

## Environment and Sustainability Committee

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Meeting Venue:  
**Committee Room 3 – Senedd**

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Meeting date:  
**15 January 2014**

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Meeting time:  
**09:30**

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Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



For further information please contact:

**Alun Davidson**  
Committee Clerk  
029 2089 8639  
[ES.comm@wales.gov.uk](mailto:ES.comm@wales.gov.uk)

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### Agenda

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#### **1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions**

#### **2 Sustainable Land Management: RSPB Cymru and Wildlife Trusts Wales (09.30 – 10.45)** (Pages 1 - 29)

E&S(4)-01-14 paper 1 : RSPB Cymru

E&S(4)-01-14 paper 2 : Wildlife Trusts Wales

Arfon Williams, Countryside Manager, RSPB Cymru  
Annie Smith, Sustainable Development Manager, RSPB Cymru  
Rachel Sharp, Chief Executive, Wildlife Trusts Wales  
James Byrne, Living Landscapes Advocacy Manager, Wildlife Trusts Wales

**Break 10.45 – 11.00**

#### **3 Sustainable Land Management: National Parks Wales and The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (11.00–11.45)** (Pages 30 - 55)

E&S(4)-01-14 paper 3 : National Parks Wales

E&S(4)-01-14 paper 4 : Brecon Beacons National Park

E&S(4)-01-14 paper 5 : National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Julian Atkins, Director of Countryside and Land Management, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority  
Geraint Jones, Farm Conservation Officer, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Authority

Chris Lindley, Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Officer

#### **4 Environment Bill White Paper: National Parks Wales and The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (11.45–12.30)**

Julian Atkins, Director of Countryside and Land Management, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Paul Sinnadurai, Conservation Manager, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Chris Lindley, Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Officer

#### **5 Papers to note**

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December

#### **Letter from the Minister for Natural Resources and Food – Common Agricultural Policy : Transfer of budgets between pillars (Pages 56 - 57)**

E&S(4)-01-14 paper 6

#### **Letter from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport – Proposals for the M4 around Newport (Pages 58 - 64)**

E&S(4)-01-14 paper 7

# Agenda Item 2

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**Evidence from RSPB Cymru to the Environment & Sustainability Committee  
Inquiry into Sustainable Land Management  
September 2013**

RSPB Cymru is part of the RSPB, the country's largest nature conservation charity. The RSPB works together with our partners, to protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. We play a leading role in BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations. The RSPB has over 1 million members, including more than 51,000 living in Wales.

**Introduction**

Sustainable land management is a vast subject that cuts across many policy areas encompassing a broad range of activities. In order to achieve this aim the Welsh Government must ensure sustainable development truly is its central organising principle. As well as ensuring its own land use decisions are set in this context the Welsh Government must use all the tools available to it – legislation, policy and guidance, and financial agreements – to ensure the wider public sector and private land managers contribute.

Fundamental to this is an understanding of what sustainable development means and how to apply it in practice. Genuine integration of environmental, economic and societal concerns to achieve sustainable outcomes is an enormous challenge, but one the Welsh Government must address in order to meet its sustainability commitments. The focus of this submission is the environmental aspect; the approach needed if we are to secure the healthy, flourishing environment that is central to the wellbeing of current and future generations.

RSPB Cymru is critically concerned that the Welsh Government risks eroding environmental protection in favour of a drive for economic growth at all costs. This move would be very short-sighted given the findings of a 2001 study<sup>1</sup> that the environment contributed £8.8 billion of goods and services annually to the Welsh economy, 9% of Welsh GDP and one in six Welsh jobs. This report valued traditional market benefits and did not attempt to put a value on ecosystem services, the actual value of the Welsh environment can therefore be assumed to be far greater. We urge the Committee to ensure this inquiry fully explores the importance of restoring our deteriorating natural environment to the overall goal of sustainable land management.

RSPB Cymru welcomes the Committee's timely inquiry into Sustainable Land Management. We hope the Committee will consider the forthcoming policy development opportunities, including those within the Welsh Government's legislative programme to ensure the natural environment is brought to the forefront of Welsh Government thinking, and to secure the appropriate delivery tools.

RSPB Cymru believes that sustainable land management in Wales:

- Should maintain and restore functioning biodiverse ecosystems, supporting resilient dynamic populations of the wealth of species and habitats found in Wales.
- Should support green jobs and vibrant rural communities based around sustainable provision of ecosystem services including food production.
- Must be governed by an ecosystem approach, which considers the real value of biodiversity and the benefits that arise from a healthy environment

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<sup>1</sup> The Valuing Our Environment study, 2001 (Countryside Council for Wales and the National Trust)

- Should be measured by the extent to which the Welsh Government delivers its legal obligations and commitments with regard to the environment, including those on biodiversity, water and climate change.

Sustainable land management does not stop in the countryside or at the coast, we must recognise the interrelations between rural and urban areas. This must include sustainable management of green space within urban areas, built development must be designed to minimise environmental impact and we must strive to enhance the connectivity of the wider countryside.

## **1. What is sustainable land management?**

The definition of sustainable development set out in, 'One Wales: One Planet', includes "enhancing the natural and cultural environment and respecting its limits - using only our fair share of the earth's resources and sustaining our cultural legacy." The concept of environmental limits may seem a challenging one, but put simply, a society that lives within environmental limits is one that will not tolerate continuing biodiversity loss; will not cause climate chaos; will not deplete or degrade finite natural resources, such as water, soils and minerals; and will not allow the erosion of ecosystems that support human needs, at home or abroad.

Targets set or committed to by the Welsh Government in legislation, policy and international agreements to prevent further deterioration and restore the environment are core to our ambitions to live within environmental limits and thereby achieve sustainability. Such targets include the EU commitment to, "Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020," and the Welsh Government commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2020 (a staging post on the way to the 80% reduction by 2050 target set out in UK law), as well as those set out in numerous European Directives and national strategies. Our progress towards achieving these targets provides a critical measure of whether we are achieving sustainable land management.

As the Committee will be aware, in May, twenty-five of the UK's leading wildlife organisations launched the *State of Nature* report, the first health check for UK nature. The report presented the grim facts regarding how nature is faring in the UK, and how we are failing to address the ongoing declines in biodiversity. In Wales, more than one in six plants are threatened, 63% of butterflies are in decline and numbers of breeding upland wading birds including lapwing, curlew and golden plover have declined by more than three quarters in recent decades. These declines are strongly linked to fragmentation, and deterioration in quality, of habitat. Around 60% of designated sites in upland areas are classed as being in unfavourable condition. Woodland, which once covered much of Wales, now covers only 14% of the land surface, of this only 4% is semi-natural woodland the remaining 10% consists of non native conifer species. Lowland meadows in Wales declined by around 97% between the 1930's and 1984. The urgency to recover our habitats and the wildlife which depend on them is clear.

The Welsh Government is currently failing to meet a number of requirements under EU Directives, such as:

- 70% of water bodies in Wales are failing to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.
- 61% of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's), designated under EU Legislation are in unfavourable condition.
- Wild bird populations continue to decline, despite the Birds Directive requirement to maintain them by securing habitat, both within and outside of protected areas:
  - 32 of the 51 Principal Biodiversity Bird species are declining, including golden plover, which has declined by more than 80% in Wales in recent decades.
  - In 2012, the Farmland Bird Index fell to a record 19% below its 1994 value.

As the *State of Nature* report points out, the data we hold on the species and habitats of Wales gives an undeniable picture of declines. However, the data available only allowed an assessment to be made of 3,148 species; partly because many species are so rare that it is difficult to obtain data through existing monitoring sufficient to understand how and why they are declining. Therefore, to implement sustainable land management, as well as taking urgent action based on what we know, we must also strive to increase our knowledge and understanding of nature in Wales.

In addition to increasing our understanding of the environment, when referring to a baseline from which to measure progress it is important to recognise that current population levels and habitat distribution are the

result of years of environmental degradation, and in many cases do not represent healthy functioning ecosystems, merely fragmented remnant populations of a much wider historical distribution.

### **1.1 Steps to ensure Sustainable Land Management:**

- **The Welsh Government should work with RSPB Cymru and other voluntary organisations to improve the quality and accessibility of data and information on Welsh species and habitats. This is vital to inform the locations and timeliness of actions to halt the loss of wildlife and how to best effect nature’s recovery.**
- **The forthcoming Future Generations Bill must recognise the protection and enhancement of the natural environment as a key outcome of sustainable development and make provisions to ensure the public sector understands its role in delivering it.**
- **The development of a Biodiversity Strategy with a clear, focused, and funded plan to affect nature’s recovery. It is important that we have an effective plan in place as soon as possible.**

## **2. Achieving Sustainable Land Management**

There are a number of areas that will be fundamental to achieving sustainable land management in Wales, and RSPB Cymru feels the following are key:

### **2.1 Building Ecological Resilience in the Countryside.**

The ecosystem approach has been much discussed in the Assembly in recent years since the publication of the Natural Environment Framework – the Welsh Government’s response to failure to meet the 2010 biodiversity target – and has latterly been described as “natural resources management”.

#### **Ecosystem Services**

Key ecosystems for Wales as set out in the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA) included Mountains, Moorlands & Heaths; Woodlands, Semi-natural Grasslands and Enclosed Farmland.

Ecosystem services are “the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living”. They are the aspects of ecosystems that are utilised (either actively or passively) to produce human wellbeing (physical and mental health). Key ecosystem services in Wales include climate regulation through carbon sequestration, flood regulation, water quality regulation, erosion control, recreation and tourism, aesthetic values, cultural heritage and health benefits.

The UK NEA recognised that many of our ecosystems are depleted and are unable to provide ecosystem services to their full potential. Biodiversity is not currently viewed as being of monetary value, when in reality biodiversity is key to the functioning of the ecosystems on which the Welsh economy depends. Biodiversity is fundamental to ensuring fully functioning, resilient ecosystems, and thereby ecosystem services, for example sphagnum mosses are essential for the creation of blanket bogs, which in turn are critical for the water and carbon services they provide. Soil microorganisms are vital in ensuring continued soil fertility that maintains agriculture and woodlands are key in managing water flow thereby alleviating flood risk.

The Convention on Biological Diversity describes the ecosystem approach as “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way”. The ecosystem approach is central to achieving sustainable land management, and we suggest the following two goals are fundamental:

- Better integration of natural environment priorities, with each other and across the policy spectrum
- The need to scale-up conservation efforts, to restore nature throughout the countryside and enable it to adapt in the face of climate change.

### **2.2 Better integration of natural environment priorities**

The creation of Natural Resources Wales should signify a major opportunity for wildlife, given that the statutory body responsible for nature conservation is now one and the same as the body responsible for managing the Welsh Government’s woodland estate and delivering other major operations on the ground such as flood management works. We suggest that critical measures of the value of merging the three

bodies, and of progress towards sustainable land management, include: the delivery of biodiversity priorities through management of the Welsh Government estate, including the public forest estate and National Nature Reserves; and the extent to which flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes protect and restore biodiversity. The Welsh Government estate should be a focal point for exemplary management, delivering biodiversity gain alongside other ecosystem services.

The wider challenge, of integrating the needs of the natural environment across the policy spectrum, in part depends on Natural Resources Wales robustly fulfilling its role as protector and champion of the natural environment. If the Welsh Government and other decision makers (such as local authorities) are to make land-use decisions that are sustainable in the long term, they must be supplied with robust, evidence-based advice on potential environmental impacts.

As the Committee knows, RSPB Cymru is concerned that the statutory purpose of NRW – and, particularly, the way it is interpreted by others - could impede the organisation's ability to give such advice and provide environmental leadership in Wales. RSPB Cymru is very disappointed that the Welsh Government has to date not honoured its commitments to provide guidance clarifying NRW's purpose.

Through the Natural Environment Framework, and latterly the Natural Resources Management Programme, the Welsh Government has developed a tool to help decision makers, or people designing plans or strategies, to take proper account of ecosystems in their decisions. In particular, this aims to enhance understanding of the value of ecosystem services and help to ensure that the true value of the natural environment is considered. As such, it could add value to the important environmental assessments that are already required by law (such as Strategic Environmental Assessment). The Committee may wish to explore how the Natural Resources Management Programme has promoted, or intends to promote, this tool for use by all Welsh Government departments.

The existence of government policies or programmes that fail to recognise the imperative to contribute to restoration of the natural environment, or indeed actively contribute to biodiversity decline, represents failure to achieve sustainable land management. An example of this would be recent Welsh Government support shown for the development of a new stretch of M4 motorway across the Gwent Levels. As well as damaging the suite of Gwent Levels Sites of Special Scientific Interest (consisting of seven SSSI's across both the Gwent and Cardiff Levels), this would promote further environmental degradation from increased carbon emissions by encouraging car use and through construction of the new road.

### **2.3 The need to scale up conservation efforts**

Protected sites provide the cornerstone for the conservation of many species and habitats that contribute to healthy functioning ecosystems; as such, they are fundamental to sustainable land management. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) and Special Protection Areas (SPA's) cover around 30%, or 620,000ha, of Wales' land and waters and are designated to safeguard the environment and biodiversity of Wales for present and future generations.

A 2006 study of Wales' suite of SSSI's by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) revealed that 68% of the sites were in unfavourable condition, and 71% of notified habitat features were in unfavourable condition. A further CCW report from June 2010 stated more than 60% of SAC's were in unfavourable condition. Progress to address this has been alarmingly slow, with Wales falling significantly behind England in this area. Besides being critical to the health of our biodiversity, this means this is a key area where Wales is failing to deliver its commitments under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Furthermore, research has shown that the value of SSSIs, in terms of the ecosystem services they provide, is more than 8 times the cost, with a further £103 million in potential benefits if all SSSI sites in Wales were in favourable condition.

While protected sites provide the cornerstone, overall sustainable land management will not be achieved unless action is taken to protect, manage and restore habitat outside the current site network, turning our series of protected sites into a truly ecologically resilient network. Progress towards wider ecological resilience requires: buffering of protected sites with areas of favourable management delivered through agri-environment schemes or other management agreements; better protection of locally important sites through planning and other land management systems; reconnecting of fragmented habitats; and management of the wider countryside to make it more favourable to wildlife.

The EU Birds and Habitats Directives (as transposed through recently updated Regulations) include requirements for member states to protect and restore habitat in the wider countryside. The proposals emerging on the Environment Bill include the concept of area based planning for natural resources. This new process should be focused on helping NRW deliver the Welsh Government's obligations under international biodiversity commitments as well as the Birds, Habitats and other Directives, in order to build up this wider ecological resilience in support of sustainable land management.

## **2.4 Landscape-scale Approach.**

RSPB Cymru is committed to 'scaling up' sustainable land management, and demonstrating best practice in the application of the ecosystem approach. For this reason we have identified large areas of the Welsh countryside and coast where we are focusing efforts on partnership delivery of environmental management. This is our landscape-scale conservation work programme, referred to as 'Futurescapes'. RSPB Cymru is currently working in close partnership on three landscape-scale conservation initiatives, which in combination cover 14% of the Welsh terrestrial area. These include:

- North Wales Moors Futurescape - an extensive upland area stretching from Blaenau Ffestiniog in the west to Wrexham in the east.
- Three Rivers Futurescape – the Carmarthenshire coast and valleys, with an emphasis on wetland management, livestock farming and tourism.
- Gwent Levels Futurescape – a distinctive coastal floodplain grazing marsh with an historic wetland system, on the edge of Cardiff and Newport.

We are working with other leading conservation organisations, community groups, statutory agencies and local authorities to design projects that target environmental management where it matters most, whilst supporting local economies.

In applying the ecosystem approach, RSPB Cymru and our partners are working towards a model that integrates dialogue with relevant interest groups at key stages. We are developing and implementing a range of projects from upland habitat restoration that delivers catchment management improvements, to targeted landowner engagement on sensitive wetlands. We believe our landscape-scale partnerships are a positive vehicle to deliver sustainable land management solutions, garner community support, and promote best practice to a wider audience.

## **2.5 Steps to ensure Sustainable Land Management:**

- **We recommend protected site management to achieve favourable condition is fast-tracked. Protected sites, both terrestrial and within the marine environment, are critical for much of our priority biodiversity and provide the backbone of an ecosystem based approach. Research has valued the ecosystem services provided by SSSIs at several times the cost of protecting them.**
- **We recommend working towards building an ecologically resilient network across Wales to provide resilience for species and habitats in the face of increasing pressures including climate change. Welsh Government land has a vital role to play.**
- **A key purpose of the Environment Bill, including proposals on area based natural resource planning, should be improved delivery of domestic, EU and international biodiversity commitments and legal obligations.**
- **We recommend a clarified role for NRW as providing leadership for Wales' nature. We need robust expert advice on environmental impacts so decision makers can ensure their decisions do not adversely impact on biodiversity, or, on the occasions when they do, that appropriate remedial action is taken.**
- **We also need NRW to lead by example, securing biodiversity gains through its management of Government-owned land and through its roles in, for example, providing and maintaining flood defences. The body has a major role in ensuring the recovery of nature.**
- **We recommend support for landscape-scale conservation partnerships, as a cost effective mechanism to deliver integrated sustainable land management, effectively pooling the resources of organisations and landowners.**



### **3. Innovative tools to support sustainable land management**

As Welsh Government failed to meet the 2010 target of halting biodiversity loss, and existing initiatives such as agri-environment schemes have failed to halt the decline in biodiversity there is a need to develop new and innovative measures for conserving the species and habitats that ensure healthy functioning ecosystems.

#### **3.1 Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)**

PES could be a mechanism for attracting investment in sustainable land management to Wales, and there are a number of successful examples below that demonstrate the potential benefits of PES. As mentioned above there are a multitude of services provided by the environment. Wales is well placed to be a major player in terms of carbon sequestration, water quality and flood regulation, as well as further improving the already economically important tourism and recreation industries.

The presence of substantial areas of blanket bog in the uplands of Wales provides an opportunity to pursue PES as a mechanism for attracting investment, by maintaining and restoring degraded peat in the uplands of Wales to increase carbon sequestration, water quality improvements and flood alleviation. Water companies could be encouraged to invest and support landowners within their catchments to reduce management practices that impact on water quality, reducing the need for expensive treatment down the line. The benefits of this approach have been demonstrated by the Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP) developed by the RSPB and United Utilities in North West England, and the EU Life Blanket Bog project at RSPB's Lake Vyrnwy reserve in Mid Wales.

