

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 3 July 2002

Time: 2.00 to 5.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

Key Achievements 2001/02

1. Despite Foot and Mouth, of the 27 Key Targets set for the year, 23 were met with 6 of these being exceeded. 3 targets were partially met and 1 target has been postponed, by agreement, until 2002-03.
2. The key achievements for the year were:

Protecting the Natural Environment

Notifying 49 Sites of Special Scientific Interest underpinning Special Areas of Conservation that the Assembly has put forward to Europe.

Whole farm agreements were gained on 38,000ha of land. Cumulative total for the first two years of the Tir Gofal scheme is 76,000ha of land (4.5% of agricultural land in Wales).

Completed mapping of the wildlife sites of 66% of our coastline.

Secured Management Agreements for SSSI on over 15,000ha of land.

Produced 100 Site Management Statements on SSSI, as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

Produced 85 Site issue Briefings (in collaboration with Environment Agency Wales) to conform to European Habitats Directive.

Progressed work on over 100 Habitat and Species Action Plans as our contribution to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Completed 20 Audits of our National Nature Reserves, to ensure high management standards

Brought 194,00ha of sea, designated as SAC, into environmentally sensitive management schemes, working closely with partners.

Improving the Natural Environment

Extended our partnership work on *LANDMAP* to 20 Local Authorities.

Produced guidance for AONBs for preparation and implementation of management plans.

Successfully distributed over £200,000 EDF funding in AONBs

Established a species challenge fund, to encourage partners to commence the implementation of a further 19 species action plans under UK BAP.

Stimulated the preparation/ publication of 22 Local Biodiversity Action Plans

Supporting Sustainable Economic Development

Advised on over 4000 items of casework, including development proposals seeking to ensure that they were sustainable.

Developed 2 regional Objective 1 proposals and supported partners with many more.

Through agreements with landowners and our other grant aid programmes, injected over £15million into the rural economy.

Promoting Understanding and Enjoyment of the Natural Environment

Funded Local Authority programmes to open, manage and publicise over 400 km's of Public Rights of Way (PROW).

Through grant aid, supported 13 projects promoting the Walking the Way to Health initiative in partnership with the British Heart Foundation.

In partnership with others, arranged the opening of Glyndŵr's Way as Wales's 3rd National Walking Trail.

Published and distributed best practice guidance for Local Access Fora

Initiated consultation on Open Access land for 22% of the land area of Wales, as required by the CROW Act.

CCW's Vision for the Future

3 Within the next 10 years, we are determined to achieve a significant improvement in the Welsh natural environment and therefore in the quality of life of people in Wales and the quality of the experience of people who visit Wales. We want:

- a Wales that is more distinctive in landscape character and includes greater biodiversity
- our land and sea supporting more wildlife and their habitats
- economic development that respects the natural environment, including its historical and cultural aspects.
- a Wales in which there is greater access to countryside and coast for all its people and visitors, giving enjoyment and well being

Delivering the Vision – the Main Challenges for the Next Three Years

- Safeguard and enhance Welsh wildlife and landscape, worth around £9 billion to the people of Wales.
- Ensure that SAC and SSSI are properly managed, thereby safeguarding Objective 1 funds.
- Increase the area of farmland under environmental management through Tir Gofal.
- Improve the standard of environmental education and interpretation, engaging all the people of Wales (in both rural and urban areas) in gaining their support to meet the challenges we face.

- Implementing Biodiversity Action Plans relevant to Wales.
- By 2005, have in place all measures for new access to the countryside as required by Countryside and Rights of Way Act
- Implement our Sustainable Development Action Plan including becoming the Assembly's leading body on greening by 2005.
- Further develop the potential and capacity of our partners through technical and financial support

Working towards joint objectives

6 Working through partners is one of our key delivery mechanisms. We distribute over £15 million through our partners in grants and agreements. Key partners include:

- 22 Unitary Authorities eg implementation of CROW Open Access provisions, *LANDMAP* and LBAPs
- 3 National Park Authorities eg developing Objective 1 funded environmental grant schemes
- 5 AONBs – management plans and the Environmental Development Fund
- 9,000 SSSI owners
- 1,000 Tir Cymen agreement holders and over 750 Tir Gofal agreement holders
- The Wales LINK organisation and its constituent voluntary sector organisations
- EAW and FC eg State of the Environment reports and joint environmental education initiative
- WCVA and HLF eg The Balchder Bro/ Local Distinctiveness initiative
- BHF and NOF eg The Walking the Way to Health initiative
- Management of National Nature Reserves by partners

On behalf of the people of the people of Wales, we care for one of our main economic assets - the natural environment. It is also the cornerstone of the health of our nation.

Our role is to protect and enhance Wales' countryside and coastline, addressing the activities that may adversely affect it. This Plan sets out our work for the next three years in more detail, explaining what we can achieve both with existing resources and with additional funding.

