

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 – Senedd

Meeting date:

Wednesday, 7 May 2014

Meeting time:

09.20

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Agenda

Informal pre-meeting (09:20 – 09:30)

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

2 Natural Resources Wales – General scrutiny session (09:30 – 11:00)

(Pages 1 – 169)

E&S(4)-12-14 paper 1

Peter Matthews, Chair

Emyr Roberts, Chief Executive

3 Papers to note (Pages 170 – 171)

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May

Letter from RSPB Cymru : Future Generations Bill (Pages 172 – 173)

E&S(4)-12-14 paper 2

Letter from the Minister for Natural Resources and Food : Water Strategy for Wales
(Page 174)

E&S(4)-12-14 paper 3

Letter from the Minister for Natural Resources and Food : The economic impact of wind farms on tourism (Pages 175 – 176)

E&S(4)-12-14 paper 4

4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for items 5, 6 & 7 (11:00)

Break (11:00 – 11:10)

Private session

5 Proposed terms of reference for forthcoming inquiries (11:10 – 11:25)
(Pages 177 – 182)

6 Inquiry into the Welsh Government's proposals for the M4 around Newport : Consideration of next steps (11:25 – 11:30) (Pages 183 – 198)

7 Sustainable Land Management : Consideration of draft report (11:30 – 12:30)



Briefing for the Environment and Sustainability Committee meeting on 7 May 2014. Natural Resources Wales' first year in operation.

1. Introduction

The purpose of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used, now and in the future. We welcome the opportunity to present to the Committee to show how we've established as an organisation, how we're delivering our priorities, and ensuring that we have the capacity to be a fully-functioning, stand-alone organisation.

We attach a short paper which highlights some of our achievements during 2013/14 (Annex 1).

2. Staff numbers and structure of NRW

The table below shows the staff number on 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014.

Staff Figures		
	Full Time Equivalent	Headcount
April 2013	2070.4	2179
March 2014	1953.8	2053

126 staff have left through voluntary redundancies. The cost is approximately £5.1 million, partly funded through the Welsh Government's Invest to Save budget.

The savings of this voluntary exit scheme are as follows:

2013/14 - £0.9m

2014/15 onwards - £4.3m annually

See Annex 2 for an organogram of our management structure.

3. Remit letter and Performance Management

The Remit Letter 2013/14 issued to NRW by the Minister for Natural Resources and Food indicated that we should pay particular attention to:

- Deliver Business Case Benefits
- Ensure Business Continuity
- Undertake Enforcement
- Ensure Incident Response
- Take forward the Ecosystems Approach
- Specific priorities of Flood Risk Management, supporting jobs & businesses, Access & Recreation, plus the urban environment
- Develop our first Corporate Plan 2014-17

Our Business Plan for 2013/14 was prepared as our response to the Remit Letter. We created a Corporate Dashboard for our Board and Executive to ensure governance and scrutiny over delivery of the Remit Letter and the Business Plan.

See Annex 3 for the paper on the Performance Dashboard presented to the February Board.

The final Performance Dashboard for 2013/14 will be presented at the May Board meeting, and will be published on our website on 7 May 2014.

Here is summary of delivery against the remit letter and the business case:

3.1 Delivering Business Case Benefits

- We are developing our independent capability and seeing savings of bringing the three organisations into one.
- We estimate that by the end of 2013/14 we will have taken actions to deliver savings worth £5.5M per year. These savings will accumulate to £47M by Year 10.
- We predict that the actions in train will deliver annual increases in savings building up to £21M per year by 2018/19. This gives us confidence that we will achieve our Business Case benefits of £158M (non-cash and cash releasing) by Year 10.

3.2 Ensure Business Continuity

- We've exceed our targets for responding to customers – our Customer Care Centre deals with 97% of requests against a target of 80% and call response time runs at 97% against a target of 90%. Two Mystery Shopper exercises have been completed, achieving 98% for quality of information provided and 90% for customer service style.
- By the end of February 2014 we were slightly below our target of 95% for issuing licences to time, with 94% of marine and protected species licences issues to time, whilst 92 % of other licences are issued to time.

