and area of Tir Gofal holdings secured under management agreements
CCW's KEY AIMS	**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AIMS**	**BETTERWALES.COM THEMES AND OUTCOMES**	**CCW PROGRAMMES**	**OBJECTIVES TO BE SET USING PERFORMANCE MEASURES SHOWN**
HELPING TO ENSURE THAT THE WELSH COUNTRYSIDE AND ITS SURROUNDING SEAS ARE MANAGED TO PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT	**A self-sustaining economy which respects the environmental and social context of Wales and responds to sustainable development opportunities**	**Better, stronger economy** Outcomes: Economic stability and competitiveness Development of the Welsh economy supported Wealth-creating potential of the Welsh countryside developed Wider landscape protected	• Nature conservation and biodiversity • Agri-environment • Landscape conservation • All programmes	• Value of income injected into communities with priority habitat (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar) areas from CCW management agreements with landowners and occupiers • Local income generated by visitors to NNRs • Value of income injected into Tir Gofal communities from CCW management agreements with landowners and occupiers • Number of jobs created or safeguarded by Tir Gofal • Number of responses made to consultations on planning applications • Number of responses opposing planning applications • Number of local authorities adopting LANDMAP • Value of income injected into rural and urban communities through CCW grant aid programmes • Value of additional income generated in rural and urban communities arising from match-funding of CCW

				grant aid programmes
CCW's KEY AIMS	**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AIMS**	**OUTCOMES**	**CCW PROGRAMMES**	**OBJECTIVES TO BE SET USING PERFORMANCE MEASURES SHOWN**
HELPING TO ENSURE THAT THE WELSH COUNTRYSIDE AND ITS SURROUNDING SEAS IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING AND GIVE MORE ENJOYMENT TO RESIDENTS AND VISITORS	**Action to make communities strong and viable, and people healthier** **People being enabled to play a part in decisions that affect them**	**Better health and well-being** Outcomes: Increased opportunities for all parts of society to enjoy the benefits of the Welsh countryside Physical and cultural well-being and enjoyment of the countryside by residents and visitors enhanced Changes in public perception of wildlife and countryside and of their value Outcomes: Stakeholders' satisfaction achieved A greener environment in urban areas of Wales and quality of life improved and access to local green space opened up **Better opportunities for learning** Outcomes: Increased public understanding of, and participation in, environmental issues	• Access and recreation • Agri-environment • Nature conservation and biodiversity • Access and recreation • Education and understanding	• Number (and satisfaction levels) of visitors to NNR • Satisfaction levels of the countryside by disabled people • Number (and %) of CROW maps of 'open country' completed • Number of publications on access issues published • Length (and %) of PROW within Tir Gofal maintained and unobstructed • Satisfaction levels of landowners and occupiers on planned notifications affecting priority habitat areas in their communities • Number of consultations completed (and satisfaction levels) of CROW mapped areas • Length (and quality) of Public Rights of Way close to population centres or linked to public transport to be defined, managed and publicised • Number (and %) of education/ interpretation facilities upgraded at NNR • Number of new policy position statements released • Number of general publications/ specialist reports published • Number of school/ college partnerships established • Survey data on public perception of environment
CCW's KEY AIMS	**AIMS**	**BETTERWALES.COM THEMES AND OUTCOMES**	**CCW PROGRAMMES**	**OBJECTIVES TO BE SET USING PERFORMANCE MEASURES**
STRIVING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICE DELIVERY	**To provide cost-effective services** **To provide high quality services to**	**Better, simpler government** Outcomes: Improved use of resources	• Nature conservation and biodiversity • Agri-environment • All programmes • All programmes	• Cost per hectare of maintaining priority habitat areas • Ratio of administration costs to payments on Tir Gofal • Value of savings in running costs from implementing new efficiency measures

	customers **To be a fair and caring employer**	Outcomes: Achievement of customer satisfaction Outcomes: Motivated, well-trained staff complement maintained	• All programmes	• Satisfaction levels of customers or partners • Number (and %) of staff undertaking structured training • Staff absenteeism levels and turnover rates