Agri-environment schemes are a widely used example of PES; public funds are used to purchase wider services, such as biodiversity, from land managers which include supplementary water and carbon benefits. By securing markets for the wider benefits provided through sustainable land management such as carbon and water, agri-environment funding can be focussed on supporting biodiversity.

#### **3.2 Conservation covenants**

Conservation covenants are agreements between a landowner and responsible body (charity, public body or local/central Government) to do or not do something on their land for a conservation purpose. The Law Commission has recently consulted on the possibility of introducing conservation covenants into law for England and Wales. These agreements are long lasting and continue after the landowner has parted with the land, ensuring that its conservation value is protected for the public benefit in perpetuity. Conservation covenants could be a useful mechanism for protecting habitats and species and securing ecosystem functions across the wider countryside. Conservation covenants have been successfully introduced outside of the UK including in Australia and Canada.

In countries where conservation covenants are widely used they have been linked to funding streams that have helped realise the potential benefits. This provides an incentive to the landowner whilst securing long term public benefits, and can contribute to the landscape scale conservation required for successful sustainable land management to be implemented.

#### **3.3 Steps to ensure Sustainable Land Management:**

- **We recommend an ecosystem based approach to managing the marine environment, integrated with new terrestrial measures being developed, through implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. We will need to ensure healthy resilient habitats from which to derive ecosystem services.**
- **We recommend new tools to support nature's recovery - the Future Generations Bill, the Planning Reform Bill and the Environment Bill all have roles to play in making clear the Welsh Government's, and wider public sector's, role in protecting nature, ensuring no net loss of priority species and habitats, and working to secure net gain.**

## **4. Agriculture**

Over 70% of Wales falls under some kind of agricultural management, and we contend that farming is dependent on a healthy natural environment across Wales to ensure its survival as an industry. Without functioning water and nutrient cycles, Welsh agricultural land will become unable to support farming. It is therefore in the interests of farmers to develop and adopt sustainable practices to ensure the resilience of their industry. There has been much talk recently of improving food security but surely securing the basic building blocks of farming, soil and water, is fundamental to guaranteeing food security.

There are farmers across Wales who already use sustainable practices, particularly extensive livestock systems that, as well as producing high quality food, provide homes for much of our wildlife and additional benefits, such as maintaining water quality and locking up carbon. These High Nature Value (HNV) farmers have traditionally received minimal levels of support, but rewarding these HNV farmers would support sustainable land management and provide a wealth of public services, as well as maintaining resilience through the diverse mosaic of habitats they support.

Rather than seeing farming areas in Wales that are unsuitable for maximum agricultural production in a negative light, we need to look at the public services these areas offer, including biodiversity, carbon storage and water quality, and reward the contribution these farms make to environmental resilience. These upland and marginal area farms are also instrumental in forming many of our iconic landscapes which support thriving and economically critical tourism and recreation industries.

There are a number of tools that should be used to ensure sustainable land management is adhered to in Wales. Unfortunately, some of these tools have been inadequately implemented and enforced such as Cross Compliance and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (Agriculture) Wales regulations. The results of this are demonstrated by the continued bird declines shown in the Farmland Bird Index and continued negative impacts on water quality.

### **4.1 Glastir**

Glastir, the Welsh Government's agri environment scheme, has suffered from limited take-up and fails to guarantee delivery of the full package of ecological requirements for species. Despite the popularity of agri-environment schemes amongst farmers, many are reluctant to participate in Glastir due to the poor design and delivery of the scheme. Poor scheme design has also severely reduced Glastir's ability to deliver for the targeted bird species (and probably other taxa), as barriers within the scheme prevent appropriate habitat management.

Many farms in Wales support multiple priority habitats and/or species. However, there appears to be a reluctance to establish agreements within Glastir that deliver benefits for all or the majority of habitats and species that may be present on a farm.

As discussed above, there is a current lack of support for HNV farmers who, as well as producing high quality food, provide a variety of public services and important habitat for some of Wales' iconic species, such as the increasingly-threatened lapwing and curlew. Unless HNV farmers are adequately rewarded for the protection and enhancement of environmental public goods they provide, the future of these farming systems hangs in the balance along with the livelihoods of these farmers and the survival of the rural communities they inhabit.

### **4.2 Steps to ensure Sustainable Land Management:**

- **We recommend Welsh Government ensures adequate funding is available for agri-environment schemes, by transferring the maximum 15% from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2 of the CAP. These funds must be used to provide the maximum public benefit through delivery of environmental obligations and should not be used to reinstate untargeted natural constraints support payments.**
- **We recommend the forthcoming Glastir review, provides an effective and integrated package of support [with Pillar 1 obligations and payments] to enable farmers to deliver genuine environmental enhancements.**

- **We recommend management practices undertaken as a result of joining Glastir must provide genuine environmental benefits, and agreements that require farmers to undertake few or no changes to their management practices on holdings of low environmental value must be avoided.**
- **We recommend that Glastir implementation must lead to the delivery of the full ecological requirements of priority wildlife at a scale and complexity that will protect and enhance diverse populations of priority habitats and species.**
- **We recommend greater recognition and reward for High Nature Value farmers who provide a variety of public services alongside food production.**
- **We recommend Improved enforcement of existing environmental legislation, such as the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Wales) Regulations 2007 (uncultivated land or semi-natural areas). We also need to make better use of tools like EIA and SEA to design truly sustainable projects, integrating environmental considerations from the earliest stage.**

Consideration should also be given to the impacts of unsustainable land management on the wider ecosystem, especially if the Welsh Government is aiming to truly deliver an ecosystem based approach. For example, while management systems tend not to cross the interface between land and sea, ecosystems do. High nutrient and e-coli loading associated with run-off negatively impacts shellfisheries within the same river basin catchment area. High e-coli loading can reduce the value of shellfish either directly, or indirectly requiring expensive “dressing” to be undertaken prior to sale of the product on the open market. Tourism is also adversely affected, with e-coli counts determining whether a beach retains or achieves blue flag status under the bathing water directive. Loss of this status can negatively affect local tourism and associated business. Unsustainable land management will hinder Welsh Government in delivering GES under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and Water Framework Directive (WFD). Descriptor 5 under the MSFD requires administrations to address anthropogenic factors such as induced increased river nutrient loads, resulting in eutrophic effects in the marine environment, which in turn can negatively impact other industries such as commercial fishing and tourism.

## **5. Wider Value of Sustainable Land Management.**

Sustainable land management has wider social and economic benefits, both tourism and recreation largely depend on the natural environment of Wales. Maintaining and improving Wales’ natural environment should have significant benefits for both industries. As stated on the Welsh Government website, “*Tourism relies on the integrity of the natural environment. In Wales, beautiful landscapes and coastlines are the very foundation of tourism.*” Tourist and recreation industries must recognise the fact that their businesses rely on the natural environment, they should be encouraged to invest in local businesses that enhance visitor experiences through maintaining and improving the natural environment through use of sustainable land management. With nature and wildlife tourism recognised as growing industries, and 40% of visitors stating the quality of the environment as their main motive for visiting Wales it is important that tourism businesses recognise the value investing in and supporting sustainable land management can bring. This reinforces the economic benefits of sustainable land management and provides an incentive to land managers to adopt sustainable land management practices as tourism plays an important role in supporting many rural communities. A good example is the RSPB South Stack reserve on Anglesey. In 2009, prior to expansion and refurbishment resulting in demonstrable increases in visits and business, as well as directly providing 4.6 FTE jobs the reserve supported 17.5 local FTE jobs and attracted £570,000 in additional tourist spend to the local area.

The healthy natural environment obtained through sustainable land management can also provide many benefits in terms of health and wellbeing, by encouraging physical activity, providing space to ‘escape’ and providing space for outdoor learning for children. As pointed out in the UK NEA, there are also a number of cultural benefits including providing a sense of place, maintaining traditional landscapes and skills and also benefits from the aesthetic beauty of the landscape.

Committee Clerk,  
Environment and Sustainability Committee,  
National Assembly for Wales,  
Cardiff Bay,  
CF99 1NA

06th September 2013

**RE: Sustainable Land Manage Inquiry**

Dear Sir or Madam

The Wildlife Trusts welcomes the committee inquiry into Sustainable Land Management. We hope that this inquiry can set the scene and influence the forthcoming programme of legislation programme. This is required to ensure nature's recovery and the suite of ecosystem services it provides. This is at the forefront of achieving a sustainable Wales.

Due to the complexity of the topic, I have answered the Inquiries question in **Annex 1**, with case studies in **Annex 2- 7**. I have summarised the main points below.

We all have our own picture of rural Wales, whether it is rolling fields or rugged Welsh mountains. We have come so accustomed to expect this green and pleasant land we have stopped questioning if everything is alright. It's not.

Across Wales, soils are depleted and degraded which in turn releases carbon, water is over-extracted and polluted, flooding is more prevalent and wildlife struggles to survive across landscapes that have lost many of the features that provide character and distinctiveness.

This has led to habitats and species vanishing at an alarming rate, as outlined in the 'State of Nature' report. Most of the land is a wildlife desert, its sole purpose is the production of food, often at the expense of other ecosystem services. However, food production in Wales is dependent on a healthy natural environment with pollinating insects, clean water, good soils, protection from flooding, breakdown and absorption of waste.

The recently published UK National Ecosystem Assessment has made it clear that:  
*"The benefits we derive from the natural world and its constituent ecosystems are critically important to human well-being and economic prosperity but are consistently undervalued in economic analysis and decision making... Actions taken and decisions made now will have consequences far into the future for ecosystems, ecosystem services and human well-being."*

The Wildlife Trusts see the main reasons for unsustainable land use as;

- **Perverse Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** subsidies that inadvertently promote practices that degrade the countryside, drastically eroding ecosystem services and wildlife populations. The majority of CAP funds are paid in the form of decoupled payments attached to little more than basic legal compliance (Pillar 1 payments) with little funding, proportionally, towards environmental beneficial schemes such as Glastir (Pillar II).
- Failure to deliver true **catchment management** such as catchment sensitive farming.
- **Failure to learn the lessons from UK Natural Environmental Assessment (UK NEA)** that highlights that the very basis of our economy, and our society, is the natural environment upon which this all depends. This in turn has led to failure to achieve sustainable development by consent or consideration of environmental damaging schemes such as the Circuit of Wales and a M4 Toll Road.
- The existence of government policies or programs that either fail to recognise the imperative to restore the natural environment, or indeed contribute to biodiversity



**WILDLIFE TRUSTS  
WALES**

Baltic House  
Mount Stuart Square  
Cardiff  
CF10 5FH

Ffôn/Tel: 029 20480070

E-bost/E-mail:  
jbyrne@wtwales.org

Mae Ymddiriedolaethau  
Natur Cymru yn Elusen  
Gofrestredig Rhif: 104567  
ac yn Gwmni wedi ei  
Chyfyngu gan Warant Rhif:  
3032775

Wildlife Trusts Wales is a  
Registered Charity: 104567  
and a Company Limited by  
Guarantee: 3032775

Gwarchod **Bywyd Gwyllt** ar gyfer y Dyfodol  
Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

decline.

We now look to the Government to show leadership, remove obstacles and siloed mentality, to take bold steps and make brave decisions to help society create a **Living Landscape**.

Therefore, we urge the Welsh Government to;

- **Take an ecosystem approach to land management** - working with nature rather than against it.
- All subsidies must be based on the principle of **public money paying for public goods and services**. CAP should be *the* example of **Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)**. Pillar I payments must deliver multiple ecosystem services and more money should be directed at Pillar II agri-environment schemes.
- CAP must play its role in meeting UK, EU and global objectives and commitments, to **halt and reverse biodiversity declines** by 2020 and meet ambitious climate change targets.
- Welsh Government must ensure greater and more effective **cross-compliance** of CAP. It should be properly enforced through simple but significantly increased checks, and breaches must also be treated seriously and proportionately.
- Promoting and adequately funding **catchment management** throughout Wales including catchment sensitive farming.
- **Develop new markets in PES**, including research and development funding to stimulate this new industry in Wales.
- **Incentivise and regulate** new PES markets to ensure that landowners receive money to enable new farm business models to work.
- Restore and cherish our protected sites - **protected sites** are nature's cathedrals are fundamental to sustainable land management, providing the backbone of an ecosystem based approach.
- Ensure its own land (and all land in public ownership) is sustainably managed.
- Welsh government must **work in equal partnership** with third and private sectors to enable this fundamental shift in land management in Wales.
- Work with and fund, landscape scale restoration schemes such as the Wildlife Trusts Living Landscapes.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document. I would also welcome the opportunity to expand on the points in this letter. As such, if offered, I would accept an invitation to present evidence to the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



James Byrne  
Living Landscapes Advocacy Manager



## ANNEX 1

### Introduction

Wildlife Trusts Wales (WTW) is the umbrella organisation for the six Wildlife Trusts in Wales – Brecknock, Gwent, Montgomeryshire, North Wales, Radnorshire and South and West Wales (hereafter referred to as the ‘Wildlife Trusts’) working together in partnership to achieve a common aims. **The Wildlife Trusts collectively speak on behalf of more than 24,000 members, over 2,000 active volunteers and manage over 216 nature reserves**, covering more than 8,000 hectares of prime wildlife habitat, from rugged coastline to urban wildlife havens.

Wildlife Trusts strive for a **Living Landscapes** and **Living Seas**, recognising this as an inspirational end point where our environment, society, and economy coexist for the benefit of wildlife and people. We want to foster the connectivity that links our urban and rural areas, our freshwater and coast, our land and sea. We aim, along with our partners, to create;

- ecologically functioning areas that can adapt to climate change; providing resilience and connectivity for wildlife,
- access and enjoyment for people
- a population that is inspired by the natural world and value our environment for the many ways in which it supports our quality of life;
- a sustainable, low carbon contribution to the economy;
- areas that provide a suite of essential ecosystem goods and services.

Our interests therefore lie in people and communities, wildlife, and their interaction.

We are at a pivotal moment. As reported in the ‘**State of Nature**’, unsustainable practices have caused dramatic decline in habitats and species outside, and within, protected sites leading to the loss of ecosystem services over vast swathes of the Welsh countryside.

Across Wales, soils are depleted and degraded which in turn releases carbon, water is over-extracted and polluted, flooding is more prevalent and wildlife struggles to survive across landscapes that have lost many of the features that provide character and distinctiveness. This has led to a habitats and species vanishing at an alarming rate, as reported in the State of Nature’. Most of the land is a wildlife desert, its sole purpose is the production of food – at the expense of other ecosystem services.

However, food production in Wales is dependent on a healthy natural environment with pollinating insects, clean water, good soils, protection from floods, breakdown and absorption of waste.

The recently published UK National Ecosystem Assessment has made it clear that:

*“The benefits we derive from the natural world and its constituent ecosystems are critically important to human well-being and economic prosperity but are consistently undervalued in economic analysis and decision making... Actions taken and decisions made now will have consequences far into the future for ecosystems, ecosystem services and human well-being.”*

Therefore, we need to take this opportunity, to influence Government programmes to restore sustainable land management.

### What do we want sustainable land management in Wales to look like and what outcomes do we want to deliver in the short, medium and longer term?

A whole new way of living that gives us more of what we want and less of what we don’t. A way that gives us viable local economies, beautiful landscapes, abundant wildlife, clean water, stores carbon; and less of the things we don’t – flooding, loss of wildlife, soil erosion and a struggling rural economy.

To achieve this we need a radical rethink of how we achieve our goals – working with nature to achieve them rather than against it.

Achieving this means

- taking an **ecosystem approach** to the sustainable management of the Welsh environment.

Gwarchod **Bywyd Gwyllt** ar gyfer y Dyfodol  
Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

- Agreeing frameworks to allow the proper valuation of ecosystem service provision and development of new markets.
- Agreeing frameworks to give a valuation of natural assets with respect to their potential for ecosystem service provision.
- Government, on behalf of citizens, and industry, needs to invest in our natural capital as part of a financially sound business model – where enhanced natural capital provides enhanced ecosystem provision which results in enhanced profit and/or cost savings for landowners.
- Subsidy systems that provide public goods for public money
- Use of the polluter pays policy, to ensure that polluters don't continue to receive subsidies.

### What are the barriers preventing us from delivering these outcomes now?

There is an imbalance between the need to 'improve' land to maximise food production against losing wildlife and ecosystem services.

The majority of unsustainable land management is driven by;

- **Perverse Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** subsidies - the majority of **CAP** funds are paid in the form of decoupled payments attached to little more than basic legal **compliance** (Pillar 1 payments). These significant Pillar 1 subsidies have driven environmental degradation on a national scale for decades. While agri-environment funding (Pillar II), designed to create public good, receives a tiny fraction of Pillar I. Glastir alone cannot achieve sustainable land management or significant ecosystem service provision.
- Catchment surveys have shown that up to 60% of issues affecting WFD classification are caused by agriculture. However, **Cross-compliance** has failed to meet its potential and its shortcomings are numerous, for example,
  - There is a lack of clear farm-level obligations for farmers which in turn prevent farmers from delivering positive change.
  - Too few farm-level inspections take place.
  - The penalty regime fails to apply sanctions (i.e. a reduction to that year's payment) which are proportionate to the severity of the infringement.
- There is a **market failure**, there are almost no mechanisms to ensure that farmers and landowners receive money for providing ecosystem goods and services.
- Failure to deliver true **catchment management** such as catchment sensitive farming (which may significantly reduce WFD problems, reduces flood risk, protects and restores biodiversity).
- The environment is seen as a cost, and environmental regulation is seen as a barrier – however, this is fundamentally wrong. A healthy, natural, biodiverse environment is the foundation of our economy and our society - as detailed in the **UK Natural Environmental Assessment** (UK NEA).
- **Sustainable development and climate change principles are not being applied** throughout all Welsh Government departments and by local authorities leading to unsustainable land management decisions being considered such as the;
  - Circuit of Wales development which removes over 200ha of peatland to replace it with a motor track which has a carbon intensive construction and carbon intensive operation.
  - M4 Toll Road which is being proposed over several national and international designated sites at huge economic, social and environmental expense when more sustainable and significantly cheaper options are not being considered (Prof Stuart Cole, pers comm).