3.3 Undertake Enforcement

- The total number of prosecutions was 209, including waste, water quality and fisheries prosecutions. The court imposed fines totalling £214,618 and awarded costs of £162,526 to NRW.
- Sentences included over 1000 hours of unpaid work; NRW's first criminal anti social behaviour order (CRASBO); a curfew order; director disqualifications amounting to

20 years; and prison sentences (including suspended prison sentences) have been ordered in a number of cases.

- A total of 23 cautions and 105 enforcement notices were issued.

3.4 Ensure Incident Response

Flooding

We've carried out reviews of the damage caused and our response to the flooding and storms over the winter months. Actions have been managed and followed through. Lessons learned have been shared with partners and we're contributing to the Welsh Government's review of the flooding. We are also part of the multi-Agency review of these incidents for North and Mid Wales.

Larch disease

- There has been a major increase in the spread of the Phytophthora ramorum disease during 2013/14 with a large extension of the disease area in south Wales and a significant new outbreak area in north Wales. The majority of these areas are on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE).
- We carried out the surveillance programme for the disease in summer 2013 with over 1000 suspect sites visited and 270 new statutory plant health notices (SPHN) issued.
- Following the announcement in December 2013 by the Welsh Government of the revised Phytophthora ramorum Disease Management Strategy, a major exercise was undertaken to reflect the new position and we are now tackling the outer edges of infection to try and slow its spread.
- Over 2100 hectares of infected larch has been felled since 2010. In 2013/14, 289 hectares has already been cleared and we are currently working to complete the clearance of a further 391 hectares on the WGWE.

3.5 Ecosystems approach

- We've set up three trials to develop natural resource management (Dyfi, Rhondda & Tawe). We continue to provide advice to Welsh Government on the Environment Bill and natural resource management. All staff have been briefed on the ecosystem approach.

3.6 Flood Risk Management

- We've developed an Action Plan to take forward the application of the ecosystem approach by Flood Risk Management (FRM). This sits within overall work on the ecosystem approach and helps promote integrated working.
- We've improved flood protection to 1205 properties, against a target of 500. We've completed the following flood schemes during 2013/14.
 - Higher Ferry - 273 Properties
 - Ystradgynlais - 244 Properties
 - Crofty Tidal and Fluvial Defence - 27 Properties
 - Balderton Brook - 108 Properties
 - Llanfair TH - 33 Properties
 - Prestatyn - 100 Properties
 - Fairbourne - 420 Properties
- 58.2% of properties at risk are signed up to our Flood Warning Direct services; our target was 58%.

3.7 Supporting Jobs and Business

- We've worked with Welsh Government to issue a report on the benefit of the Wales Coast Path to business. We've also worked with local authorities to repair damage to the path.
- We've slightly exceeded our annual target for offering timber to market.
- Our enterprise strategy has been developed and includes a programme of feasibility studies.
- We're reviewing and improving the permit application processes, including multi permit application and hydropower.

3.8 Access and recreation

- We've completed our new visitor centre at Coed y Brenin and have exceeded our target of 50,000 extra visitors.
- We've achieved a 99.4% spend on the Rights of Way Improvement programme and have completed an evaluation report for Welsh Government on the future of the programme.

3.9 Urban environment

- We've developed urban community targets within our new Corporate Plan that build on the work of the legacy bodies.
- The iTree Eco project (urban tree survey), which was to give a monetary value to the benefits of trees by looking at the amount of carbon and other airborne pollutants captured and stored by urban trees, as well as their contribution to reducing the effects of climate change, has been completed and reported on. It should be adopted into Wrexham's Tree Strategy during 2014/15.
- Tree planting pilots have progressed at Coed Aber, Treezilla in Aberystwyth and Coed Talbot at Port Talbot.
- Come Outside! Networks have been formed in Newport East, Cardiff West, Wrexham, Barry, Gwynedd, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Swansea. We have defined the different elements of our delivery and established procedures for local network members to make bids for our Community Engagement and Capacity Building funds.