Appendix 8: Distribution of CCW programme expenditure, and running costs 1996-97 to 2000-01

£ thousands

	1996-97	**1997-98**	**1998-99**	**1999-00**	**2000-01**
Countryside strategies	440	440	0	0	0
Landscape policy	550	440	530	450	489
Biodiversity	5,120	5,361	5,180	5,103	6,339
Agri-environment	5,180	5,550	6,530	5,751	11,084
Access	660	1,095	1,050	1,158	1,612
Improving understanding	600	676	855	916	814
Sea Empress	280	270	100	48	33
Capital	557	510	442	790	754
Receipts	-87	-87	-87	-87	-87
Total programmes and support	**13,300**	**14,255**	**14,600**	**14,129**	**21,038**

	1995-96	**1996-97**	**1997-98**	**1998-99**	**1999-00**	**2000-01**
Running costs						
(£ thousands):						
Core budget	8,232	8,443	8,480	8,900	9,930	10,550
Tir Gofal	-			816	1,541	2,000
Total	8,232	8,443	8,480	9,716	11,471	12,550
Core budget in real terms (Index, with 1995-96 = 100)	**100**	**99.4**	**96.9**	**99**	**107.7**	**112.4**

Appendix 9: Partnership linkages between CCW and other bodies

The following draft tables show some of the main interfaces between CCW and other selected bodies

with related responsibilities to CCW's main functions

1. NATURE CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY

Countryside Council for Wales	**Environment Agency**	**Forestry Commission**	**National Park Authorities**	**Unitary Authorities**
Statutory duty to discharge nature conservation functions, including the following:	Statutory duty to further conservation in respect of inland waters and wetlands and those coastal areas where EA has operational role; and a statutory duty (in respect of land and air functions) to have regard to conservation of features of special interest	Statutory responsibilities for enhancing the environmental conservation, including biodiversity, of FC's land holdings	Statutory purpose to conserve and enhance wildlife, natural beauty and cultural heritage within National Parks	
Protection of designated sites of special sites scientific interest (SSSIs), through notification, management and monitoring, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	Implementation of Habitats Directive Review of Consents in respect of existing and new authorisations impacting on SACs and SPAs	Management of SSSIs on forest estate (endorsed by CCW) and grant aid for woodland SSSIs; and provision of advice and grant aid to landowners for work which may affect protected species and habitats in woodlands		
Statutory consultee on planning applications affecting SSSIs, Natura 2000 sites and protected species		Non-statutory consultee on planning applications affecting ancient woodland sites	Decision-maker on planning applications	Decision-maker on planning applications
Designation and management works in National Nature Reserves (NNRs)		Management of FC estate	Management of National Parks	Designation and management of Local Nature Reserves and Country Parks and (built) conservation areas
Responsibility for implementing, through research and management schemes, Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs)	Responsibility for managing selected species and habitat action plans under BAP	Biodiversity research work on woodland species and habitats		
Provision of advice and information to support implementation of local BAPs (LBAPs)		Preparation of local woodland habitat plans (with non-woodland habitat plans on estate endorsed by CCW); and advice and support for LBAP process on FC land holdings and private estates	Player in biodiversity through local BAPs	Production and implementation of local BAPs
Responsibility for the administration of the Tir Cymen agri-environment scheme, and on behalf of the National Assembly, the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme		Provision of advice and grants for management of native woodlands on Tir Gofal	Partner in delivery of Tir Gofal (Snowdonia NP)	
Licensing certain operations affecting European protected species		Restoration of non-woodland biodiversity through regulation of felling licences		

Other examples of partnership work between CCW and others:

- With FC - Conservation management of native and coniferous woodlands; and sourcing of native woodland tree seed from NNRs for forest planting.
- With EA (and others) – Wetlands for Wales project aimed at acquisition and maintenance of 14 wetland sites for conservation, education and access.
- With EA – development of procedures and appraisal criteria to help EA screen their authorisations
- With Cadw – partner in Tir Gofal; and joint management initiatives on SSSIs/SACs with both wildlife and archaeological interests.