## How do we overcome these challenges?

- **Taking an ecosystem approach to land management** - working with nature rather than against it. For example,
  - restoring floodplains rather than building on them such as the Gwent Levels,
  - restoring and managing blanket bogs for carbon sequestration, water retention and filtration rather than draining and/or ploughing them.
  - Implementing the Pollinator Action Plan using land in public ownership to provide for pollinators such as road verges, non-functional amenity grassland etc.
- The overriding objective of the CAP should be to maintain and improve natural ecosystems, as the basis of a **sustainable farming system**. All payments must be based on the principle of **public money paying for public goods and services**. CAP should be *the* example of **Payment for Ecosystem Services**. For example, the sustainable land management should produce food, but also tackle issues of flood management at source through ditch blocking to slow down peak flow flood water.
- Participation of agri-environment schemes should be a precondition of receiving direct payments – this would require Glastir to be adequately funded via a significant transfer of funds from Pillar I to Pillar II via modulation.
- CAP must play its role in meeting UK, EU and global objectives and commitments, to **halt and reverse biodiversity declines** by 2020 and meet ambitious climate change targets. This includes supporting High Nature Value (HNV) farming which is biodiverse and produces significant ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration.
- **Top-up payments** are another potential tool for ring-fencing Pillar I funds and could be used for very specific farming issues such as protecting and maintaining semi-natural permanent pasture, Natura 2000 areas.
- **Small Landowner Grants** could be made available to landowners with biodiversity rich areas that are not eligible for agri-environment funding. An example of this is the **Monmouthshire Meadows Project**<sup>1</sup> and Gwent Wildlife Trusts, **Natural Assets Programme**<sup>2</sup>.
- Welsh Government must ensure greater and more effective **cross-compliance** of CAP. It should be properly enforced through simple but significantly increased checks, and breaches must also be treated seriously and proportionately.
- Well-resourced **advisory services** are a key tool to support farmers and land managers to adopt the most appropriate and beneficial land management options on their farm. This is not just Government officials but trained, and funded, Conservation Officers at organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and the Woodland Trust.
- Promoting and adequately funding **catchment management** throughout Wales including catchment sensitive farming. This includes encouraging Water Companies to do the same.
- Sustainable abstraction regimes should be in place in all catchments so that there is no risk of environmental damage.
- Restore and cherish our protected sites. **Protected sites** are nature's cathedrals are fundamental to sustainable land management, providing the backbone of an ecosystem based approach. However, many are in unfavorable condition.
- We need the science/evidence base to be agreed and codified. This needs to be written into national and European policy in such a way as to drive the new business models such as PES.
- The Welsh Government Estate should be managed to maximize biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Working with conservation organisations to deliver landscape scale projects that deliver sustainable land management such as the Wildlife Trusts Living Landscapes Schemes (see Annex 2 – 7).
- Work to educate the population, or at least sectors within it, that they are reliant on ecosystem services, green infrastructure and thus nature.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gwentwildlife.org/what-we-do/projects/monmouthshire-natural-assets-project>

- Promote green infrastructure for the multiple benefits it provides such as Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, Severn Farm Ponds. This reserve, sited within an industrial estate, was originally created to drain the Welshpool bypass and industrial estate – but Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust created a wetland nature reserve that is the centre point of their educational and special needs work. It is also a great place for the employees of the industrial estate to have their lunch and de-stress. Without this reserve, the industrial estate is not viable and likely to flood – therefore it is a catalyst for economic activity within an urban context.

### **What are the main policy drivers and how can these be shaped to overcome these challenges?**

All policy areas need to change – across all ministerial portfolios. This is not about a bolt on, quick fix. This change needs to be recognised as good for the economy, social justice, health and wellbeing. However, sustainable land management should be included in the forthcoming programme of legislation.

### **How we define the key ecosystems and ecosystem services in a way that makes sense for Wales?**

Ecosystem services, as defined by the UK Natural Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA) as “*the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living*”.

However, it is essential that Welsh Government (with third and private sectors) start to communicate what ecosystem services are to the general public. Using the marketing expertise of the private sector and the public engagement of the third sector it is possible to communicate in clear, everyday language how this new system works and what benefits they can expect.

Without this common understanding it will remain difficult for companies to justify investment, hard for Welsh Government to justify legislation and public spend. Also this general awareness could assist developing markets by allowing consumer choice to select products that will give them multiple benefits such as insurance that gives them financial security but also invests in preventing flooding in the first place.

### **What incentives we can provide land managers to develop sustainable practices, and in particular, any new sources of investment we can attract to support these?**

- **EU funding** should be refocused to promote investment in natural capital this includes CAP and Regeneration – as it benefits all sectors of the economy and society,<sup>34</sup> (see above).
- **Payment for Ecosystem Services** - payments to undertake actions that increase the levels of desired ecosystem services, and can therefore be broadly defined within market-based approaches. PES provides some key opportunities to link up those involved in ‘supplying’ ecosystem services more closely to those benefiting from the same ecosystem services and in doing so, potentially provide cost-effective ways of developing new streams of financing. The **Pumlumon Living Landscape** by Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust is pioneering this approach in Wales
- **Catchment Management** – A form of PES, where water companies pay for catchment management (ultimately, we pay for via our water bills). For example, ‘Upstreaming solutions’ by South West Water has a strong projected benefit to cost ratios (in the region of 65 to 1 or better over 30 years) and will cost just 60p per customer by 2015. This flagship programme is run alongside Devon and Cornwall Wildlife Trusts Living Landscapes (page 32 DEFRA’s ‘Water for Life’<sup>5</sup>). Water Consumers, like all consumers want value for money and managing the catchments provides multifunctional benefits –more bang for their buck.
- **Tourist and recreation industries** – Visitor Payback Schemes is another form of PES. Examples, include the Lake District where this approach has been very successful. For example, visitors are given the option of adding an extra pound or percentage to their bill. This money then goes towards projects that sustain the local environment and upkeep of paths etc – it’s like a tip for the landscape.
- **Conservation covenants** are voluntary agreements between a landowner and responsible body (charity, public body or local/central Government) to do or not do something on their land for a conservation

<sup>3</sup>DEFRA and Natural England (July 2013) - Green Infrastructure’s contribution to economic growth: a review <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/greeninfrastructure/gigrowthfeature.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Natural England – Health and the Natural Environment – An Evidence Based Information pack [http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/health-information-pack\\_tcm6-31487.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/health-information-pack_tcm6-31487.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> DEFRA ‘Water for Life’ - <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm82/8230/8230.pdf>

purpose. A similar system is used in Gwent, where **Gwent Wildlife Trust** and **Monmouthshire Meadows** enter into such agreements, however small grant funding is provided for management and capital works (as plots are usually too small to enter agri-environment schemes).

- **Other Ministerial Portfolios** - There is significant peer reviewed evidence that states ‘green infrastructure<sup>6</sup>’ make significant difference to
  - **Inward investment:** The evidence shows clearly that increasing the attractiveness of an area through investment in high-quality parks, increases inward investment and property values in proximity.
  - **Visitor spending:** The attractiveness of the area and the quality of parks impacts on the number of visitors attracted to, and spending in, the local area. For example, the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trusts, Dyfi Osprey Project attracts 40,000 visitors a year which brings in £350,000 per year to the local economy.
  - **Environmental cost-saving:** Green Infrastructure provides important regulatory services such as pollution filtration, flood risk reduction and the mitigation of temperature extremes. There is good evidence that green infrastructure can therefore reduce damage costs and is often a more cost-effective way to meet environmental targets than mechanical solutions. Reduced damage and costs should allow greater investment in productive activities.
  - **Health improvements:** Mental ill-health and stress are significant health issues in the UK and there is strong evidence that access to green space has a positive impact on these issues. The UK also suffers from a significant burden of ill-health due to people not meeting recommended levels of activity. The evidence is strongly suggestive of the quality of the outdoor environment being an important factor in encouraging daily exercise. There is also good evidence that health improvements feed through into increased productivity.
  - **Market sales:** There has been a recent upsurge in interest in the production of conservation or niche food. Opportunities like the Wildlife Trust Wales Conservation Branding initiative is a good example of this.
  - **Employment generation:** Developing and maintaining green infrastructure provides jobs. In Wales, the natural environment is big business. A study in 2001 estimated that Wales’ natural environment contributes 9% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), one in six jobs and 10% of all wage and salaried incomes, maintaining the country’s leisure and tourism, agriculture, forestry, water resources and waste management sectors. It also found that *‘the environment is relatively more important to the Welsh economy than is the case for the other UK nations.’*<sup>7</sup> Biodiversity makes a significant contribution to economic and social prosperity in Wales and wildlife (flora and fauna) based activity generates £1.9 billion in revenue, equivalent to 2.9% of Wales’ national output and 3% of employment<sup>8</sup>.

#### **How we ensure that our sustainable land management policies maintain vibrant rural communities and attract new entrants into the land-based sector?**

Using CAP and catchment management/PES to pay for ecosystem services – public money for public good.

#### **The most appropriate geographical scale(s) at which we should be delivering sustainable land management policies and practices in Wales?**

It will vary on site specific issues, but catchment scale would be a good place to start.

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<sup>6</sup> Natural Environment White Paper (Defra, 2011) defines ‘green infrastructure’ as “a term used to refer to the living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. It is often used in an urban context to cover benefits provided by trees, parks, gardens, road verges, allotments, cemeteries, woodlands, rivers and wetlands.”

<sup>7</sup> Valuing our Environment, Valuing the Environment Partnership (2001)

<sup>8</sup> Wildlife Economy Wales: An Economic Evaluation Scoping Study, Mabis Ltd (2007)

### If there are key actions we can take to deliver short-term 'quick wins' and the actions we should be taking for the long-term?

- Welsh Government estate including Local Authority land should be managed for multiple benefits including pollinators, carbon and water storage and restoration of important habitats and species. Recently Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust was successful in bidding for money, from an independent source, to undertake habitat restoration work on NRW forestry land. While, this shows the value of third sector organisations, this project should have been funded by Welsh Government and/or NRW.
- The Forest and Water Guidelines should be reviewed and strengthened to protect and benefit the water environment, including discontinuing forestry pesticide (*cypermethrin*) spraying and large scale clear felling.
- Any scheme receiving planning approval or grant funding from the Welsh Government or local authorities should deliver for the environment or, at a minimum, not erode or degrade ecosystem services such as the Circuit of Wales, or the M4 Toll Road.
- Adequate funding to projects that deliver multiple benefits at a landscape scale such as the Living Landscape Projects (See Annex 2-7) such as the Pumlumon project.

### Identification of good examples of sustainable land management

1. The **Pumlumon Project** is led by the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, pioneering an upland economy built around wildlife, ecology and long-term sustainability across 40,000 hectares of the Cambrian Mountain range in mid Wales. It is an official PES scheme, looking to attract investors in flood control, carbon sequestration and water purification. It aims to demonstrate the viability of new, more sustainable business models for farmers, forestry owners and tourism businesses. A suite of land management actions tailored to local conditions (ditch-blocking, tree-planting, alteration of grazing regimes and grazing species) are being piloted across several landowners' holdings as well as those of the Wildlife Trusts. These actions are designed to improve water quality, reduce peak run-off in storm events, safeguard carbon, increase biodiversity and engage local communities. Collaborative investigations by the Centre for Hydrology has shown that the water table has risen by 5cms.
2. **Source to Sea Living Landscape** - Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT) are working with working our partners to restore and recreate wetland habitats and floodplains across the whole catchment. In turn, this should help vital ecosystem services such as reduction of flooding, improved drinking water quality and rebuilding the beautifully interconnected biodiversity of the river and its catchment.
3. **Usk to Wye Living Landscape** – This Living Landscape includes a number of discrete projects which have land management and habitat creation at its heart such as the **Natural Assist Programme** and the **Monmouthshire Meadows Project**. The Trust's volunteer task force has put in over thousands of days of work to help create and manage grassland and woodland sites. The Trust has also provided more than £70,000 of capital funding manage meadows outside their reserves - installing fencing and water supplies and support the use of cut and collect machine for both seed collection and scrub cutting. The Trust's experienced advisors have provided free advice to landowners, held events and road shows and carried out grassland management demonstrations in the project area. The project has enabled local people to be involved in managing their landscape and to understand how wildlife, food and farming are fundamentally connected. The involvement of local communities volunteers and particularly farmers, working in partnership has enabled the enhancement of habitats for wildlife and the production of food in ways that help manage and mitigate against the continuing pressures facing the countryside.
4. **Pontbren** - The Pontbren Group comprises a group of farmers in the upper Severn valley who have worked together to develop a more sustainable way of farming. It covers almost 1000 hectares of farmland. Restoration of woodland area and hedgerows by this group, supported by Coed Cymru, resulted in a reduction in surface flows after heavy rain. Collaborative investigations with a number of universities quantified the substantial benefits of planted trees in reducing surface water flows and flooding, as well as allowing banks and streambeds to consolidate and thus aiding the recovery of streamside vegetation. Stream widths have narrowed significantly and pools and riffles have developed on stretches which were previously shallow and uniform. The group wanted to combine elements of

woodland and landscape management, marketing and cost reduction through better resource management. This did not fit within a standard agri-environment scheme so they sought different funding including the CAP's LEADER fund. By demonstrating the positive environmental impacts, Pontbren has now become an agri-environment scheme tailored to its particular catchment, combined with co-operative marketing projects and is run from the bottom-up.

5. **The Clettwr catchment survey** - A survey of the Clettwr catchment in 2012, conducted by volunteers within the Teifi Rivers Trust, established a variety of impacts from farming. This included riparian habitat degradation due to overgrazing, organic pollution from inadequate waste management systems and sedimentation of river gravels caused by soil erosion. The Trust has worked with farmers and Environment Agency Wales to address these issues through schemes aimed at habitat improvement, reduction of soil erosion and improvements to waste management systems. As well as benefiting the river the project has helped farmers to improve the working farm environment.
6. **Upper Conwy Partnership Project** - Peat drainage as a result of the extensive drainage ditching (moorland gripping) in the Migneint area of the upper Conwy has led to peat drying, acidic "flushes" and highly variable flows; resulting in channel and gravel instability, washout of eggs and fry and downstream flooding issues. Approximately 125km of ditches were blocked by peat dams and were re-profiled during 2011 through projects involving RSPB Cymru, National Trust and Afonydd Cymru. Results show this work has reduced the risk of flash floods, as more rainfall is being retained within the bog. The moderation of flash floods achieves multiple benefits by preventing the discharge of acid 'spikes', lessening the erosion damage to the river channel and reducing the scouring of spawning gravels.
7. **Reducing bacterial input to rivers** Research has demonstrated that preventing stock access to watercourses whilst providing alternative stock drinking facilities can have major benefits in reducing bacterial runoff to rivers. The fencing and buffer strips that are being created as a result of the habitat improvement work carried out by River Trusts in Wales will limit stock access to streams. This work could be combined with provision of alternative stock watering facilities to achieve major reductions in bacterial input to rivers and in turn help to achieve bathing water standards.

# Alun and Chwiler Living Landscape

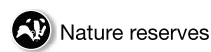


The Alun and Chwiler (Alyn and Wheeler) catchments flow through the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Halkyn Mountain Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The area has been recognised as a biodiversity hotspot for many years.

The area supports a range of important habitats including ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, heathland and wetland habitats. The area contains a number of notable species such as dormice, water vole, otter, lesser horseshoe bat, lesser spotted woodpecker and a wide range of plant species.

However, this area has a number of significant challenges. **Invasive Non Native Species** have gained a substantial foothold in these catchments. For example, if allowed to remain, Himalayan Balsam can out-compete native plant species, greatly reducing biodiversity and negatively impacting on the native ecosystems. By exposing bare soil when it dies back in winter, it causes soil erosion leading to sediment entering the river that can silt up spawning grounds. Also, following rainfall, the bare soil allows pollutants to run into rivers and thus degrade the chemical status of the water.

Controlling invasive species will help to maintain ecological diversity and health throughout the river system. However, there are other issues these catchments face such as grazing pressures and significant gaps in riparian habitat connectivity.

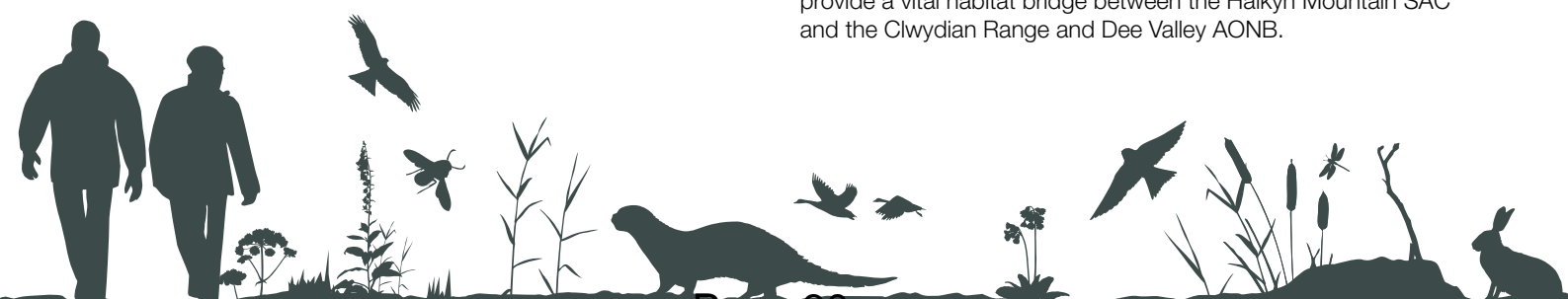


By working within the catchments to restore, recreate and reconnect important habitats, the North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT) will improve the:

- essential **ecosystem services** that these habitats provide such as flood alleviation
- water quality and therefore delivery of the **Water Framework Directive** objectives
- **river corridor habitats** for European, UK, and Welsh protected species

This area is also close to significant urban populations, parts of which suffer from multiple deprivation. To counter this, the project will continue to train and encourage the involvement of volunteers from local groups to help deliver action. The NWWT and partners will give people access to the countryside and greenspace, increasing their confidence and transferable skills, encouraging healthier habits and future **job prospects**.

Therefore, this Living Landscape, offers an excellent opportunity to take a more holistic approach to large-scale land management. With proper enhancement and management, the project area would provide a vital habitat bridge between the Halkyn Mountain SAC and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.