4. Corporate Plan and Stakeholder Engagement

Our first Corporate Plan 2014-17 (Annex 4) was published on 1 April 2014. In developing our plan we held 10 stakeholder events, including three specific to industry across Wales. 130 organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors attended the events and provided information for the development of the plan.

Our proposals went to public consultation between 4 November 2013 and 10 January 2014. There were 92 formal responses with broad support for our proposals. A summary report of these responses has been published on our web site.

5. Planning and consenting

5.1 A summary of how the separation of advisory and consenting functions has operated to date.

Natural Resources Wales has many functions and duties arising from our role as advisors, land and natural resource managers/project developers/operators, as the regulator for some 30+ regulatory regimes, together with specific roles in respect of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessments. Mindful of this complexity, but with a clear line of sight on the strategic case for NRW to function as a single `one voice` organisation, with integrated teams adopting an ecosystem approach to support fully integrated decision making in pursuit of our purpose, the NRW Board has adopted a number of high level principles to help manage these potential tensions. These principles include:

- All proposals for managing our multiple roles will facilitate integrated decision making, in support of an ecosystems approach (within our legal and constitutional framework);
- Functional separation will therefore only be used when necessary, in recognition that NRW is one organisation and that regulatory, advisory and operator/applicant functions should support the same outcomes where appropriate;
- Transparency will be a fundamental requirement both internally and externally;
- Accountability for roles will be clear and delegations will be based on risk thresholds.

In response to our responsibilities and these principles teams providing advice and teams operating a permitting and consenting function have been established within functionally separate Directorates. Additionally, a functionally separate Strategic Assessment team has been established within the Governance Directorate; this team's primary role is to fulfil the statutory consultee role for the SEA of NRW's own plans and programmes.

Specifically, in relation to energy developments on our and the Welsh Government woodlands estate, the team that liaises with developers to establish lease agreements operates separately from those teams who provide statutory advice to Local Authorities and advice to our permitting service.

We have not encountered any difficulties to date. We will continue to review the effectiveness of our working practices in fulfilling our roles and responsibilities.

5.2 Information on the volume of planning applications that NRW has dealt with since 1 April 2013 and in particular:

a) The number of pieces of planning casework that NRW has dealt with between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014.

During 2013/14, NRW received a total of 7,710 planning consultations.

b) The number of on-going pieces of planning casework that NRW is dealing with.

As of 1 April 2014, there were 847 items of ongoing planning casework for which NRW had been consulted.

c) Within this total, the number of planning applications for energy projects that NRW has dealt with between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014

Currently, NRW ICT is still recording on two different legacy body ICT systems, which has limited our reporting capability for 2013/ 14. A new ICT system for NRW is being developed.

Our records indicate that NRW responded to 522 new energy-related Development Management consultations that were received during the 2013/ 14 period. However, in noting the above limitation, the actual number of responses made by NRW may be higher.

d) The number of on-going pieces of planning casework relating to energy projects that NRW is dealing with.

As noted above, our current legacy body systems have limited reporting capability and we are unable provide this information at present.

e) The number of staff involved in the consideration of planning and energy casework.

Consideration of planning and energy casework involved 100 FTE spread across 300 staff.

This figure:

- includes staff directly responding to planning applications, including those on energy.
- includes technical and specialists input to support those responses.

f) The percentage of planning casework consultations and the percentage of planning casework consultations for energy projects that NRW responded to with the required deadlines.