- With Sea Fisheries Committees – joint activity in developing and operating marine monitoring projects; and liaison over fisheries in relation to marine SACs.

2. LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

Countryside Council for Wales	**Environment Agency**	**Forestry Commission**	**National Park Authorities**	**Unitary Authorities**
Statutory duty to perform functions for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the countryside. Activities include:		Objectives include enhancing the visual amenity of the FC estate		

Statutory consultee on Unitary Development Plans (UDPs)	Statutory consultee on UDP	Production of strategic plans and forest design plans on FC land	Production of comprehensive management National Park Plans Collaborative working on regional planning guidance and co-ordination	Production of Development Plans, including landscape conservation and enhancement provisions Production of Countryside Strategies, covering landscape, recreation etc Collaborative working on regional planning guidance and co-ordination
Statutory consultee on planning applications affecting countryside resources, including proposed operations by Environment Agency	Consultee on planning applications	Regulation of tree-felling and replanting in and outside FC estate	Decision-maker on planning applications Statutory consultee on afforestation and deforestation within NPs Landscape Special Development Orders – controlling farm and forest roads and buildings	Decision-maker on planning applications Tree Preservation Order powers (incl. Hedgerow conservation)
Provision of advice and information to developers and others		Provision of grant aid to private landowners for preparation of long-term forest plans		
Duty to designate National Parks (NPs); and to advise Ministers and planning authorities on, inter alia, the administration of NPs			Management of Heritage Coasts	Management of AONBs
Duty to designate Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Encouragement through advice and grant aid for the enhancement of AONBs and Heritage Coasts				
Promotion of 'Landmap' for landscape assessments; and development of seascape assessment methods				Use of Landmap by authorities to inform UDP process and planning decisions
Responsibility for administration of the Tir Gofal scheme				

Other examples of partnership work between CCW and others:

- With FC, Cadw, FC and WDA – membership of Wales Landscape Partnership.
- With FC – membership of Wales Woodland Strategy Working Group; and joint sponsorship of Coed Cymru.
- With Cadw – production of Register of Historical Landscapes.
- With WDA – joint funding of some unitary authorities of Landmap'; and collaboration over 'design guides'.

3. IMPROVING ACCESS AND RECREATION

Countryside Council for Wales	Environment Agency	Forestry Commission	National Park Authorities	Unitary Authorities
Statutory duty to encourage the provision or improvement of facilities for the public enjoyment of the countryside, including opportunities for open-air recreation. Activities include:	Promotion of recreational use of inland and coastal waters; and best recreational use of Agency owned land and associated waters [Specific role as Navigation Authority for the Dee Estuary – relevant for both recreational boating and commercial shipping]	Commitment to maintain and promote public access, including sporting activities, to forests and woods in a complementary way on the FC and private woodland holdings	Statutory purpose to promote enjoyment in NPs	
Preparation, consultation and review of maps on 'open country' including responsibilities under CROW Act in respect of closures and restrictions				
Provision of advice to NaIW and others on all aspects of open air recreation and public access to the coasts and countryside				
Securing access arrangements on National Nature Reserves and through Tir Cymen and Tir Gofal		Management of Forest Parks, Woodland parks and network of visitor centres, forest trails, cycle routes, and picnic places	Management of heritage coasts	
Designation of, setting management standards for, long distance routes (National Trails); and support to local authorities for managing Trails and improving public rights of way (ProW)		Provision of grant aid to private woodland sector to secure and improve access	General maintenance of PRoW	Statutory duty to define, maintain and promote PRoW

Other examples of partnership work between CCW and others:

- With FC – agreed approach to CROW Act implementation; joint management works at some key sites; joint management of 'Countryside and Coasts' Objective 1 Plan.
- With planning authorities, ASPBs, NGOs, landowners and occupiers to promote recreation and access through membership of National Access Forum.
- With unitary authorities – agreed annual programmes of PROW improvements and other initiatives under CROW.