# Alun and Chwiler Living Landscape



By linking the Halkyn Mountain SAC to the Clwydian range this project would create a continual corridor for wildlife from the north of Flintshire to the south of the Berwyn Range and beyond.

| Habitats                                 | Species                   |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rivers and ponds                         | Wale vole and otter       |
| Lowland meadows and calcareous grassland | Deptford pink             |
| Lowland mixed deciduous woodland         | Dormouse                  |
| Wet woodland                             | Lesser horseshoe bats     |
| Hedgerows and arable field margins       | Lesser spotted woodpecker |
| Limestone pavement                       | Adder                     |
|                                          | Freshwater fish           |

## Vision

The natural, healthy river corridors of the Alun and Chwiler river catchments will be interconnected with the Halkyn Mountain SAC and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB. These corridors will be alive with abundant native wildlife that expands into the surrounding environment. Local communities, farmers, businesses and schools will prosper and be enthused and inspired to value and conserve their unique and wildlife rich environment.

## Environment

Priority areas for habitat creation and enhancement have been identified. NWWT are undertaking active habitat management in these areas such as creating and restoring wetlands, erecting bankside fencing, planting trees and undertaking woodland management and conservation grazing. NWWT and their partners are:

- Advising local landowners on measures to promote better land and river management
- Improving the ecological status of these rivers thus contributing to WFD objectives
- Establishing projects to remove or control non-native invasive species within these catchments



## Society

This Living Landscape will engage local communities and disadvantaged groups by offering training and volunteering opportunities. NWWT have developed relationships with schools and community groups, encouraging and supporting the use of the outdoors for **health, wellbeing and education**. They are also improving access to wild areas thus allowing more opportunities for people to engage with local wildlife.

## Economic

NWWT aim to undertake cost effective and sustainable management of water catchments to create beneficial economic outcomes.

By working with partners to prevent contaminants entering the river we can reduce the impact upon economically important fishing grounds and help alleviate flooding further downstream. NWWT aim to bring local communities and tourists into previously unexplored areas. NWWT are working with Visit Wales to increase the numbers of visitors to the area by using wildlife reserves as tourist 'honeypots'. In turn, this will increase opportunities for local B&Bs, hotels, restaurants and more.

By offering skill development to the local long-term unemployed, NWWT aim to increase the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities.

**Key Partners:** AONB, NRW, Visit Wales, Flintshire and Denbighshire County Councils and local groups.

### Join North Wales Wildlife Trust

376 High Street, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 1YE

☎ 01248 351541

✉ [nwwt@wildlifetrustswales.org](mailto:nwwt@wildlifetrustswales.org)



[www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk)



# Cwm Marteg Living Landscape



## The Hidden Jewel in the Welsh Heartland

Radnorshire Wildlife Trust's (RWT) Cwm Marteg Living Landscape is based around the 6,000ha catchment of the River Marteg, a tributary of the River Wye.

This Living Landscape encompasses the scenic valleys and open hills of the eastern Cambrian Mountains near Rhayader in Mid Wales. It is an area of **wild natural beauty**, scattered family farms and small rural communities, alive with rivers and streams like the Marteg, the Wye and their tributaries.

To the west of the Cwm Marteg Living Landscape lies the Elan Valley with its expansive uplands, wooded slopes and drinking water reservoirs. To the north-west is the Pumlumon Living Landscape. Drawing these areas together is the River Wye, rising on Pumlumon and collecting water from all these hills, connecting this landlocked landscape with the sea.

A large area of the upland habitat of the Living Landscape is both nationally and internationally protected, particularly for its birdlife. Away from this are the family farms with their semi-improved grasslands and acres of commercial forestry plantations, interspersed with patches of marshy grassland, pockets of peat bog and hillsides of upland oak woodland.



### Habitats

- Rivers and ponds
- Scrub and ffridd
- Dry dwarf shrub heath
- Upland oak woodland
- Rhos pasture and wetlands
- Lowland meadows

### Species

- Small pearl bordered fritillary
- Water voles
- Atlantic salmon
- Welsh clearwing moth
- Pied flycatcher
- Bullhead

At the heart of the Living Landscape is RWT's **Gilfach nature reserve**, a 410 acre hill farm with a mosaic of wildlife habitats including rock-strewn scrubby hillsides, oak woodland, wet flushes and unimproved pasture. The reserve and the visitor centre is the hub of the Trusts work to **inspire, educate and engage local communities and visitors** with wildlife.







Welsh  
clearwing  
moth



Small  
Pearl-bordered  
fritillary



Gilfach Visitor  
Centre

RWT recognise that wildlife cannot be restricted to nature reserves if it is to survive. Therefore, they have been working with local landowners to help them manage and restore habitats so that wildlife populations can be safeguarded and move more easily through the landscape in response to climate change.

By working within the catchment to restore, recreate and reconnect important habitats, RWT will improve the essential **ecosystem services** that these habitats provide.

For example, RWT are supporting the retention of rainwater by allowing the vegetation and soil to release it more slowly into the rivers, so helping to reduce the severity of future flood incidents further down the Wye. This habitat restoration will also intercept and thus reduce pollution entering the rivers, thus contributing to **Water Framework Directive** objectives.

By maintaining a diverse range of habitats throughout the catchment, RWT are supporting a huge variety of invertebrates which benefit pollination and food chains.

## Vision

The river valleys, pastures and uplands of the Cwm Marteg Living Landscape will be alive with abundant native wildlife, moving easily through connected habitats and expanding into the surrounding environment. Communities, landowners and businesses will prosper and enjoy living in a high quality environment. Both local people and visitors will be inspired to value and conserve this unique and wildlife-rich area.

## Environment

The Living Landscape will continue to work to restore, recreate and reconnect important habitats and the species which rely on good habitat connectivity for survival, such as water voles, small pearl bordered fritillary and Welsh clearwing moth. RWT are also working with partners to control non-native species such as American skunk cabbage and Himalayan Balsam. These species can have devastating impacts on native wildlife and ecosystems.

## Society

RWT are inspiring local communities to get involved, stay active and get fit. This is being done by improving access to wild areas, encouraging visits to nature reserves, celebrating iconic species and involving people in surveying wildlife. RWT are working in partnership to encourage both community groups, schools, local people and visitors to use the outdoors for health, wellbeing and education.

## Economic

RWT will work with partners and landowners, improving and safeguarding ecosystem service provision by protecting watercourses and supporting wildlife friendly farming businesses.

RWT acted as a catalyst, and are supporting local wildlife tourism initiatives aiming to make Rhayader the “wildlife centre of Wales”. They are encouraging people to visit nature reserves and bringing tourists into previously unexplored areas. RWT are working to restore wetland habitats so the flow of rainwater is regulated and flooding prevented further downstream.

**Key Partners:** Powys County Council, local Community Councils, Visit Wales, Natural Resources Wales and Rhayader Angling Club.

### Join Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

Warwick House, High Street Llandrindod Wells,  
Powys, LD1 6AG

☎ 01597 823298 ✉ info@rwtwales.org

www.rwtwales.org



# The Pumlumon Living Landscape



## Delivering Ecosystem Health for People and Nature

Led by the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT), the Pumlumon Living Landscape Project is a flagship project of the Wildlife Trusts, built around amazing wildlife, ecology and long-term sustainability across 40,000ha of the Cambrian Mountain range.

This region of the Cambrians supports the largest watershed in Wales and is the source of the nationally important and vibrant Wye, Severn, and Rheidol rivers. At the core of the project is the 5000ha Pumlumon SSSI, but the entirety of the project area supports a mosaic of locally, nationally and internationally important habitats and species including blanket bog and dwarf shrub heath.

The natural beauty of these landscapes also has considerable aesthetic appeal, with the wide horizons and open spaces lending visitors a sense of freedom and tranquillity.



before



after



 Nature centre  Nature reserves

Over the past century, changing land use practises (e.g. draining of blanket bog) have resulted in a decline in the quality of these important habitats, and as a consequence the wildlife has suffered. In turn, this decline in biodiversity has a damaging effect upon the level of essential societal benefits, known as **'ecosystem services'**, which these habitats provide.

For example our upland blanket bogs help to;

- **reduce flood risk** by retaining rainwater and slowly release it into the rivers
- **improve drinking water quality** by filtering impurities from rainwater
- **soak up carbon from the atmosphere**

The Project demonstrates that by managing the natural environment on a large scale, we can deliver a sustainable future for the people and wildlife of Montgomeryshire – **'win-wins'**. Working in partnership with other organisations, landowners, communities, schools and businesses, the Wildlife Trust and partners are piloting the delivery of essential outcomes such as for; wildlife, water quality, flood risk reduction, carbon safeguarding, upland farming communities, and parts of the tourism industry.



# The Pumlumon Living Landscape



## Vision

To revitalise Pumlumon's important habitats and amazing wildlife by enhancing key ecosystem services. This exemplar project will pioneer a new, sustainable upland economy for Wales.

## Environment

The Project will develop healthy, robust habitats which will benefit **iconic wildlife**. By undertaking sustainable management on partners and MWT's landholdings (such as Glaslyn Nature Reserve), the Project will deliver;

- 5,050ha of species rich habitat under positive management
- 10 priority bird, mammal and/or invertebrate projects
- Large-scale hydrological management of upland Montgomeryshire delivering a number of Water Framework Directive objectives

To complement the above, MWT will work alongside the Welsh Government and statutory agencies, to assist farmers and landowners with agri-environment applications.

## Society

The Project aims to reconnect **upland communities** with the natural environment through a vested economic and social interest in the health of their surrounding ecosystems. The Project will:

- Establish community led environmental and 'sense of place' projects
- Develop skills and training
- Create a volunteer task force for wildlife surveys and monitoring
- Improve the health and wellbeing of local communities

## Economy

The Project will deliver **economic benefits to the local communities** and further afield by;

- Carbon Safeguarding – storing 2,565,750 tonnes of carbon by appropriately managing 3,730ha of land
- Floodwater storage – storing 41.9 billion litres of water by appropriately managing 3,730ha of land
- Providing capital grants towards soil, nutrient, water and habitat management works
- Creating high quality, added-value products for local markets such as 'Conservation Beef'



- Providing a suite of access, tourism, and people engagement points
- Showing how modern farming can be sustainable, maintain upland traditions and make money

MWT will champion new sustainable 'Payment for Ecosystem Service (PES)' markets required to support the delivery of ecosystem services. These new markets will support the future of the upland farming community through access to alternative income streams as a result of sustainable land management.

| Habitats                                  | Species              |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Wet dwarf shrub heath                     | Red and black grouse |
| Dry dwarf shrub heath                     | Hen harrier          |
| Blanket bog,                              | Curlew               |
| Unimproved acid grassland                 | Short eared owl      |
| Upland, low nutrient lakes (oligotrophic) | Sundew               |

**Key Partners:** TWT, NRW, WG, Waterloo Foundation, J Paul Getty JNR, Charitable Trust and Biffaward

### Join Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

42 Broad Street, Welshpool. Powys, SY21 7RR

☎ 01938 555654 ✉ info@montwt.co.uk

www.montwt.co.uk



# Upper Tawe Valley Living Landscape



## Creating a healthier future for wildlife and people in the Upper Tawe Valley



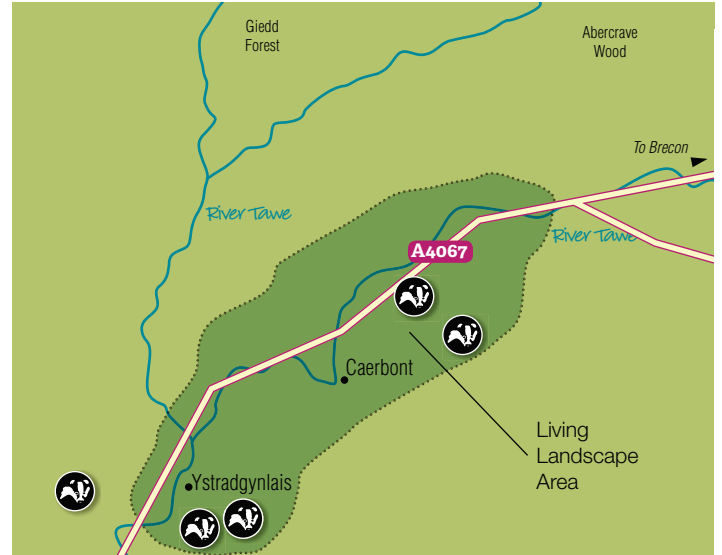
**Lying on the southern edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park, the Upper Tawe Valley is an area of great potential for wildlife with many priority habitats and species.**

One such species is the marsh fritillary butterfly. It breeds in rhos pasture which contains both its food plant, (devil's bit scabious) and thick tussocks of grass that shelter the caterpillars over winter. This area holds a key population of the butterfly and is one of the best sites in Wales.

Marsh fritillaries require extensive habitat networks for their long term survival. However, with the continued fragmentation of this habitat, this species has become scarce, suffering a severe decline in its distribution over the last century.

In parallel to this, large areas of the valleys are identified as areas of multiple deprivation. Local communities often seem disenfranchised from nature and see wildlife as remote and inaccessible.

Led by Brecknock Wildlife Trust (BWT), the Upper Tawe Valley Living Landscape Project is working to restore, recreate and reconnect wildlife rich spaces. They also aim to bring local communities closer to the wonderful wildlife on their doorstep.



Nature reserves

This project brings together the management of several nature reserves which form the cornerstone of this Living Landscape. But wildlife cannot be restricted to nature reserves if it is to survive. Therefore, BWT is working with neighbouring landowners to enhance their land for wildlife, allowing populations to be safeguarded and adapt to climate change.

They aim to restore uplands habitats to fulfil their important ecosystem services such as water regulation, flood prevention and pollution control.

Restoring the River Tawe and tributaries to act as wildlife corridors will help engage local people to take care of nature in their patch. In turn, this will equip those communities with the confidence and skills to avail of new employment opportunities such as increased wildlife tourism.

| Species                             | Habitats                     |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Marsh fritillary                    | Rhos pasture                 |
| Harvest mouse                       | Blanket bog                  |
| Grass snake                         | Marshy/Wet grassland         |
| Common lizard                       | Acid and limestone grassland |
| Redstart                            | Heathland                    |
| Green and great spotted woodpeckers | Oak woodland                 |
| Marsh orchid                        |                              |
| Devils bit scabious                 |                              |



# Upper Tawe Valley Living Landscape



## Vision

The Upper Tawe Valley Living Landscape project aims to create a healthy and resilient landscape for both wildlife and people. Wildlife populations will be safeguarded and able to expand and colonise new areas, adapting to climate change. People will be inspired by wildlife and re-connected to it, empowered to take action to conserve it and benefit from the economic, social and health opportunities it can provide.

## Environment

The Upper Tawe Valley Living Landscape will **restore, recreate and reconnect a fragmented landscape**. BWT are working with partners to bring forward a selection of rhos pasture sites into appropriate management for marsh fritillary and create new wetland habitats for amphibian and reptile species.

This work will contribute to **Water Framework Directive** objectives and help bring designated sites into 'favourable conservation status'. BWT aims to manage limestone grassland to benefit rare wildflowers and restore urban and upland river habitats, improving their ecological connectivity. This in turn will allow animals to adapt and be resilient, to the effects of climate change.

## Social

By using iconic species, the Upper Tawe Living Landscape will inspire, empower and re-connect local communities and disadvantaged people to nature. BWT aim to work with local health initiatives to provide fun outdoor recreation, health walks and voluntary work for people with mental health issues who frequently suffer from isolation and **social exclusion**.

BWT aim to offer opportunities and training to **disadvantaged young people** who are long term unemployed. They will look to offer training in wildlife conservation, practical conservation skills, management plans, grant funding, sponsorship and community fundraising. This will benefit participants confidence and improve their social skills.

BWT are continuing to develop relationships with schools and community groups. They encourage and support the use of the outdoors and nature for **education, health and wellbeing**. They are also continually **improving access** to wild areas to allow more opportunities for engagement with local wildlife.

## Economic

BWT are working with partners and landowners to inspire a new economic vision for the Upper Tawe. BWT aims to harness the potential within the uplands to sequester carbon and prevent flooding further downstream thus improving and safeguarding critical **ecosystem service** provision.

BWT are working alongside Visit Wales and Brecon Beacons National Park to utilise wildlife reserves as tourist 'honeypots', bringing tourists into previously unexplored areas.

BWT are also creating new jobs by employing Wildlife Apprenticeships and Community and Wildlife Education Officers, recruited from the local community.

**Key Partners:** WREN, Visit Wales, Natural Resources Wales and Brecon Beacons National Park.

### Join Brecknock Wildlife Trust

Lion House, Bethel Square,  
Powys, Brecon, LD3 7JP.

☎ 01874 625708

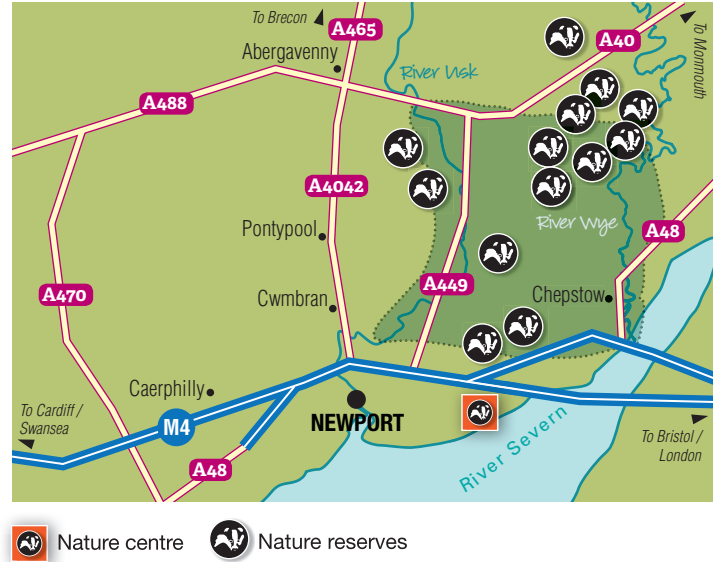


✉ [enquiries@brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk)

[www.brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk)



# Usk to Wye Living Landscape



## A natural health service

**Gwent Wildlife Trust's (GWT) Usk to Wye Living Landscape covers some 40,000ha of breath-taking countryside. It is a rolling patchwork of farmland, meadows, hedgerows, woodland, brooks and streams. It lies between the banks of the River Usk and the River Wye.**

This Living Landscape includes the beautiful Wye Valley AONB, and the Trellech Plateau that rises above the River Wye with its mosaic of small landholdings, woodland and riparian habitats. The wider landscape of Usk to Wye is notable for its species-rich meadows and two significant areas of ancient woodland centred around Wentwood and along the Wye Valley. The Usk and Wye rivers themselves are both highly prized because of their **economically important migratory fish populations** and other wildlife wonders.