The deadline for planning consultations is normally 21 days from the date of the letter. Many consultations received do not include enough information to support adequate assessment. We often have to contact applicants and local planning authority planning officers to obtain the necessary information before we can respond. This can lead to a delay in our response to planning application consultations. Bearing this in mind, our response for 2013/14 was:

- NRW responded to 75% of all (Town and County Planning) Development Management consultations within the agreed deadline.

- NRW responded to 62% of (Town and Country Planning) new energy related consultations within the agreed deadline. 78% of energy related consultation responses were submitted within 7 days of the deadline. We are aware that the response performance is not satisfactory and below our targets; we are currently addressing this issue, with a view to improving our performance significantly during 2014/15.

Over the first year of NRW, we have been engaged with a total of 25 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects within or close to Wales. During the year, examinations have been held for three of these: Burbo Bank offshore windfarm; Clocaenog windfarm; and South Hook Power Station. The remaining projects are in the pre-application stage or have received consent and require advice in relation to the discharge of conditions or preparation for construction.

Where there has been a statutory response needed from NRW we have responded within deadline in 100% of cases.

g) The number and percentage of decisions on permits for all projects and separately for energy projects reached within four months.

As of the end of February 2014, 804 (out of a total 875) decisions by NRW on permits/licences were made within statutory deadline and service level agreement timescales (92%).

Of these, 45 (out of a total 100) decisions made within statutory deadline and service level agreement timescales were for energy projects (45%).

Where it states 'within 4 months' – we have taken this to mean 'within our statutory deadline and service level agreement timescales' which varies from 5 working days to 4 months (or greater for Marine Licences needing Environmental Impact Assessments). It will also include some Environmental Permitting Regulations applications where 'the clock is stopped' during the determination period if we have requested the applicant to provide further information. In these scenarios, the decision would have been made within the statutory deadline, but may have been over 4 calendar months. Again, we will address performance during 2014/15 in order to significantly improve response times.

6. Finances

6.1 A copy of the Annex that accompanies the Finance Update paper that was provided to the Board on 12 February 2014.

See Annex 6.

6.2 An update of the costs and benefits profile for the merger of the three environmental bodies to form NRW in a consistent format with the baseline position you provided to the Committee in October 2013 and including actual costs and benefits for the financial years 2012-13 and 2013-14 and any re-profiling of costs and benefits going forward to 2022-23.

NRW – Cost/benefit profile

Post Vesting Revised Figures

In July 2013, the Welsh Government provided revised targets based on the opening budget position of NRW as at vesting day.

These figures were on the same basis as the Business Case (Economic Case), but only included cash releasing benefits. A comparison of the revised figures to the original Business Case is shown below:

Business Case - Economic Case (cash releasing only)											All figures in £000	
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
NPV												
Business Case												
Benefits	0	6,295	9,299	12,389	14,118	14,232	14,232	14,232	14,232	14,232	14,232	127,494
Costs	-10,575	-13,943	-11,923	-8,744	-5,494	-5,374	-2,973	-2,973	-2,243	-2,243	-2,243	-68,728
Net	-10,575	-7,648	-2,624	3,645	8,624	8,858	11,259	11,259	11,989	11,989	11,989	58,766
NPV	-10,575	-7,390	-2,450	3,287	7,515	7,459	9,159	8,850	9,105	8,797	8,499	42,256

Revised Economic Case (cash releasing only)											All figures in £000	
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
NPV												
New												
Benefits	0	-2,721	7,679	12,976	13,879	14,734	15,605	16,074	16,074	16,074	16,774	127,150
Costs	-12,441	-16,584	-16,200	-6,600	-1,600	-1,600	-2,200	-2,200	-2,200	-2,200	-2,200	-66,025
Net	-12,441	-19,305	-8,521	6,376	12,279	13,134	13,405	13,874	13,874	13,874	14,574	61,125
NPV	-12,441	-18,652	-7,955	5,751	10,701	11,059	10,905	10,905	10,536	10,180	10,332	41,321

The revised figures were broadly in line with the Business Case over 10 years, but there is a change in the profile. The net benefits are forecast to be lower in the first 2 years of NRW as a result of the costs and complexity of transformation away from dependency on Environment Agency ICT systems.