One of our main priorities over the last few years has been to put in place a suite of sites of European importance in terms of their conservation status - a requirement that Wales must satisfy in order to access European funding under Objective 1. Notifying sites, however, is only the start of the process. The Habitats Directive requires that these sites are properly managed, with a reporting regime on conservation status that Wales must satisfy. We therefore make the case to retain for this work the staff we originally engaged to notify these sites and for

additional funds for partnerships with landowners to manage them on behalf of the nation

We have also helped the Assembly develop and expand the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme and we are refining its implementation. Through this scheme, we have succeeded in bringing a significant proportion of Wales' farmland under environmentally sensitive management, whilst making a substantial contribution to the rural economy.

This Plan seeks the resources to secure the management of all our designated sites and the continued expansion of Tir Gofal. We will then start to see the benefit of significant blocks of land under sympathetic management, the further development of traditional rural industries and a reversal in the decline of biodiversity – itself an indicator of sustainability. With the requested level of funding, we will be able to bring under sensitive management a further 8% of the land area of Wales by 2006. Research on Tir Cymen, the scheme's precursor, shows that such investment will help secure the viability of many existing - and catalyse the creation of new - rural businesses.

We also make the case for a significant acceleration to the work that we undertake in increasing public understanding of, and thereby care for, our natural wealth. The problems of global warming and climate change will only be fully addressed when we all recognise the need to modify our behaviour, in learning to live differently and in greater sympathy with our natural environment. We recognise that to achieve this goal we need to engage a wider audience, particularly the urban-based communities, and to influence further the education process.

A further major work area will be delivering the access provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to maximise the potential benefits to affected communities. Access to the countryside is crucial to rural economies, as demonstrated by the impact of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak. Our environment is relatively more important to the Welsh economy than is the case with other UK economies, and has further economic potential. Green tourism is one specific area from which rural Wales in particular could reap greater benefit. We will also continue to promote the benefits to health of getting out into our magnificent countryside.

Very little of our work is delivered by us alone and our capacity to work with partners is the subject of a further bid, as increasing the capacity of our partners to help us achieve our goals is crucial to the successful delivery of our work programme.

The next three years will provide us with an opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, build on the outcome of the review of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries legislation, and work to ensure that the potential for a more holistic approach to flood and water management is realised in Wales. This work has the potential to benefit many habitats and species in Wales. Our involvement will increase substantially, year on year, during the life of the Plan.

We are the first ASPB to submit a Sustainable Development Action Plan to the Assembly, which commits us to working towards a series of demanding targets in respect of our own operations over the period of this Plan. We will also seek to influence others and will help to develop, through partners, small-scale renewable energy generation projects, whilst working with developers to identify optimum locations for larger scale schemes. Both will move society towards more sustainable living.

We have expanded rapidly over the last few years to deliver additional work generated largely from EC legislation. We now need to consolidate our position, invest in our infrastructure, including upgrading our IT systems and regrouping our Head Office to one site. Unless we are able to do this it will be difficult for us to address properly some of the issues arising from our Quinquennial review, including those relating to better integration between our staff, improved internal communications and sharing information more effectively with partners whilst improving the services we offer customers in keeping with the Modernising Government agenda.

We also make the case for our funding to keep pace with inflation. In the past, we have been expected to absorb inflation through efficiency measures, but after many years of doing this we are now experiencing a decline (in real terms) in our ongoing programmes. We will continue to ensure that our staff enjoy equal opportunities for all, flexible working practices, and a healthy work place. Our commitment to our staff is reflected in our role as one of the pilot organisations taking forward the Assembly's Work-Life Balance initiative.

Priority Targets
By 2006, to secure the management by partners of an additional 30,000ha of wildlife habitat.
By 2006, to admit an additional 150,000ha of farmland to Tir Gofal
By 2005, have in place all measures for new access to the countryside
By 2006, to develop 8 exemplar National Nature Reserves for sustainability awareness

Develop new initiatives to engage the urban population in our natural environment.

Expand the capacity of our partners to achieve our objectives

Develop catchment based management projects to protect our rivers, lakes and seas

Pilot new models of integrated rural development

By 2005, to become the Assembly's exemplar "green" ASPB

By 2005, to have a unified HQ and modernised infrastructure.

Summary Bids (in priority order)	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
	£	£	£
Baseline*	34.153	34.153	34.153
Unconsolidated funding and unavoidable costs	1.775	3.130	4.598
Bids:			
Management & Monitoring of Designated Sites	2.527	3.994	5.939

Getting our Message Across	2.303	2.473	2.625
Access and Enjoyment of the Countryside	0.327	0.720	1.076
Grants – Increasing Partnership Capacity	0.615	1.335	2.111
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	0.164	0.272	0.321
Marine / Fresh Water	0.901	1.304	1.557
Landscape Protection & Rural Development	0.260	1.255	1.294
Modernising Government / Greening	0.324	0.335	0.348
Improving CCW's Infrastructure	3.629	2.192	1.145
TOTAL BIDS	11.050	13.880	16.416
* excluding £2m Tir Gofal running costs			

Tir Gofal			
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
	£	£	£
Baseline*	16.880	16.880	16.880
Bids	1.431	7.435	18.399
* including £2m Tir Gofal running costs			