The unique qualities of this corner of Wales makes it an inspirational place to live and work. And the area's wildlife and landscape attracts thousands of tourists each year. The region's biodiversity and habitats play their parts in a wider sense too - performing **important ecological functions** including floodwater management and carbon storage.

However, the natural bounty of the Usk to Wye Living Landscape is under threat. Over the last 50 years there has been increasing pressures from commercial forestry, agricultural intensification, land abandonment, economic development and urbanisation. Once widespread, wildlife rich, habitats have significantly declined and are now increasingly fragmented and isolated across the landscape.



Damage has not been limited to terrestrial habitats. Usk and Wye rivers, and their various tributaries, have suffered declines in water quality and habitat functionality as a result of pollution and nutrient loading from surrounding land uses. Added to this, the invasion of exotic species has caused the decline of many of the area's most charismatic native species such as water vole. For wildlife, the future influences of climate change will only exacerbate these problems, with knock-on effects on the ecological functionality that we all rely on in this corner of Wales.

In order to address these threats to wildlife, habitats and ecosystems within the Usk to Wye Living Landscape, GWT is working with its local conservation partners on the development of an effective landscape scale programme to protect our rich natural heritage, and to make the most of opportunities this affords for people and wildlife.



# Usk to Wye Living Landscape



## Vision

The Usk to Wye Living Landscape will support wildlife-rich patchworks of interconnected habitats between the Usk and Wye Rivers. Well managed habitats, and healthy rivers and streams will function as wildlife highways allowing species to move freely through the landscape. In turn, this will support the aspirations of local communities through enhancing sustainable agriculture, tourism, and ecosystem functions such as natural flood protection.



| Habitats                         | Species           |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Woodlands                        | Dormouse          |
| Hedgerows                        | Water vole        |
| Wildflower meadows               | Bats              |
| Traditional orchards             | Otters            |
| Lowland heath                    | Farmland birds    |
| Rivers, streams and water bodies | Shrill carder bee |
|                                  | Grassland fungi   |
|                                  | Salmon and trout  |

## Environment

GWT itself manages a dozen nature reserves within the Usk to Wye Living Landscape. These perform an increasingly important role as examples of best practice for habitat management. They help to inform and advocate 'best practice' for land managers and owners in the area and beyond. Also, as local wildlife 'hotspots', they act as refuges and important stepping stones, enabling wildlife to repopulate the landscape as habitat improvements are rolled out.

This Living Landscape aims to increase the size and ecological connectivity of fragmented habitats. GWT will look to re-establish iconic species back into the countryside such as water voles, dormice and shrill carder bees.

This will be achieved by increasing the amount of land within conservation management as well as providing surveys, grants and advice to landowners to encourage habitat creation and restoration, and uptake of agri-environment schemes.

GWT aim to undertake management on a number of key habitats such as management of woodlands, meadows, hedgerows, river corridors and orchards.

## Social

Greater involvement, empowerment, and engagement of local communities within landscape conservation initiatives are imperative for conservation success. GWT's nature reserves will therefore play an increasingly important role in community engagement and outreach for the Usk to Wye Living Landscape. GWT is committed to the development of local 'People and Wildlife' activities that will facilitate a wider understanding of the true values of biodiversity, wildlife and ecology.

Such activities will range from traditional education/outdoor education approaches on their own nature reserves, to wider engagement with local artists, the farming community, landowners and employers. The fullest possible range of social and mainstream media will be utilised in support of these vital efforts. They will also;

- Support landowners, community groups and schools in managing land for wildlife.
- Run wildlife based events including nature walks to enhance people's connection to nature and stay active.
- Work with local health initiatives such as providing outdoor voluntary work for those people with mental health issues who frequently suffer from isolation and social exclusion.

## Economic

GWT will work with partners to improve and safeguarding ecosystem service provision such as flood risk management, water purification and carbon sequestration. They will demonstrate best practice showing that economically viable farming and wildlife can co-exist.

GWT use local contractors thus keeping money in the area and promoting rural jobs. They also run habitat management courses to increase participant's skills, confidence and chances of employment.

**Key Partners:** The Usk and Wye Rivers Association, Visit Wales, Natural Resources Wales

### Join The Gwent Wildlife Trust



Seddon House, Dingestow, Monmouth, NP25 4DY

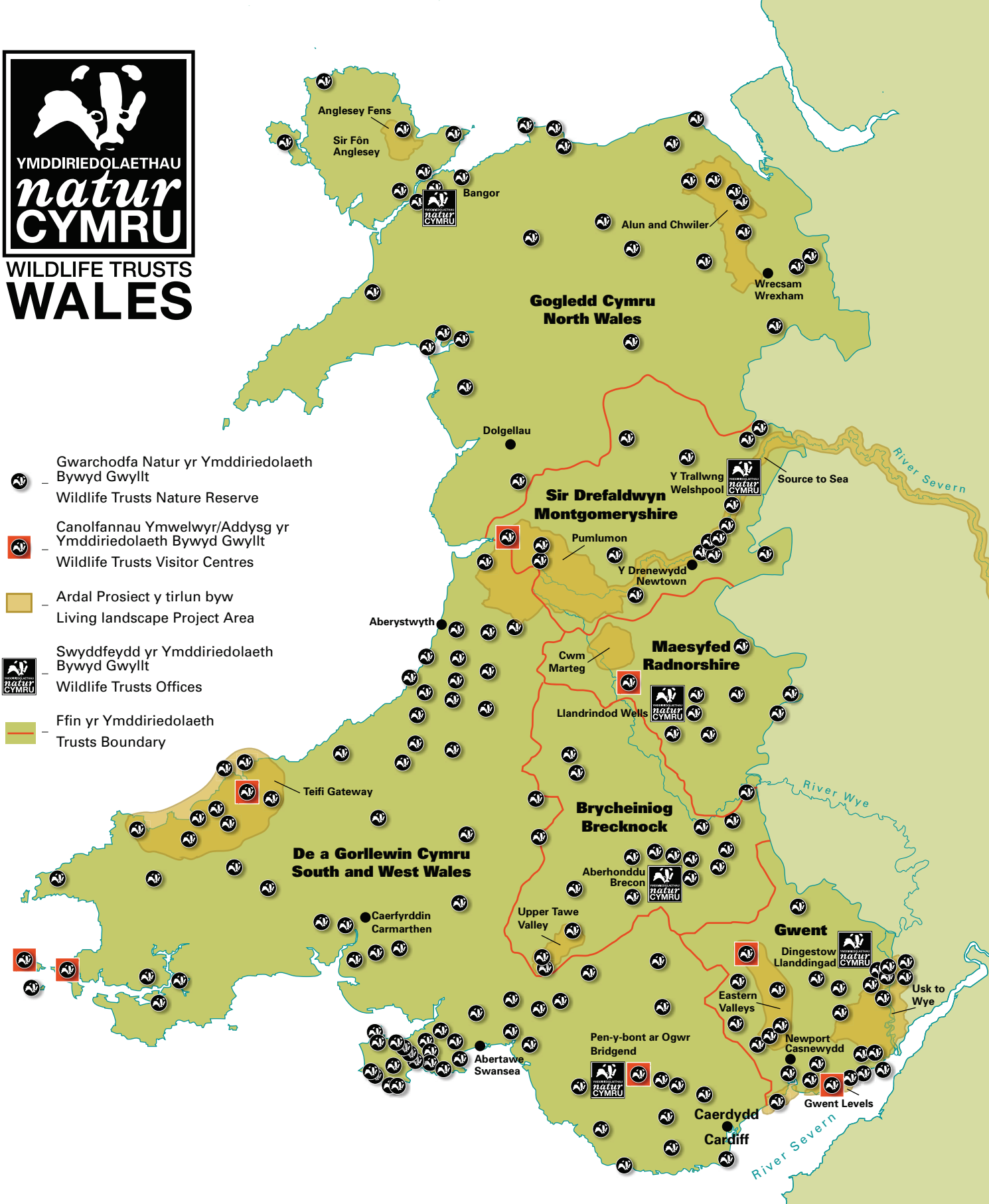
☎ 01600 740 600

✉ [info@gwentwildlife.org](mailto:info@gwentwildlife.org)

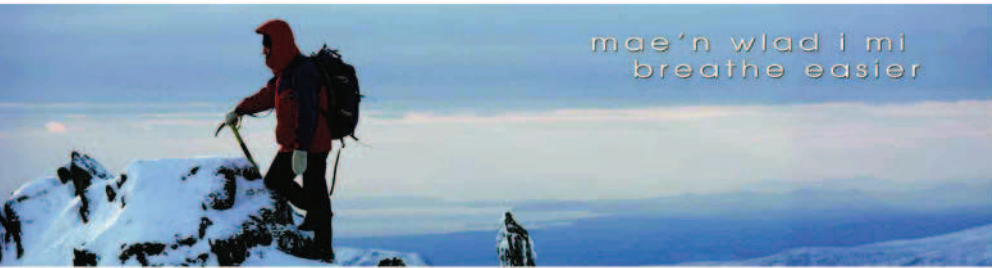
[www.gwentwildlife.org](http://www.gwentwildlife.org)



-  Gwarchodfa Natur yr Ymddiriedolaeth Bywyd Gwyllt  
Wildlife Trusts Nature Reserve
-  Canolfannau Ymwelwyr/Addysg yr Ymddiriedolaeth Bywyd Gwyllt  
Wildlife Trusts Visitor Centres
-  Ardal Prosiect y tirlun byw  
Living landscape Project Area
-  Swyddfeydd yr Ymddiriedolaeth Bywyd Gwyllt  
Wildlife Trusts Offices
-  Ffin yr Ymddiriedolaeth  
Trusts Boundary







NATIONAL PARKS WALES  
Britain's breathing spaces

Committee Clerk  
Environment and Sustainability Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay,  
Cardiff,  
CF99 1NA.  
By Email: [es.comm@wales.gov.uk](mailto:es.comm@wales.gov.uk)

06 September 2013

## National Parks Wales' Response to the Inquiry into Sustainable Land Management

National Parks Wales is grateful for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Inquiry into sustainable land management in Wales. The three National Park Authorities (NPAs) in Wales work in partnership as National Parks Wales to collectively respond to policy issues which may potentially influence the management of Wales' National Parks. Colleagues from the Brecon Beacons; Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia National Park Authorities have collaborated on this response. We are content to see this response to be made public and should be able to respond to further questions in person should the Committee believe that is required.

### 1. What do we want sustainable land management in Wales to look like and what outcomes do we want to deliver in the short, medium and longer term?

1.1. This is the key question. Whilst we are all familiar with the standard definitions of sustainability and sustainable development from Brundtland onward, there is no unanimity nor consensus in Wales as to how those definitions can be applied in such a way as to enable widespread, inclusive and consensual "buy in" across Welsh society and the Welsh political spectrum.

1.2. This can best be illustrated by our diverse attitudes to land itself. As National Park Authorities (NPAs), guided by our statutory purposes, we perceive that the remaining semi natural habitats in National Parks that form our most valued landscapes are of the utmost significance and importance.

1.3. We want to see A properly functioning mosaic of agricultural land, woodlands, moorlands and uplands contributing to the provision of ecosystem services and resilience to the impacts of climate change in the medium to long term. In the short term this requires us to plant native broadleaf woodland on marginal agricultural land at an increased rate, the felling of upland coniferous forests and the restoration of upland peat bogs as the very minimum. There will also be significant biodiversity



enhancement. In the short term, Wales is on course to fail to meet the EU's 2020 biodiversity target, which in short is to halt the loss of biodiversity.

- 1.4. National Park Authorities are guided by the National Parks statutory purposes and subsequent clarification and guidance such as the Sandford principle. Hence the values placed on them are primarily environmental and aesthetic. We then perceive opportunities for quiet enjoyment and understanding (guided by Sandford) to be a second strand of appreciation. Those two elements combine to create economic benefit for society which we then define as sustainable land management.
  - 1.5. The perception of farming communities to this same land is very different. Landowners, whilst appreciating the environmental and aesthetic elements see the economic dimension as the main driver for the management of land. Historically, opportunities to reclaim semi natural habitats for increased agricultural production (with very significant state support) was regarded as economically and socially beneficial and an environmental price worth paying.
  - 1.6. Whilst public policy has evolved, providing a framework for the protection of these areas, a fundamental 'mismatch' between the hopes and aspirations of landowners and their representatives and the plethora of governmental and non-governmental environmental organisations remains.
  - 1.7. Reconciling that fundamental difference of opinion lies at the very heart of creating an environment of mutual respect and cooperation that will lead to sustainable land management. Current elements of farm-based environmental management should become second nature to farming, rather than reliant on cross-compliance and agri-environment incentives; management of the environment should become a public good as equally as important as food production.
  - 1.8. This reconciliation process will determine the shape and structure of future sustainable land management in Wales. In practical terms sustainable land management will contribute to a properly functioning mosaic of agricultural land, woodlands, moorlands and uplands contributing to the provision of ecosystem services and resilience to the impacts of climate change in the medium to long term.
- 2. What are the barriers preventing us from delivering these outcomes now and how do we overcome these challenges?**
- 2.1. We are where we are. A significant proportion of land within the Welsh National Parks is intensively managed. The land is highly agriculturally productive, but offers comparatively little in terms of nature conservation. Yet it is perceived by landowners and the general public as being well managed and cared for, highlighting differing perceptions of land management. In the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park for example, it is calculated that some 49% of the total land area comprises intensively managed grassland together with approximately 11% arable land. We calculate that about a third is semi natural habitat.



2.2. Most of the agricultural land in the Welsh National Parks has been significantly modified. Whilst continuing to offer opportunities for public enjoyment and appreciation, the nature conservation value of the landscape has been lost over large areas. Programmes of restoration management for public/ecosystem goods production, tied as and where necessary to the production of market goods, will be necessary.

2.3. In order to overcome these barriers there has to be universal acceptance that the policy outcomes related to ecosystem services and climate change cannot be achieved without significantly modifying the current system in which we operate. There has to be collective action, perhaps utilising the primary law making powers of the Assembly, some suggestions include;

- The production of a long term vision and a national biodiversity recovery plan, with the right legislative, policy, information and skill tools in place to deliver on objectives.
- Raising the priority of biodiversity conservation within local government as a whole;
- Reasserting the duty under Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 for all public bodies and statutory undertakers to have due regard to the purposes of National Parks and AONBs - amending this duty from "having regard to", to "actively supporting the purposes of National Parks and AONBs";
- Developing a bigger 'biodiversity workforce' in the private as well as the public sector;
- Developing a growth model for Wales that is based primarily on wellbeing, environmental, public health and education outcomes rather than GDP.

### 3. What are the main policy drivers and how can these be shaped to overcome these challenges?

3.1. The market will be the main determinant for the agriculturally productive land. Creating a vibrant, competitive and flexible agricultural economy, based on sustainable land management, that values and contributes to wellbeing, ecosystem and climate change-related outcomes will be key to a successful future for this element of our land resource.

3.2. For the remaining semi natural habitats, substantial public investment through agri-environment schemes is required to ensure their continued management. Common land for example is a very large and valuable environmental resource. Currently many commons are threatened by abandonment and non-management. The Glastir Commons element illustrates what can be achieved through a positive and dynamic intervention.

3.3. It should also be noted that there are economic opportunities from marketing products good and recreational services from these iconic landscapes.

**The Committee would also welcome views on these questions too:**



#### 4. How we define the key ecosystems and ecosystem services in a way that makes sense for Wales?

- 4.1. The *Living Wales* programme sets out an approach to management and regulation of Wales' landmass and seas in accordance with the principles for ecosystem health and productivity set out in the Convention on Biological Diversity. We welcome this pan-Wales approach. As authorities responsible for 20% of Wales' landscape by area (an additional 5% managed by the AONB partnerships), we note that the purposes of protected landscapes are entirely consistent with the emerging principles of the ecosystem approach to management and the *Living Wales* programme.
- 4.2. However, in Wales, and across UK protected landscapes, the emphasis is less on managing pristine ecosystems and more on managing human impacts on what are often heavily-modified environments. While natural beauty, heritage, access and recreation (of particular importance in protected landscapes) are recognised by the ecosystem approach, we suggest that there would need to be an enhanced application of the approach in UK protected landscape management, in order to reflect the strong, interacting, cultural and social dimensions of the designations and the exceptional nature of these landscapes: in other words a whole-landscape approach (to include all the ecosystem principles) within protected landscapes.
- 4.3. But if this is true in protected landscapes, there is no reason why it cannot be true across Wales as a whole. The landscape is the ultimate provider of the most important things in life: opportunities to enjoy the rest of nature, get fit and healthy, enjoy great food, find satisfying employment, benefit from clean and secure energy sources, become self-reliant and help build friendly, resilient communities.
- 4.4. This suggests that sustainable natural resource management can, in and of itself, can contribute to key economic and social outcomes, and help bring about cultural and behavioural change. The economy might therefore be viewed as a set of ecological transactions taking place within a global environment. It is up to us as a nation, in the way the economy and monetary system is structured, to determine whether these transactions are environmentally benign and socially equitable, or otherwise.
- 4.5. The *Living Wales* programme proposes adoption of natural resource management plans at national and local levels. We envisage an integrated and complementary 'net' of plans, fit for purpose and pitched at an appropriate geographical scale to cover and coordinate the necessary aspects of management human activity and their impacts on the environment.
- 4.6. This suite of plans would, perhaps, include catchment management plans, habitat/species action plans (including action for migratory species), woodland strategy, a national heritage plan, invasive non-native species strategy, health and wellbeing strategy, to give just a few examples. Collectively these should point the way for economic strategy based on a non-destructive use of Wales' assets.