Latest Forecast

An audit trail of the costs and benefits of NRW is being maintained. There is a formal forecast performed on a quarterly basis, the most recent is below:

December 2013 Forecast (cash releasing only)											All figures in £000	
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
NPV												
New												
Benefits		-1,624	7,975	12,375	14,675	14,675	15,675	16,175	16,175	16,175	16,175	128,451
Costs	-12,441	-11,100	-15,821	-13,700	-1,600	-1,600	-2,200	-2,200	-2,200	-2,200	-2,200	-67,262
Net	-12,441	-12,724	-7,846	-1,325	13,075	13,075	13,475	13,975	13,975	13,975	13,975	61,189
NPV	-12,441	-12,294	-7,324	-1,195	11,394	11,009	10,962	10,984	10,613	10,254	9,907	41,869

The most significant change since last July is that the complex work involved in transforming away from Environment Agency ICT systems is now fully defined and agreed plans are in place. This has resulted in changes in the cost and benefit profile between 2013/14 and 2015/16. The longer term benefits from setting up NRW are still in line with the Business Case.

The figures for 2013/14 will be finalised when the Annual Accounts are completed. Work has progressed on a full benefit delivery plan, including identifying non-cash releasing benefits. The latest forecast of both cash and non-cash releasing benefits show an amount in excess of £160M over 10 years.

6.3 A list of any additional functions that have been transferred to NRW since 1 April 2013 and the funding that has or will be transferred to NRW to perform any additional functions.

There have been no additional functions transferred to NRW since 1 April 2013.

7. Legislation

7.1 Planning Bill

See Annex 7.1 for our response to the Planning Bill consultation.

7.2 Future Generations Bill (formerly the Sustainable Development Bill)

Although the consultation on the Sustainable Development Bill White Paper ended in March 2013, before NRW was formally established, NRW submitted a response in January 2013 (Annex 7.2).

The Chairman subsequently wrote to the First Minister in December 2013 (Annex 7.2.1).

8. Strategy & Policy

8.1 2020 Biodiversity targets

We will continue to build on the work of the legacy bodies to protect, maintain and enhance habitats and species populations through a range of mechanisms including the Ecosystem Approach Framework, in order to contribute to the delivery of Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and EU biodiversity targets.

Activities include:

- Maintaining and improving the protected site series, providing advice to government and others, contributing to policy and legislation development (including Section 15 management agreements, Marine Protected Areas, NERC s42 etc).
- Identifying and designating protected areas e.g. we are currently consulting on SPA extension.
- Addressing the drivers of change in the wider environment (e.g. providing advice on agri-environment schemes, climate change, fisheries, invasive non native species (INNS) and providing input to statutory consultations response's and advice on marine developments including nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs).
- Implementing the legal framework e.g. advice on environmental assessments, species licensing, consents etc.
- Working in partnership (e.g. Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) and the Marine INNS Pathways project).
- Demonstrating best practice.
- Undertaking and improving monitoring, surveillance and reporting of environmental change (e.g. Intertidal and subtidal Special Area of Conservation (SAC) monitoring programme).
- Engaging the public.

We also have a statutory responsibility to deliver on several European Directives and have responsibilities to implement UK legislation.

We're developing integrated natural resource management and testing the implementation of the ecosystem approach with the aim of improving environmental resilience in Wales so that people, species and ecosystems are better able to adapt to challenges such as climate change.

The focus of much of this work is on improving biodiversity, which is widely understood to underpin ecosystem resilience and therefore function and the delivery of services.