- With Wales Tourist Board – in delivering integrated tourism, leisure and environmental projects as part of NAW's Rural Recovery Plan
-

4. IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING

Countryside Council for Wales	Environment Agency	Forestry Commission	National Park Authorities	Unitary Authorities
Duty and powers to disseminate knowledge; foster understanding, and provide opportunities for the study of nature. Activities include:	Similar statutory duty Specific duty to form opinion on the general state of pollution of the environment Responsibilities to compile data on fish stocks and data on wildlife relevant to water management duties and to publish reports on the state of contaminated land	Statutory remit to develop the educational potential of the FC estate		
Provision of general environmental information services to the public	Duties and roles above rolled out within wide ranging state of the environment reports			
Provision of advice and grant aid to other parties		Provision of grant aid in private woodlands to develop education opportunities		
Developing education potential of NNRs		Promotion of Forest Education initiative to use woodland as an educational resource for young people and lifelong learning opportunities		

Other examples of partnership work between CCW and others:

- With EA and FC – joint production of 'State of the Environment' Report; development of Environmental Education Programme; and membership of Wales Environmental Interpretation Group.
- With FC – joint interpretation at some 'shared sites'.

Other functions carried out by Environment Agency and planning authorities

	Environment Agency Wales	Unitary authorities	National Park Authorities	Forestry Commission
Fisheries	• Rod licensing • Responding to fish in distress • Monitoring fisheries quality • Consenting fish introductions			
Water Resources	• Managing groundwater and surface water through licensing all abstractions; monitoring the water cycle; and planning future water use	• Ensuring private water supply quality • Key consideration in Development Plan and Development Control	• Key consideration in Development Plan and Development Control	Management of the FC estate in compliance with Forest Water Guidelines.
Surface water	• Licensing discharges to surface waters • Responding to pollution incidents • Routine monitoring and reporting • Pollution prevention	• Health and safety aspects	• Key Development Plan and Development Control consideration	
Groundwater	• Regulating nitrate vulnerable zones • Regulating special contaminated land site (future) • Enforcement of Groundwater Regulations	• Compiling contaminated land registers (future)	• Key Development Plan and Development Control consideration	
Flooding	• Provision of effective flood warning service • Maintaining, operating and improving flood defences • Supervising, regulating and influencing actions of others		• Key Development Plan and Development Control consideration	
Air	• Regulation of large industrial processes (e.g. power stations)	• Regulation of smaller industrial processes • Traffic generated air quality • Air Quality Management Plans	• Key Development Plan and Development Control consideration	
Waste	• Regulation of carriage, treatment and disposal of controlled waste • Shared responsibility with unitary authorities regarding illegal fly-tipping of waste • Promotion of waste recovery and minimisation	• Waste Planning Authority • Collection and disposal services for municipal waste • Identification of future waste disposal sites of incinerators • Litter control; local municipal waste recycling	• Waste Planning Authority	
Radioactive substances	• Regulation of sites • Regulation of sites discharging radioactive substances (e.g. hospitals) • Regulation of nuclear sites			
Hazardous substances		• Hazardous substances planning authority	• Hazardous substances planning authority	

Appendix 9: Partnership linkages between CCW, ASPBs and other bodies

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Appendix 9: Partnership linkages between CCW and other bodies

During its consideration of the interim report, the Environment Planning and Transport Committee requested a diagram showing the linkages between CCW and other associated bodies.

The diagram, showing the responsibilities of CCW and those of other selected organisations as well as aspects of joint activity between them, will be issued in the near future.