**5. How we develop a baseline from which to measure progress? This includes how we collect, coordinate and use data to support sustainable land management in Wales. What incentives we can provide land managers to develop sustainable practices, and in particular, any new sources of investment we can attract to support these?**

5.1. Wales is the only country in Europe to have comprehensive coverage provided by local records centres, through Local Records Centres Wales). We need to make use of them more and provide greater support. Help them to become the repositories of national biodiversity datasets and the arbiters and standard bearers for field survey techniques and field crafts.

5.2. Partners need to monitor change in Wales in order to know whether policies are working and whether, taken together, they are sufficient to achieve ecosystem and human welfare outcomes. We identify three levels of information.

| Level               | Purpose                                                               | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Outcome information | To assess progress on outcomes.                                       | This is the most important type of monitoring as it tracks the overall result of various influences on Wales. However, outcomes may change only slowly and may not, on their own, tell us why things are changing.                                                                |
| Factor information  | To identify existing and future causes of change.                     | Often helps identify existing and future causes of change in a more timely way than outcome data. The issues and opportunities associated with impacts on the state of the Wales should give rise to policies.                                                                    |
| Impact information  | To assess effectiveness and efficiency of organisational performance. | Coupled with the reasons for management (provided by 1 and 2 above), this completes the basic audit trail. Performance information (e.g. impact-to-cost ratios) will often be collected by individual organisations, for example in relation to their Corporate or Business Plan. |

5.3. If all the factors affecting achievement of the outcomes have been identified, and management addresses these factors, there can be a degree of confidence that partners' combined efforts are contributing towards the desired outcomes. Whether that effort is actually enough to achieve the outcome may only become apparent over time, since Wales is a dynamic place and may be influenced by factors that are beyond partners' direct control, and/or which originate beyond its borders.



5.4. The result is that 'success' is not always a fixed quantity, and will often, in addition, depend on how people feel or what they perceive. For example, people's expectations of recreational opportunities or the state of the environment will change, as well as recreational provision or the "objective" state of nature itself. For this reason, we suggest avoiding using fixed outcome targets to try and define a desired state of Wales. Instead, outcome and factor measures are used to assess the direction and rate of travel towards headline goals, and thereby determine appropriate and adaptive policies and action.

**6. How we ensure that our sustainable land management policies maintain vibrant rural communities and attract new entrants into the land-based sector?**

6.1. Meaningful, genuine and locally based engagement with land managers is key to this element. The principles of localism and adaptive management should lie at the heart of sustainable land management policies. Conversely, broad-brush, inflexible support measures based on the "one size fits all" principle will inevitably contribute little to the vibrancy of the Welsh countryside and could very well actively undermine it.

**7. The most appropriate geographical scale(s) at which we should be delivering sustainable land management policies and practices in Wales?**

7.1. There are several scales at which sustainable land management can be delivered. Produce, product and service marketing can be delivered at local, regional and national levels, each tier being complementary and mutually supportive.

7.2. Conservation land management of remaining semi natural habitats should be at a landscape scale. Much work has been done to identify coherent landscapes throughout Wales including historic landscape characterisation assessments and habitat identification and prioritization.

7.3. Ultimately, sustainable land management always relies on persuasion, co-operation and partnership. Therefore scale will include the scale at which partnerships can operate most effectively. The agriculturally productive land will be largely self defining and based on sectoral and commodity factors.

**8. If there are key actions we can take to deliver short-term 'quick wins' and the actions we should be taking for the long-term?**

8.1. Introduce measures now that will ensure that Wales doesn't fail by too much to meet the 2020 biodiversity conservation target. Following the failures in 2010 to halt the loss of biodiversity, Wales still requires a national plan and a set of clear objectives to know what it must achieve. Without this, Wales still doesn't know what it's losing, or gaining.

8.2. Related to this we need to recognise and correct the deficiencies of the current Glastir agri-environment scheme to bring it into line with the principles of adaptive management referred to above.



BRECON BEACONS  
NATIONAL PARK



Pembrokeshire Coast  
National Park



SNOWDONIA  
NATIONAL PARK

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry. If you require any further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Pycroft  
Policy Officer  
National Parks Wales





Lle i enaid gael llonydd  
One of Britain's breathing spaces

## Environment and Sustainability Committee Inquiry into Sustainable Land Management Response from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Committee Clerk  
Environment and Sustainability Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay,  
Cardiff,  
CF99 1NA.  
By Email: [es.comm@wales.gov.uk](mailto:es.comm@wales.gov.uk)

September 16<sup>th</sup> 2013

### Inquiry into Sustainable Land Management Response by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Thank you for providing an opportunity for the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to give evidence to this inquiry. As National Parks Wales, the three National Park Authorities in Wales have submitted a joint response to this inquiry. This Authority submits additional evidence herewith, which compliments that provided already by National Parks Wales.

#### 1. What do we want sustainable land management in Wales to look like and what outcomes do we want to deliver in the short, medium and longer term

In the short to medium term, we recommend that great weight be given to implementing a national biodiversity recovery plan in order to bring Wales as close as possible to meeting the European Union's 2020 target to halt the loss of biodiversity; and in order to ensure that Wales will definitely meet the



Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog  
Plas y Ffynnon, Ffordd Cambrian, Aberhonddu, Powys, LD3 7HP  
Ffôn: (01874) 624437 Ffacs: (01874) 622574  
E-bost: [ymholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org](mailto:yholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org)  
Safle ar y we: [www.bannaubrycheiniog.org](http://www.bannaubrycheiniog.org)

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Brecon Beacons National Park Authority  
Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP  
Telephone: (01874) 624437 Fax: (01874) 622574  
E-mail: [enquiries@breconbeacons.org](mailto:enquiries@breconbeacons.org)  
Website: [www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org)

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2050 EU target to have protected, valued and appropriately restored Wales' biodiversity.

Given the close fit between the purposes of protected landscapes, their management principles and the emerging principles of the ecosystem approach, we believe that short, medium and longer term benefits can be achieved by providing National Parks and their Authorities with the right tools for the job. We recommend that measures be developed explicitly for Wales' designated landscapes in the Rural Development Plan for Wales, future agri-environment schemes and national policies (e.g., forestry, planning etc). This would be consistent with objectives in the draft National Parks Policy Statement "Taking the Long View," which envisages National Parks as "*areas where new solutions to environmental and rural issues are tried, tested and shared,*" (paragraph 12) and "*articulating visions of rural development*" (paragraph 30).

## 2. What are the barriers preventing us from delivering these outcomes now and how do we overcome these challenges?

Solutions to overcoming these challenges include growing the "sustainable land management workforce" to get the job done. Wales needs more people employed directly in this field and, in order to meet EU biodiversity conservation targets in 2020 and 2050, more people employed and volunteering directly in biodiversity conservation.

The public scepticism about human-induced climate change must be addressed in order to incentivise people better to understand their relationship with their local environment.

Better alignment of policy advice and decisions would avoid the situation whereby the environmental regulators have to mitigate the environmentally damaging fallout caused by other public policy decisions and actions. The solution is to provide good practice guidance that ensures that environmental damage is avoided.



Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog  
Plas y Ffynnon, Ffordd Cambrian, Aberhonddu, Powys, LD3 7HP  
Ffôn: (01874) 624437 Ffacs: (01874) 622574  
E-bost: [ymholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org](mailto:yhmholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org)  
Safle ar y we: [www.bannaubrycheiniog.org](http://www.bannaubrycheiniog.org)

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Brecon Beacons National Park Authority  
Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP  
Telephone: (01874) 624437 Fax: (01874) 622574  
E-mail: [enquiries@breconbeacons.org](mailto:enquiries@breconbeacons.org)  
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### 3. What are the main policy drivers and how can these be shaped to overcome these challenges?

All relevant national, regional and local policy can be appropriately shaped by ensuring that they are correctly and effectively assessed through Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment. These assessments can be adjusted in order to take into account the challenges identified.

The Committee would also welcome views on these questions too:

How we develop a baseline from which to measure progress? This includes how we collect, coordinate and use data to support sustainable land management in Wales.

Wales, together with the rest of Britain, already has a long tradition of collecting and co-ordinating data but, with the exception of designated sites, is less good at using it. Conservation has always relied on volunteer recorders and naturalists and Wales needs to invest effort to ensure this legacy continues, by supporting measures to recruit new recorders and naturalists. There is a national shortage of these sorts of skills. There are opportunities here to grow the sustainable land management workforce.

Alongside national monitoring schemes such as the Countryside Survey and the Environmental Change Network (<http://www.ecn.ac.uk/>) run by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Wales could capitalise on these by developing land-based research stations, for example by sponsoring farmers or landowners to permit this research on their land. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is at the very earliest stages of considering a monitoring network for this National Park.

There is a wide range of national surveys governed by the specialist organisations that run them (British Trust for Ornithology, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Woodland Trust, Bat Conservation Trust, Bug Life, Botanical Society for the British Isles,



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Butterfly Conservation, Plantlife, etc). We recommend that you figure out a way of co-ordinating and extrapolating information from these for Wales as a whole and for each unitary authority boundary.

These organisations also offer their own training courses and each of them boasts their own roster of volunteers; use them.

It would be extremely helpful to other stakeholders if Natural Resources Wales was to release the digitised Habitats of Wales. This is the most comprehensive baseline of broad habitat types yet developed.

The Brecon Beacons NPA is commencing discussions with the British Geological Survey on what it would take to extend the Tellus Programme (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/gsni/tellus/overview/>) to cover the Brecon Beacons National Park, as well as other areas of South Wales.

The Brecon Beacons NPA has developed a Research Prospectus, with which it aims to develop research partnerships with universities, to help provide answers to a range of environmental questions. One research partnership has already been established.

**What incentives we can provide land managers to develop sustainable practices, and in particular, any new sources of investment we can attract to support these?**

The Brecon Beacons NPA has previously provided a paper outlining how the Welsh Government might re-design agri-environment schemes to provide incubator capital for farm-based environmental management plans designed to improve the market value of farm produce alongside better environmental outcomes; as opposed to one off payments for ecosystem services. The PES approach has limited likelihood of long term sustainable outcomes because it relies on finite sums of money, which are always under review during modulation between financial pillars; and for which there will be less cash available during future iterations of CAP as the EU expands.



Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog  
Plas y Ffynnon, Ffordd Cambrian, Aberhonddu, Powys, LD3 7HP  
Ffôn: (01874) 624437 Ffacs: (01874) 622574  
E-bost: [ymholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org](mailto:yhmholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org)  
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Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP  
Telephone: (01874) 624437 Fax: (01874) 622574  
E-mail: [enquiries@breconbeacons.org](mailto:enquiries@breconbeacons.org)  
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An investment scheme on the other hand would be able to grow the incubator investment, achieve added value and through this recoup the investment for re-investing elsewhere. This approach would stimulate diverse original thinking amongst farm businesses (as opposed to the prescriptive approach of agri-environment schemes); it would attract private sector interest (business advice as well as additional investment to meet corporate social responsibility portfolios); it would avoid agri-environment payments functioning as income (which risks creating a raft of agri-environment-dependent farm businesses to follow on the heels of subsidy-dependent farm businesses); it would provide a market incentive to farmers to learn more; it would help to broaden the public support for farming and farm-based environmental goods and services; and it would help to create and expand a farm-based market where the success of the farm business is based upon environmental outcomes as much as food quality. This would also create space for new entrants with new ideas. Wales and Britain will need more, new farmers in order to help build resilient future.

### The most appropriate geographical scale(s) at which we should be delivering sustainable land management policies and practices in Wales?

The existing network of designated sites and landscapes and seascapes (National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natura 2000 Network, Ramsar Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Marine Reserves, Geoparks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest), alongside other nature reserves owned and managed by non-governmental organisations, provide Wales with a network with which to develop a national biodiversity restoration plan. This can work by ensuring that this network is provided with opportunities to expand (in an ecologically coherent way) and that it is supported and provides support in turn, by more biodiversity conservation in the wider countryside; the latter approach has been



#### Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog

Plas y Ffynnon, Ffordd Cambrian, Aberhonddu, Powys, LD3 7HP

Ffôn: (01874) 624437 Ffacs: (01874) 622574

E-bost: [ymholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org](mailto:yhmholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org)

Safle ar y we: [www.bannaubrycheiniog.org](http://www.bannaubrycheiniog.org)

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#### Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP

Telephone: (01874) 624437 Fax: (01874) 622574

E-mail: [enquiries@breconbeacons.org](mailto:enquiries@breconbeacons.org)

Website: [www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org)

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articulated widely and repeatedly over the past thirty years and it is still true today.

Finally, as an appendix we provide examples of sustainable land management underway in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Sinnadurai  
Conservation Manager  
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority



**Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog**

Plas y Ffynnon, Ffordd Cambrian, Aberhonddu, Powys, LD3 7HP

Ffôn: (01874) 624437 Ffacs: (01874) 622574

E-bost: [ymholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org](mailto:yhmholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org)

Safle ar y we: [www.bannaubrycheiniog.org](http://www.bannaubrycheiniog.org)

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**Brecon Beacons National Park Authority**

Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP

Telephone: (01874) 624437 Fax: (01874) 622574

E-mail: [enquiries@breconbeacons.org](mailto:enquiries@breconbeacons.org)

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## Appendix: Examples of sustainable land management underway in the Brecon Beacons National Park

### Partnerships:-

- Meithrin Mynydd Group (chaired by the Authority, with representatives from the Mynydd Du Graziers and conservation organisations affecting Mynydd Du SSSI)
- Waterfall Country Management Plan partnership (affecting Coedydd Nedd a Mellte SAC and environs)
- Waun Fignen Felen Management Forum (bog restoration partnership affecting an area of bog on Mynydd Du SSSI)
- Cantref Catchment Management Steering Group (led by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, a catchment management project to solve water discolouration in Cantref Reservoir)
- Partnership with Manor Penderyn Commoners Association to obtain Welsh Government consent for the retention of a fence separating two commons, enabling sustainable land mgmt. to be developed
- Llangors Lake Advisory Group (all stakeholders and landowners affecting this SAC lake)
- Wye and Usk Foundation fisheries restoration projects  
<http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/>, including the ISAC Project restoring the River Irfon ( <http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/isac/>)

### Direct work:-

- High standards of planning conditions for planning permissions affecting biodiversity
- The Woollenline Project on Pen Trumau (Black Mountains SSSI)  
<http://woollenline.wordpress.com/>



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- Service level agreements and now staff secondment to The Green Valleys CIC, generating a range of community-led biodiversity and local woodland group initiatives
- Completion of hedging, ditching and scrub clearance works on terrestrial habitats within Llangors Lake SAC
- Annual heather and grass burning on Authority-owned land (Black Mountains SSSI, Mynydd Du SSSI and Mynydd Myddfai)
- Service level agreement with Biodiversity Information Service for Powys and the Brecon Beacons National Park
- Completion of a biodiversity audit of the four key settlements in the Park under the Planning Improvement Fund
- Partnership with graziers of four commons on the Mynydd Du complex to assist them to develop their Glastir advanced schemes; also providing advice to graziers on Mynydd Illtyd and Cefn Llechid
- Other graziers associations in the Park to have submitted expressions of interest include Brecon Beacons, Mynydd Llangynidr, Mynydd Llangattock and Buckland Manor
- Moving closer towards the designation of Talybont Reservoir LNR
- Dwr Cymru Welsh Water submitted a Talybont Reservoir catchment management project to the Resilient Ecosystems Fund
- Brecon Beacons NPA submitted an evidence-gathering and partnership-building project proposal for the Black Mountains SSSI to the Resilient Ecosystems Fund
- Better Woodlands for Wales grant-assisted projects completed at four woodland sites, most notably Carreg Cennen SSSI
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan and capital budget projects completed on time and to budget



Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog

Plas y Ffynnon, Ffordd Cambrian, Aberhonddu, Powys, LD3 7HP

Ffôn: (01874) 624437 Ffacs: (01874) 622574

E-bost: [ymholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org](mailto:yhmholiadau@bannaubrycheiniog.org)

Safe ar y we: [www.bannaubrycheiniog.org](http://www.bannaubrycheiniog.org)

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Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP

Telephone: (01874) 624437 Fax: (01874) 622574

E-mail: [enquiries@breconbeacons.org](mailto:enquiries@breconbeacons.org)

Website: [www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org)

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- Successful year with the Black Mountains Volunteers and Waterfall Country Volunteers, both groups growing
- Completion of the Mellte lower plants survey to extend the Gorge Walking Code of Conduct for this gorge
- Provision of training and early career development for new entrants into countryside management; most recently this Authority has received Heritage Lottery Funding under the Future Skills Future People theme. This will provide countryside management training for six trainee wardens each year for the next three years, commencing 2014
- This list does not include all the habitat and species management undertaken by Natural Resources Wales on National Nature Reserves; the Section 15 management agreements on Sites of Special Scientific Interest; the habitat and species management work undertaken by The National Trust Wales and Brecknock Wildlife Trust on their reserves; and the work undertaken by farmers and other landowners, with or without agri-environment schemes.
- Sustainable land management can and is also being achieved through the planning system. The Brecon Beacons NPA uses its Planning Obligations Strategy to provide management measures that are relevant to the development but which cannot be achieved through planning conditions. Additionally, through its draft Local Development Plan, the Brecon Beacons NPA has used an environmental constraints model to develop planning policies; the LDP is nearing its final stages of inspectorate scrutiny. Once adopted, the Authority will commence a programme to work in partnership with communities to develop community plans. These have the potential to evolve into local land management plans.



**Environment and Sustainability Committee  
Inquiry into Sustainable Land Management  
Response from The National Association for Areas of  
Outstanding Natural Beauty**

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) is a voluntary body whose membership includes all but one of the AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards in England and Wales, many of the Local Authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, a Trust which manages AONBs in Northern Ireland, as well as a number of voluntary bodies and individuals with an interest in the future of these nationally designated landscapes.

Thank you for the opportunity to input to this Welsh Assembly Inquiry.

**GENERAL POINTS**

Wise use of land is a fundamental building block in achieving wider ambitions for sustainability. We know from many sources ([Planetary Boundaries](#)) that 'business as usual' is no longer a viable option. We need a change in approach to land management, one that moves us towards living within the limits of the natural world and more fairly with each other, locally, nationally and globally.