This includes:

- The production of a Framework for the Ecosystem Approach.
- Internal and external training on the ecosystem approach.
- Work to develop habitat and species network models taking account of the protected sites and the wider countryside.
- The establishment of three NRW trial areas which will be used to test the ecosystem approach across our activities including in the marine environment (Dyfi, Tawe and Rhondda catchments and adjacent seas).
- The application of the habitat and species models to develop the methodology including building ecosystem resilience and informing the development of natural resource management in the trial areas.
- Supporting ecosystem approach activity delivered through the WBP Support Team, and the WBP groups and specific WBP projects such as the Evidence project.
- External funding has been refocused to support partners to deliver the ecosystem approach e.g. Welsh Government Resilient Ecosystem Fund (REF), the Aquatic Biodiversity Delivery Programme and Flood Risk Management Habitat Creation Programme.

- Supporting interagency working especially with regards to surveillance and research activity will improve our ability to deliver the ecosystem approach and monitor progress.

We're contributing to the development of the first Biodiversity Strategy for Wales – the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) - through representation on the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board. We currently have no formal framework on delivery or reporting biodiversity targets so the first step has been to map existing activity against the CBD and EU targets to develop a baseline. This work will inform our contribution to the NRP which will include action, monitoring, and reporting and will provide this framework.

We've started the process of survey and data collation for the next round of Article 17 reporting on the Habitats Directive. This is a statutory commitment that is required every six years. In addition, reports were developed to support the UK reporting commitment to the CBD.

8.2 State of Nature Report (SoN)

Two briefing notes have been produced:

1. Information produced ahead of the launch of the Welsh Government response to the SoN Report at the Royal Welsh Show in July 2013 (Annex 8.2).
2. Preliminary recommendations for the ecological scope of the Biodiversity Strategy for Wales and potential future funding for biodiversity in September 2013. This set out two key ecological challenges and steps that we could take to address these. The challenges include the lack (or age) of baseline data for many taxa and habitats and the need for a strategic approach for action to address this and report (Annex 8.2.1).

We've also provided advice on the development of the two key Welsh Government response activities:

1. The Nature Fund – Advice to Welsh Government on the development of packages for the £6 million Nature Fund.
2. Improving Data – we're working with Welsh Government to improve the evidence base as the lack of data was a key issue identified in the SnN Report.

This includes:

- working with UK schemes to increase levels of participation in Wales e.g. the National Bat Monitoring programme.
- providing advice to Welsh Government on the development of the Data Hub.
- engaging with the SoN Partnership over future plans for reporting.

8.3 Phase 2 of NRW's review of coastal defences

Since we submitted the Phase 1 report to Welsh Government at the end of January, we've continued to build on this work and to gather information to enable us to respond to the Phase 2 requirements set by the Minister. This includes consideration of the wider lessons learnt for both the coastal flooding incidents of early December 2013 in North Wales and the more widespread impacts of the early January 2014 storms. As directed by the Minister, this work includes the themes of:

- Modelling and forecasting
- Operational response of risk management authorities
- How defences performed, properties affected and estimates of those protected
- Impacts on infrastructure and resilience to future flood events
- Lessons learnt, so that we can be better prepared for future events.

We've received many valuable contributions and comments from professional partners. These include all the maritime local authorities and key infrastructure operators, as well as local community contributions either via our professional partners, or directly received from our network of local flood wardens and contacts. We continue to collate and evaluate this evidence and will compile this in to a draft report which we will submit to the Minister at the end of April.

9. Stakeholder Engagement

Our Strategic Stakeholder Engagement strategy was approved by our Board in May 2013 (Annex 9).

We continue to work with a wide range of stakeholders and issue a regular bulletin 'Cyfoeth' to stakeholders.

Natural Resources Wales
23 April 2014



Annex 1

Natural Resources Wales – one year on

April 1, 2014 marks the first anniversary of the creation of Natural Resources Wales.

Our first year has seen us lay the foundations for the future and begin to build the organisation that can deliver for the environment, people and economy of Wales. Our focus has been on continuing to deliver our core business as well as ensuring that we are an organisation that is fit for the future.

We have begun considering how we manage the environment in a joined up way, considering all the issues in a geographical location and all the different options available for managing these, how we can streamline our business processes, and how we respond to the challenges of the future as an efficient and professional organisation.

It is early days and there is still much to be done; we are realistic about the challenge this presents, but also optimistic that we have the commitment, skills and expertise to make it happen. Expectations for the new organisation were really high, but we are pleased with the progress we have made during the first year of Natural Resources Wales.

Some of the main successes and challenges of the first year include:

1. Dealing with the wettest winter and harshest coastal storms to hit Wales in decades.

- Despite spectacular television images and some flooding, flood defences kept an estimated 74,000 homes safe, meaning less than 1% of properties that potentially could have flooded were affected.
- This year we have invested more money than ever in Wales - £38m - to reduce the risk of flooding for people and their homes.
- Flood schemes built in the last year alone have improved the level of protection for more than 1,000 properties.
- During the storm in January alone, we issued more than 100 Flood Warnings to more than 28,000 properties that were at risk.
- During the December and January storms we used our Twitter account (@NatResWales) to warn people - reaching an estimated 5.2 million accounts and a 40 percent increase in followers to the @NatResWales account.

2. Completion of the LIFE project - one of Europe's largest projects to restore fens.

- This work is part of our ongoing wetland restoration work which helps improve wildlife habitats and water quality and reduce flood risk.
- The LIFE project restored approximately 1,850 acres (the size of 1,000 football pitches) of fens on Anglesey and the Llŷn Peninsula.
- Work to restore 7,200 hectares (17,791 acres) of The Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountains and Migneint-Arenig-Dduallt Special Areas of Conservation involved blocking up 485km of drains and removing non-native trees from 5,982 hectares (14,781 acres) of the sites.
- The Snowdonia and Hiraethog Peat Bog Restoration Project - a joint project between ourselves and Snowdonia National Park Authority, RSPB, Welsh Water and the National Trust – will restore over 450ha (the equivalent of 600 football pitches) of wetlands.
- Peatland restoration has major benefits for climate change. Peatlands in good condition not only store carbon but also capture more carbon from the atmosphere through peat growth. Degraded or damaged peatlands release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- In peak condition peatlands store thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide, reducing Wales' impact on climate change. Around half of Wales' carbon is stored in wet soils, but this is released into the atmosphere if they become polluted or dry out.

3. Dealing with the effects of P Ramorum. So far almost 2 million infected larch trees covering almost 2,000 hectares have been felled since 2010

- Felling work has been carried out in a way to minimise the impact on people who use and visit the mountain bike trails, visitor's centres and walks at places like Garwnant, Bwlch Nant yr Arian and the Afan Forest.
- We have committed £2.5 million to tackle the disease by felling infected areas and trialling a pioneering treatment to inject infected trees with a herbicide to prevent further spread.
- A new strategy was put in place in January to slow the spread of the disease. Based on modelling from Cambridge University it involves felling trees around the outskirts of the infection, rather than in the core areas.
- Where infected trees are felled, we replant new tree species to make future woodlands more diverse, more resilient to disease, more attractive places to visit and maintaining a good supply of wood for the timber trade.
- In the last 18 months we have replanted 750,000 trees across Wales.

4. Announcing new guidance for hydropower schemes to be developed in Wales.

- New guidance means we support sustainable small-scale, renewable energy generation while protecting our rivers and wildlife.
- A new assessment checklist has been developed that allows developers to consider how much water could be available on certain rivers before they consider applying for the necessary permissions.
- We are making the whole application process simpler and faster for developers to get approval for sustainable hydropower schemes.
- We have provided additional guidance to help hydropower developers to develop sustainable schemes in the right places, which are designed and operated in the right way.
- A hydropower working group consisting of developers, community groups, angling groups and other environmental organisations has been established to help the industry develop sustainably for the long term.
- Hydropower in Wales has the potential to make a real difference for farmers, landowners and community groups, to help their economic and environmental sustainability on a local level.