The challenge is to articulate a long term policy direction and select the actions or series of actions that will bring about the necessary changes in

**The National Association for  
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Fosse Way  
Northleach  
Gloucestershire GL54 3JH  
Tel: 01451 862007  
Fax: 01451 862001  
Email: [jill.smith@landscapesforlife.org.uk](mailto:jill.smith@landscapesforlife.org.uk)

A company limited by guarantee no: 4729800  
Registered office as above

approach. We need to move to securing and restoring ecosystem services rather than unwittingly support ecosystem disservice.

Decisions about current and future land management practices are complex and complicated. The majority of land in Wales is privately owned with large areas operated by private estates. The motivations driving landowners and land managers choices about land use are many and varied; from personal knowledge to peer practice, market forces, fiscal regimes and government policy initiatives.

The case for building social and environmental value through land management practices should be the central goal of policy-making. As long as the achievement of good outcomes is separate from the real business of business, we will not see these outcomes achieved. Similarly, public policy cannot hope to create the best possible social and environmental outcomes unless we adjust the focus of policy-making.

The NAAONB supports the notion that functioning ecosystem services underpin the wealth, health and wellbeing of Wales and its people.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are distinctive landscapes of outstanding quality and value. The landscapes themselves are strategic national assets, and the partnerships that govern the AONB designation are in a prime position to advance sustainable development for the people of Wales.

AONB designation provides Welsh government with a framework for supporting sustainable management of special places, key habitats and functional ecosystems. AONB landscapes are understood by people and provide the ideal framework in which to negotiate and agree sustainable land use decision-making. At the core of this negotiated framework for change lie AONB Management Plans, valuable statutory mechanisms that can help shape and deliver long term visions for landscapes and ecosystems.

## DETAILED POINTS:

The NAAONB is keen to ensure that there is clear and consistent use and communication of terminology to support better understanding of land management objectives. To achieve this, we need to understand the mutually supportive relationship between landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The NAAONB subscribes to the EU Landscape Convention definition<sup>1</sup> of landscape:

*“An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”.*

The NAAONB supports the adoption of the ecosystems approach to land use planning, management and development. In England, AONBs have been piloting a checklist for land managers and delivery bodies to support holistic, integrated and joined up decision making. The NAAONB is keen that this experience and practice should be shared widely in the Welsh context.

The possibility that ecosystem disservice may occur must be kept in mind when planning, evaluating and monitoring the ecosystem approach. The distinction between an ecosystem service and disservice could be dependent upon the context and perceptions of actors involved. To improve the understanding of possible disservice, collaboration between landscape managers, ecologists and social scientists should explore interactions and provide quantifiable analysis of costs and benefits.

**QUESTION – How we define the key ecosystems and ecosystem services in a way that makes sense for Wales?**

The functional grouping of ecosystem services has been widely adopted.

Defining, mapping and communicating ecosystem services is a critical first step to better decision making about land use. It allows land use

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<sup>1</sup>

decision makers to:

- Understand the resource implications of land use decisions – What the key risks of their actions and decisions to ecosystem health are,
- Develop “Opportunities maps” where targeted activity will safeguard or restore ecosystem functionality,
- Help people, without a science background, understand how the ‘land’ contributes to society’s wellbeing.

The NAAONB is aware that there are sufficient data sets currently available to begin the process of mapping ecosystem services. Gaps in data do exist, especially for the full suite of ecosystems (i.e. marine data) and for the full suite of ecosystem services – we are aware more work is required to support better understanding of cultural services.

AONB partnerships can and should help with this work. A number of AONBs are already working to improve the read across from landscape character assessments to ecosystem services mapping. Much good work has been undertaken by the former Countryside Council for Wales and the Joint Nature Conservancy Council.

See

- Spatial framework for assessing evidence needs for operational ecosystem approaches <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6241>
- The 'Ecosystem Service Mapping Gateway', developed by the NERC Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BESS) Directorate, with funding from Natural England, brings together information on the growing number of projects concerned with mapping ecosystem service delivery at the landscape level <http://www.nerc-bess.net/index.php/bess-news/114-new-ecosystem-service-mapping-gateway>
- Landscape permeability mapping – Dorset AONB [http://www.cordialeproject.eu/en/toolkit/tools/tool\\_03\\_biodiversity\\_corridor\\_mapping\\_methodology/](http://www.cordialeproject.eu/en/toolkit/tools/tool_03_biodiversity_corridor_mapping_methodology/)

What is required, now, is a concerted effort to share approaches, build good practice and ensure consistent and compatible data is used across a variety of spatial scales – local to regional to national/ international.

**QUESTION – How we develop a baseline from which to measure progress? This includes how we collect, coordinate and use data to support sustainable land management in Wales.**

AONB partnerships are well placed to use the landscape framework to compile and negotiate integrated landscape/ ecosystem services planning. Central to achieving this will be the use of common methodologies for data capture and display and compliance with the EU INSPIRE directive.

The NAAONB recognises that agencies and organisations will need to work harder at integrating data use and ensuring there is a ‘clear line of sight’ between landscape, ecological and ecosystems mapping and monitoring.

The NAAONB is working with AONB partnerships to develop a common approach to landscape monitoring that adds effectively to the current work on ecosystems mapping. In Wales, the State of the Environment 2012 reporting together with State of AONBs work provides an excellent start–point for building a common and respected platform for integrated data sharing and monitoring of landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

**QUESTION – What incentives we can provide land managers to develop sustainable practices, and in particular, any new sources of investment we can attract to support these?**

The NAAONB has been working with a wide range of interested organisations to support High Nature Value (HNV) farming as a practical short to medium term response to landscape management.

In a Welsh context, High Nature Value (HNV) farming covers a large proportion of the country – mainly associated with extensive beef and

sheep farming in the uplands and marginal farming areas, because of its high reliance on semi-natural vegetation (vegetation comprising native plants and maintained by grazing and/or mowing which has not been agriculturally 'improved') and unimproved pastures for grazing. However there are also examples from the lowlands which include some low input arable/mixed farming systems and coastal habitats which contain a mosaic of semi-natural features which support a rich assemblage of wildlife.

HNV farming relies upon the sympathetic land management practices of farmers – such as grazing with low stocking rates, the traditional mowing of hay meadows, leaving fallow areas, cutting rush or undertaking habitat restoration – all vital for maintaining many of our priority habitats and ensuring the survival of our most threatened wildlife species.

A coalition of organisations has identified five things the UK Government and Devolved Administrations can do to support High Nature Value (HNV) farming

- Through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), ensure that High Nature Value (HNV) farmers are properly rewarded for supporting our most precious wildlife and landscapes. Across the UK, there are thousands of farming businesses that contribute hugely to supporting our best natural assets, but these are failed by current CAP approaches,
- Prioritise spending on targeted Rural Development Programmes across the UK that support the farming systems most important for wildlife, and secure viable incomes for HNV farmers to enable them to deliver for society and the environment,
- Build on what we've got: through valuable funding programmes such as LIFE+ and INTERREG, support local community led initiatives that encourage the continuation of sustainable grazing and land management in places of highest value. These initiatives

can foster investment in HNV systems, for example, via appropriate processing, marketing, revenues from certified products, sustainable tourism and business support,

- Make progress in identifying and monitoring HNV systems – this is a priority of the European Commission and a requirement for all Member States. In the UK, the Scottish Government has already made considerable progress in developing a HNV farming indicator; England, Wales and Northern Ireland must now follow suit and make this a policy priority, ensuring farmers are engaged in the process,
- Invest in research on HNV farming systems across the UK, including an assessment of the broad benefits they provide for society and the threats they face. The ‘sustainable intensification’ approach to farming fails to recognise the important environmental, cultural and economic benefits that these more extensive farming systems can provide.

**QUESTION – How we ensure that our sustainable land management policies maintain vibrant rural communities and attract new entrants into the land-based sector?**

The NAAONB supports an expansion of the concept of ‘subsidiarity’ – the idea that decisions are best taken at as local a scale as possible within a wider strategic framework agreed at a higher level.

Greater local production will require us to re learn many skills that have been forgotten. From agriculture to manufacturing to the provision of local finance, returning to appropriate scale means equipping ourselves with the means to do so.

A great strength of AONB partnerships lies in their ability to develop fit for purpose planning and business approaches that engage a wide range of stakeholders and deliver integrated solutions locally.

**QUESTION – The most appropriate geographical scale(s) at which we should be delivering sustainable land management policies and practices in Wales?**

The NAAONB recognises the benefits for integrated delivery that would flow from more consistent geographic focus for land management policies and practices. Existing administrative boundaries are rarely the best units for managing natural resources. AONB designated areas provide valuable geographic scales with strong community identification as well as ready-made stakeholder partnerships.

There is a case to be made for developing a common land management unit that all stakeholders understand and can relate to. A proposal could be to use river catchments as the common land management unit. The NAAONB is keen to play an active role in developing approaches based on common land management units.

**QUESTION – If there are key actions we can take to deliver short-term ‘quick wins’ and the actions we should be taking for the long-term?**

There are a number of key steps that will assist all partners in moving toward more sustainable land management in Wales.

**Key Steps – Recognition of the Challenge, including**

- Acceptance and support for the fundamental principle that earth-system processes are necessary for ensuring a safe operating space for humanity,
- Acknowledging the need to act in order to safeguard such processes from the threats of serious or irreversible damage as a result of human activities,
- Researching and developing our understanding of the nature and vulnerabilities of such processes, including the thresholds at which



they could shift into new states and where boundaries at a safe distance from such thresholds would lie,

- Identifying the human activities that affect such processes, and monitoring the effects of such activities, including collecting, collating and presenting scientific data and information by reference to such processes and the human activities which affect them and
- Developing and communicating information about such processes in ways which are transparent and designed to encourage public engagement, trust, common understanding and acceptance of shared responsibility for safeguarding them.

#### **Key Steps – Partnership Action including**

- Baseline mapping of ecosystems and ecosystem services to establish extent of functioning and degraded ecosystems,
- Clearly articulated ambitions for restoration of degraded ecosystems with focus on “buffering” and extending priority habitats,
- A focus on restoring deep peatlands, ancient woodlands and riverine habitats,
- A focus on catchments and the water system,
- A focus on the woodland system,
- Support of HNV farming as part of CAP reform,
- Support of AONB Management Plans and the work of AONB partnerships as tried and tested mechanisms for delivering the ecosystems approach.

#### **KEY NAAONB POINTS**

Adopting an ecosystem approach is more than managing the environment as an integrated system; it involves managing societal and economic drivers as part of this system. This is fundamental, in our view,

to achieving sustainable development and is a key principle behind the landscape approach. AONB partnerships, in their delivery of the AONB purpose, have an exceptionally important role to play in moving toward a more sustainable Wales.

The AONB designation acts as a framework for systematic, co-operative planning, and actively supports social well-being in ways consistent with the AONB purpose.

The NAAONB asserts that sustainable land management is at the heart of decision making within AONBs. By supporting AONB partnerships and plans Welsh Government can

- Build stakeholder engagement in land use decision making, (PEOPLE)
- Integrate decision-making to benefit landscapes and functional ecosystems whilst prioritising returns to the local economy (ECONOMY)
- Ensure long term management of natural capital and ecosystem service delivery (ENVIRONMENT)

NAAONB  
September 2013

## Environment and Sustainability Committee

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Meeting Venue: Committee Room 3 – Senedd

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Meeting date: Thursday, 12 December 2013

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Meeting time: 09:35 – 13:35

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Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



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### Concise Minutes:

#### Assembly Members:

Dafydd Elis-Thomas (Chair)  
Mick Antoniw  
Russell George  
Llyr Gruffydd  
Julie James  
Julie Morgan  
William Powell  
Antoinette Sandbach  
Joyce Watson

#### Witnesses:

Gill Bell, Marine Conservation Society  
Gareth Clubb, Friends of the Earth Cymru  
Professor Peter Matthews, Natural Resources Wales  
Anne Meikle, WWF Cymru  
Professor Gareth Wyn Jones, Bangor University  
Dr Tim Peppin, Welsh Local Government Association  
Dr Emyr Roberts, Natural Resources Wales  
Neville Rookes, Welsh Local Government Association  
Rachel Sharp, Wildlife Trusts Wales  
Katie-jo Luxton, RSPB Cymru  
Professor Nick Pidgeon, Cardiff University  
Professor James Scourse, Climate Change Consortium of Wales

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Committee Staff:

Alun Davidson (Clerk)  
Naomi Stocks (Second Clerk)  
Catherine Hunt (Deputy Clerk)  
Nia Seaton (Researcher)  
Chloe Corbyn (Researcher)

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## **1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions**

1.1 There were no apologies or substitutions.

## **2 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for items 3, 8 and 9**

2.1 The Committee agreed the Motion.

## **3 Climate Change**

3.1 The witnesses responded to questions from members of the Committee.

## **4 Environment Bill – White Paper : Evidence from Natural Resources Wales**

4.1 Professor Matthews and Dr Roberts responded to questions from members of the Committee.

## **5 Environment Bill – White Paper : Evidence from Environment Groups**

5.1 The witnesses responded to questions from members of the Committee.

## **6 Environment Bill – White Paper : Evidence from the Welsh Local Government Association**

6.1 The witnesses responded to questions from members of the Committee.

## **7 Papers to note**

7.1 The Committee noted the minutes

### **Draft Budget 2014–2015 – Chair's report**

7.2 The Committee noted the report.

## **8 Inquiry into non native invasive species – draft letter to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food**

8.1 The Committee agreed the content of the letter and that it should be published as a committee report.

## **9 Control of Horses (Wales) Bill – Consideration of draft guidance**

9.1 The Committee agreed that Members would write to the Minister individually with their comments on the draft guidance.

Alun Davies AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd  
Minister for Natural Resources and Food



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref

Lord Elis-Thomas AM  
Chair  
Environment and Sustainability Committee  
The National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

18 December 2013

## COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY – TRANSFER OF BUDGETS BETWEEN PILLARS

I will be making a statement to the National Assembly on 14 January 2014 about decisions I will be taking over the next few weeks on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). On 23 January I will be meeting the Committee to discuss the same subject.

In advance of my statement and our meeting I thought it would be helpful if I wrote to you about the transfer of budgets between the two CAP funding Pillars. The CAP regulations provide for the transfer of budgets between the Pillars and, should Member States wish to do this, they are required to inform the European Commission by 31 December 2013.

The main CAP regulatory framework is now finalised, and we recently had confirmation of the allocation of the UK budget for the period 2014-20. I am considering the responses to my consultation on CAP Pillar 1 (direct payments to farmers), as well as the emerging findings of the review of resilience in the farming industry which Kevin Roberts is undertaking. Peter Davies has also reported to me the views of the Rural Development Plan (RDP) Advisory Group in relation to the future of Pillar 2 in Wales. I will publish both these reviews early in the New Year.

I have been clear from the outset of CAP reform that I regard both Pillars as crucial to the future development of Welsh agriculture, and that they should be taken together as a single package. Alongside direct payments, the RDP provides essential business support for farming; it underpins vital programmes for people living and working in rural Wales, and the majority of activity and expenditure is of direct benefit for our farmers, principally through advice and training, and through the provision of agri-environment schemes. In the current Plan over 80% of all the available funding has gone to recipients of Pillar 1 subsidy. Not only am I committed to ensuring that this level of support under Pillar 2 continues, my ambition has been to build on it and make further investments in the future of our agricultural industry and the wider economy of rural Wales.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)  
paper*

Page 69

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300  
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400  
Correspondence: Alun.Davies@wales.gsi.gov.uk  
*Printed on 100% recycled*

There is another key reason for developing Pillar 2 effectively. I believe that the reduction of the CAP budget for 2014-20 agreed last spring, while regrettable, is the first step in a real terms – and perhaps absolute - decline in direct payment support for farming as the EU shifts the balance of its spending and adjusts to tougher economic circumstances. It is very important that Wales uses the coming period to 2019 to put its farming industry on the best possible footing to face further public funding reductions from 2020. As a policy tool, Pillar 2 allows for effective targeting of interventions and more tailored support to agriculture and our rural communities - in that sense it provides a better return for public expenditure than Pillar 1, where outcomes can be less easily determined or secured. I recognise only too well that Pillar 1 provides income support which is important for an industry that faces risks from a range of sources, but Pillar 1 cannot be a never-ending subsidy, and I believe it also serves to stifle the modernisation and innovation that are crucial for the future competitiveness of our industry in Wales. As the latest Farm Business Survey data indicate, there remains a wide gap in performance between the top and bottom quartile of farms across nearly all the sectors.

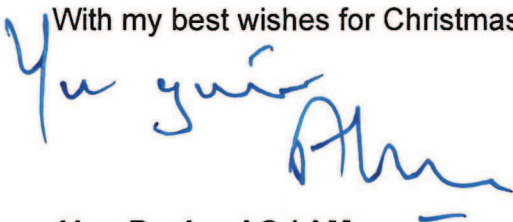
For the above reasons I have concluded that I will not transfer any money from Pillar 2 into Pillar 1. I have also decided that I will transfer 15% from Pillar 1 to 2, which is the maximum permitted level, providing £286m over the lifetime of the new Wales Rural Development Programme (WRDP). Alongside the EU contribution and domestic co-financing - about which I shall say more on 14 January – this transfer will underpin a rural development fund large enough to help the farming industry in a sustainable and meaningful way. I shall begin consultation on my proposed new RDP measures in February, but my intention is to offer a multi-faceted, integrated and properly resourced package to encourage and support a wide range of farm improvements. This is within the context of the clear need for improved productivity, better environmental practice and actions that respond to the challenge of climate change and its risks, and to exploit opportunities for increased profitability through green growth.

In light of our experience of recent years, Welsh farming must also become better able to withstand setbacks from price volatility or natural causes. Investing in businesses and people to improve efficiency, strengthen supply chains, and open up a diverse range of market-rewarded opportunities, must be the long-term answer to these challenges. The dairy sector has helped lead the way in using the latest knowledge and techniques to improve efficiency and effectiveness, but other sectors have not made as much progress in these areas. The new Rural Development Programme support package will improve uptake of best practice and learning across all the livestock sectors. I am particularly mindful of the greater challenges facing upland farming, and determined that the new RDP will provide particular and targeted support for this sector.

This is a time of significant change for Welsh agriculture, but also one of considerable opportunity. I am optimistic about the future for Welsh agriculture and determined that these CAP measures should put our industry on the best possible footing for the future.

I look forward to discussing these matters further with the Committee on 23 January.

With my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.



**Alun Davies AC / AM**  
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd  
Minister for Natural Resources and Food

Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AC / AM  
Gweinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth  
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM  
Chair  
Environment and Sustainability  
Committee

20 December 2013

dafydd.elis-thomas@wales.gov.uk

Dear Dafydd

Thank you for your letter of 13 November, seeking clarity on a number of issues relating to the proposed M4 relief road at Newport.

The document at Annex A provides responses to the questions raised.

The consultation on the draft Plan closed on 16 December. My officials have started to collate and assess the responses and will report to me on the findings in due course.



## Welsh Government Responses to Queries Raised by the Environment and Sustainability Committee 13 November 2013

### **Q1) Details on the planned process for taking forward and developing the proposals once the consultation has closed, including timelines and how they link in with other plans such as the South East Wales Metro.**

The Welsh Government will use the responses to the draft Plan Consultation to decide whether or not to adopt the draft Plan without or without amendment. In making its decision, the Welsh Government will take into account consultation responses to the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment. The Welsh Government may then decide to announce a preferred route which would protect a corridor for planning purposes. An announcement will be made in summer 2014, once the Welsh Government has made its decision.

Traffic modelling during the draft Plan development<sup>1</sup> identified that a highly significant increase in public transport usage in the Newport area would not solve the problems on the M4 around Newport. However, Welsh Government recognised the importance of public transport improvements and a dedicated separate task group was formed for this purpose.

The Welsh Government has recently published Mark Barry's study of proposals to develop a metro system for South East Wales<sup>2</sup>. The report focuses on how a metro system could support economic growth and regeneration at key locations across South East Wales. The M4 Corridor around Newport draft Plan is compatible with, and will complement, the South East Wales Metro and the electrification of the rail network.

The potential key dates for taking the M4 Corridor around Newport forward should the draft Plan be adopted are:

1. Announcement by Welsh Government whether to adopt the draft Plan with or without amendment: **Summer 2014.**
2. Publication of draft Orders and Environmental Statement: **Summer 2016.**
3. Public Local Inquiry: **Winter 2016/2017.**
4. Start of Construction: **Spring 2018**
5. Completion of Motorway Construction: **Autumn 2021**
6. Completion of work associated with reclassification of existing motorway **Spring 2022.**

### **Q2) Further details on why Highway Option C (Grade separated junction improvements to the A48 Newport Southern Distributor Road) was removed as an [sic] possible option in the current consultation.**

The M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures (CEM) public consultation, held between March and July 2012, included consultation on Highway Option C (Grade separated junction improvements to the A48 Newport Southern Distributor Road).

Some respondents to the M4 CEM consultation challenged Highway Option C as a solution or clearly stated that Option C would not address the problems or achieve the goals chosen. This view was borne out by analysis, which indicated that, whilst Option C would be likely to result in local benefits, these would not be focused on relief to the motorway, especially at the Brynglas Tunnels. By the design year (2035), analysis has shown that the traffic levels

<sup>1</sup> M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures Public Transport Overview, February 2013  
<http://www.m4cem.com/reports%20and%20newsletters.html>

<sup>2</sup> Cardiff Capital Region Metro: Impact Study, October 2013 <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/integrated/metro/?lang=en>



through the Brynglas tunnels under Option C would be reduced by only some 4% compared to a do-minimum scenario.

The WelTAG process focuses on the overarching Welsh impact areas of economy, society and environment so that the Welsh Government can make reasoned and auditable decisions. Decision making on the M4 around Newport continues to follow the Welsh Government's standard WelTAG appraisal process and is publicly reported in the Corridor Enhancement Measures (CEM) WelTAG Stage 1 (Strategy Level) Report and M4 Corridor around Newport WelTAG Stage 1 Appraisal (Strategy Level) Report. These are both available at [www.wales.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations) and [www.m4newport.com](http://www.m4newport.com).

Based on the CEM Consultation and the WelTAG appraisal, it was thus recommended that Option C should not be taken forward for further appraisal and consultation.

### **Q3) Details of why development of the Steelworks Access Road was not considered in the initial M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures consultation either alone or in combination with Highway Option C.**

The improvement of the Steelworks Access Road (A4810) was included as a measure to aid access to the Newport Eastern Expansion Area in the M4 CEM Strategy, Appraisal and Monitoring Report. The scheme included roundabouts and intermediate signal controlled junctions to provide access to existing employment sites and new development sites.

Measures to upgrade the Steelworks Access Road to dual 3 lanes with grade separation and rationalisation of junctions were considered in the M4 CEM Programme. A high level appraisal of this option is provided in a 'Discarded Measure Appraisal Summary Worksheet', provided at Page 27 of the M4 CEM Alternatives Considered Workbook, publicly available at [www.m4cem.com](http://www.m4cem.com). To upgrade the road to this motorway standard, along with the necessary service roads and junctions to serve existing and planned residential and employment land developments, would involve considerable land and property acquisition, with associated expenditure. Additionally, this option was not progressed for consultation due to the subsequent reduced accessibility to the existing commercial and industrial areas served by this road and the planned 4000 houses at the Glan Llyn site.

For further details of options considered as part of the development of the draft Plan and the reasons why they were not progressed, please refer to the M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures (CEM) WelTAG Stage 1 (Strategy Level) Report, M4 Corridor around Newport WelTAG Stage 1 Appraisal (Strategy Level) Report and M4 CEM Alternatives Considered Workbook. The M4 CEM documents can be found at [www.m4cem.com](http://www.m4cem.com) and the WelTAG reports are available at [www.m4newport.com](http://www.m4newport.com).

### **Q4) Clarity as to the status of the Strategic Environmental Assessment completed as part of the M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures consultation.**

The strategic level environmental assessment carried out during M4 CEM reported on measures and options that were under consideration to solve transport related problems affecting the M4 around Newport. This assessment was consulted on and the responses received to this assessment assisted with the subsequent preparation and assessment of the M4 Corridor around Newport draft Plan and its Reasonable Alternatives. An Environmental Report has been prepared for the draft Plan in accordance with Regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Wales) Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) and published in accordance with Regulation 13 of the SEA Regulations. This Report can be accessed at [www.m4Newport.com](http://www.m4Newport.com).

**Q5) Why have the environmental impacts been reduced in the current Strategic Environmental Assessment as compared to the M4 Corridor Enhancement Measures consultation? For example biodiversity, soil, water and material assets have all been changed from major negative to minor negative.**

Following the 2012 assessments, potential additional mitigation measures were identified that would deliver benefits. The 2013 SEA consequently included these additional mitigation measures which would be integrated into a project's design should the decision be taken to progress the draft Plan with or without amendment. Assessment methodology has remained consistent.

Summary of changes to the categories referred to are as follows:

### **Biodiversity and Water**

The biodiversity and water receptors of the Gwent Levels SSSIs are dependent upon the water volume and quality of the reen network.

The 2012 strategic level environmental assessment of an additional high quality road to the south of Newport (M4 CEM Option A) identified potential negative effects due to its potential implementation. The 2013 SEA introduces measures to reduce direct and indirect effects on biodiversity features and water resources. Newly introduced measures include:

- Water treatment areas: attenuation ponds to store and dilute runoff in-combination with treatment via a reedbed filtration system prior to release to local watercourses. Integration of water treatment areas throughout the highway would provide significant biodiversity enhancement as additional resource and habitat complexity whilst also maintaining compliance with the WFD.
- Creation of new reen system to offset the loss of reens through construction of a highway. The created reen would exceed the length of reen lost and would be constructed to the required Internal Drainage Board specification; often representing an enhancement in quality compared to that lost.
- Consideration of an overarching management strategy for the Gwent Levels. An ambition to raise the quality of the Gwent Levels beyond the requirements for protected features to the benefit of wider biodiversity.

The additional mitigation measures meant the 2013 SEA concluded lower overall negative effects. At a project level, should a draft Plan be adopted, an aim would be to demonstrate these measures would provide an overall benefit to biodiversity and compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD). It is not possible to reach this conclusion at the strategic stage of assessment.

### **Material Assets**

The 2013 SEA considered the short-term use of energy and materials for construction and the long-term benefit gained from improved vehicle efficiency and integration of energy efficient technologies into any highway subsequently developed. This was therefore assessed overall as a minor negative effect.

### **Soils**

The 2013 SEA considers the potential enhancement of the soil resource that would result from developing the considered options. Large tracts of land along the highway alignments feature contaminated land. Development of a highway option would require remediation of contaminated land; remediation would represent a significant benefit for the soil resource.

**Q6) We understand that the line of the black route included in the current consultation is further north than the protected line contained in the constraints maps published as part of Newport Council's deposit LDP. Please explain this variation and clarify which route is correct.**

The route corridor given 'TR 111' protection in 2006 is that shown in Newport Council's deposit LDP. The TR 111 plan is available on [www.m4newport.com](http://www.m4newport.com).

The Black Route, as presented in the draft Plan, is the current proposed alignment and includes minor changes to reflect consultation, investigation and analysis since 2006 leading up to the current consultation.

Dependant on the outcomes of the current consultation, further minor changes could be made to the alignment. If the draft Plan is adopted, with or without amendment, the alignment would be reprotected for planning purposes with an updated TR 111.

**Q7) What, if any, cost benefit analysis / economic impact analysis has been undertaken, and can this be shared with the Committee?**

Analysis at a strategic level of appraisal has been undertaken to consider the economic impacts of the draft Plan and its Reasonable Alternatives.

Information on the 'Economic Activity and Location Impact' (EALI) of the draft Plan (and its Reasonable Alternatives) is provided in the M4 Corridor around Newport draft Plan Consultation document, and the M4 Corridor around Newport WelTAG Stage 1 (strategy level) Report, which can be accessed on web sites [www.wales.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations) or [www.M4Newport.com](http://www.M4Newport.com).

An Outline Business Case was issued to the Finance Committee in September 2009 which indicated a very high value for money benefit to cost ratio for the proposal at that time. Should a draft Plan be adopted, detailed cost benefit analysis would be made available for the current proposal.

**Q8) A number of witnesses raised concerns about the data used for the forecasting of traffic growth. They highlighted that traffic has plateaued in recent years, yet the forecast is showing an increase in demand. Could you provide further detail on how these figures have been calculated?**

The M4 Corridor around Newport Consultation Document<sup>3</sup> shows observed and forecast traffic levels on the existing M4. This shows substantial growth occurring in the late 1990s, followed by a generally flat profile prior to the economic downturn in 2007/2008, which was further affected by the major road works on the M4 in 2009 and 2010. Following the completion of these road works, traffic volumes have risen back to around the 2005 pre global recession level. 'TEMPRO' (Trip End Model Presentation Program) forecasts show growth from 2011 onwards.

Forecasts are made in accordance with the Welsh Government WelTAG and Department for Transport WebTAG guidance (see [www.dft.gov.uk/webtag](http://www.dft.gov.uk/webtag)). Calculation methodology is explained as follows.

Traffic surveys were carried out between March and May 2012 to enable comparison with forecast traffic flows and update the M4 traffic model. Attached at Annex B is a copy of "Figure 7.2: 2012 Traffic Flows and Urban Motorway Operating Conditions" from the M4 Corridor around Newport WelTAG Appraisal Report Stage 1 (Strategy Level). This shows that in 2012 the M4 at Newport was experiencing traffic flows associated with operational problems, resulting in frequent traffic congestion, which could increase the risk of incidents and accidents occurring.

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<sup>3</sup> Figures 4 and 5, draft Plan Consultation Document, available at [www.m4newport.com](http://www.m4newport.com).

The M4 traffic model was validated using the 2012 information. Further information on the traffic model can be found in the 'M4 Corridor, Newport, Local Model Validation Report (LMVR), Draft 1', November 2012<sup>4</sup>. Traffic forecasts were prepared for the then anticipated opening year of the proposed M4 Corridor around Newport Options in 2020 and the design year of 2035 as required by the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. Car trips were factored using the Department for Transport's National Trip End Model (NTEM), as set out in the TEMPRO version 6.2 program. The growth in goods vehicle trips, both light and heavy vehicles, was based on the forecasts contained in the National Transport Model produced by the Department for Transport. Variable demand modelling has been deployed using DIADEM (Dynamic Integrated Assignment and Demand Modelling) to produce the model forecasts, in accordance with WebTAG unit 3.10 advice. It should be noted that traffic forecasts at this strategic stage of option assessment are based on a number of assumptions. More details of such assumptions are documented in the 'New M4 Project, Magor to Castleton, traffic Forecasting Report', Arup, November 2012, which is available at [www.m4newport.com](http://www.m4newport.com).

With regard to recent and future traffic forecasts your attention is drawn to recent research<sup>5</sup> led by Professor Peter Jones at University College London, who was referred to in Professor Cole's evidence to the Committee.

This research is reported in the Paper "On the Move"<sup>5</sup> which contains the following quote which is relevant to a strategic roads like the M4.:

*"...by 2040 traffic on strategic roads will have grown by 46%, based upon central estimates of population growth, economic growth and the decline in the cost of motoring. In situations where the economy grows faster than expected, where the costs of motoring fall and population grows more quickly, this could mean traffic could grow by as much as 72%. If economic forecasts were downgraded, if population growth stagnated and if motoring technology did not develop as fast as predicted, the increase would be smaller. However, the minimum forecast increase, 24%, is still a substantial rise on current levels."*

Furthermore, in July 2013, the Department for Transport published its command paper entitled Action for roads: a network for the 21st century<sup>6</sup>. The following is a quote from that the paper:

*"Even under our lowest growth forecasts we would expect traffic growth to cause major increases in congestion, greater delays and more unpredictable journeys. Without action, growing demand will place unsustainable pressure on our roads, constraining the economy, limiting our personal mobility and forcing us to spend more time stuck in traffic. This will mean more pollution and more frustration for motorists..."*

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<sup>4</sup> LMVR available on [www.m4cem.com](http://www.m4cem.com).

<sup>5</sup> On the Move, December 2012, written for the RAC Foundation, the Office of Rail Regulation, Independent Transport Commission and Transport Scotland by a research team led by Professor Peter Jones at University College London.

<sup>6</sup> Action for Roads: A network for the 21st Century, Department for Transport, July 2013 (Cm 8679).

## Annex B

### Figure of Traffic Flows and Urban Motorway Operating Conditions

(extract from m4 Corridor around Newport WelTAG Appraisal Report Stage 1 (Strategy Level))

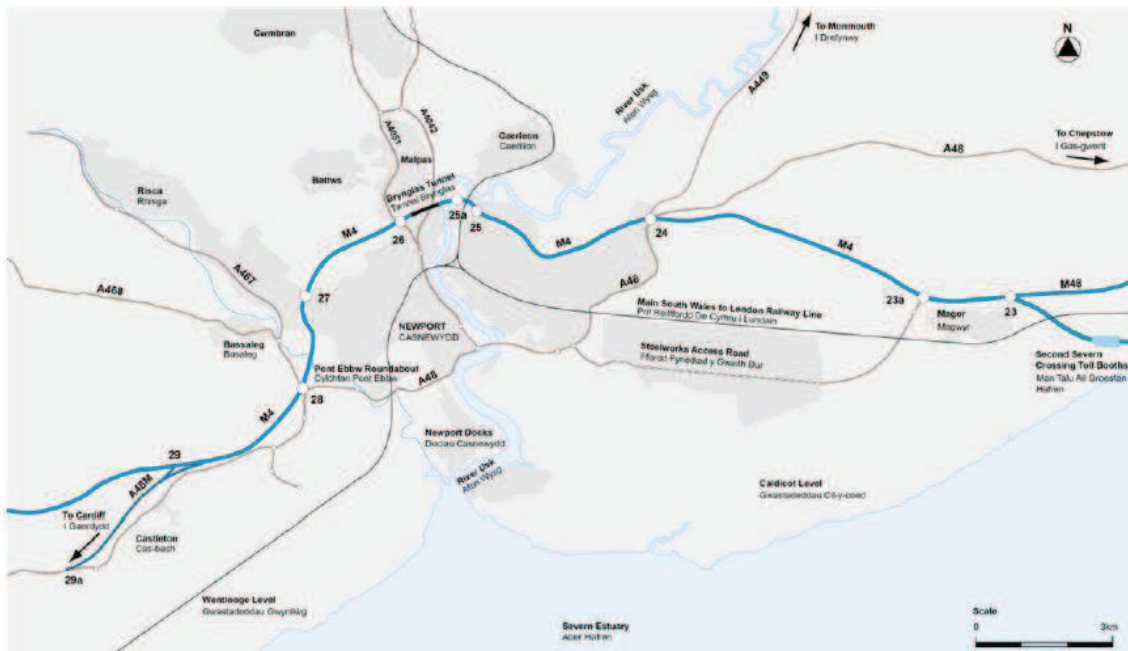
Welsh Government

M4 Corridor around Newport  
WelTAG Appraisal Report Stage 1 (Strategy Level)

**Figure 7.2: 2012 Traffic Flows and Urban Motorway Operating Conditions**

| Location         | 2012 AADT | DMRB Urban Motorway Capacity <sup>19</sup> Veh/hr | Sept 2012 ~ Highest Peak % Flow to Capacity |                      |
|------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|                  |           |                                                   | Average Weekday Peak                        | Maximum Weekday Peak |
| J23a to J24      | 79,300    | 5600                                              | 70.2%                                       | 78.3%                |
| J24 to J25       | 93,400    | 5600                                              | 80.2%                                       | 87.2%                |
| Brynglas Tunnels | 70,100    | 4000                                              | 85.7%                                       | 95.6%                |
| J26 to J27       | 104,400   | 5600                                              | 86.2%                                       | 94.2%                |
| J27 to J28       | 103,400   | 5600                                              | 96.6%                                       | 103.3%               |
| J28 to J29       | 104,200   | 5600                                              | 92.1%                                       | 100.2%               |

| Flow to Capacity | Operational Conditions         |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| < 80%            | Operating within capacity      |
| 80% to 100%      | Operational problems occurring |
| > 100%           | Severe operational problems    |



<sup>19</sup> Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Volume 5, Section 1, Part 3, TA 79/99 Amendment No.1, Traffic Capacity of Urban Roads, Table 2, May 1999