5. Conducting a review into salmon stocking activities and its operations at four hatcheries where new fish stocks are reared.

- Evidence from scientific studies suggests that hatchery-reared young salmon have a much lower survival rate than young wild fish, and in some cases introducing them into a river can potentially harm existing wild salmon populations.
- The review recommends ending salmon stocking and using the money saved to help salmon stocks more effectively.
- Any money raised from the sale of the hatcheries would also be used in other ways to improve fisheries in the areas which have previously been stocked. This could include improving habitats or opening up new migratory routes.
- Salmon are important both culturally and economically to Wales, but they are also a protected species and some rivers are designated as Special Areas of Conservation specifically for their wild salmon.

6. Llanelli laboratory

- We operate a laboratory in Llanelli, which now has full laboratory accreditation. This is the fastest ever accreditation of a laboratory of such size and complexity. This will allow us to maintain and create high skilled jobs in Wales.

Annex 1 – NRW One Year On – Successes and Challenges

- The laboratory currently delivers analysis in marine monitoring and microbiology, for example analysis of bathing water sampling in Wales (which contributes to the Blue Flag scheme), pollution response (i.e. support for pollution incidents such as slurry spills, fish kills) and air quality sampling as part of our response to major incidents.
- The laboratory uses the very latest in chemical and environmental analysis tools, is considered a centre of excellence and trains delegates from across Europe.
- The laboratory offers a mobile air monitoring service, which can be deployed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The laboratory now delivers an air quality data gathering service for the whole of Wales. It plays an important role in the response to fire and chemical related emergencies. As well as supporting the Fire & Rescue services in managing the environmental impacts of incidents such as fires at waste sites at Llandow and Nantyglo and the Fforestfach tyre fire in Swansea in 2011, it also collects air quality data to enable our health partners to determine possible health impacts.
- Wales used to pay £2M per year to send Welsh samples to the Environment Agency's labs in England. The start-up cost of the laboratory was £1.25M, but the laboratory is now saving £0.22M per year.

7. Corporate Plan

- Natural Resources Wales has consulted widely on its plans for the future and this has formed the basis for the organisation's first Corporate Plan.
- To develop this Corporate Plan, we have gathered a wide range of information and evidence from our staff, our stakeholders, our customers, and the people of Wales.
- Last year we ran a series of events and a public consultation on our ideas, priorities and how we can work better together in future. We were pleased with the level of response and the broad support for our proposals. We have used this information to develop our Corporate Plan, which is published on our website.
- The three-year Plan sets out five programmes of work: 'Good Knowledge'; 'Good for the Environment'; 'Good for people'; 'Good for the economy'; and 'Good organisation'.
- Our annual Business Plan for 2014/15 is also available on our website.

8. Natural Resource Management

- We have begun the task this year of planning how we turn the ambition of adopting an ecosystem approach to the way we manage our natural resources, into reality.
- We are trialling a more joined-up 'whole catchment' approach in three areas at the moment (the Dyfi, Rhondda and Tawe), with a view to learning from these and

Annex 1 – NRW One Year On – Successes and Challenges

adapting how we work across Wales accordingly. This is in response to the proposed duties for NRW in the Environment Bill White Paper for Area-Based Natural Resource Management.

- The three trial areas include a mixture of environmental, social and economic pressures found across Wales. They vary in the size of population identified with the place, the number of local authorities within the area and the amount of control we have over the land management.
- In the Rhondda, the Welsh Government Woodland Estate accounts for approximately 40% of the whole catchment, whereas for the Tawe, this is about 3%. In addition, the Dyfi and Tawe link with the marine environment, and so the three areas have different challenges which offer an opportunity for learning.

9. Summary

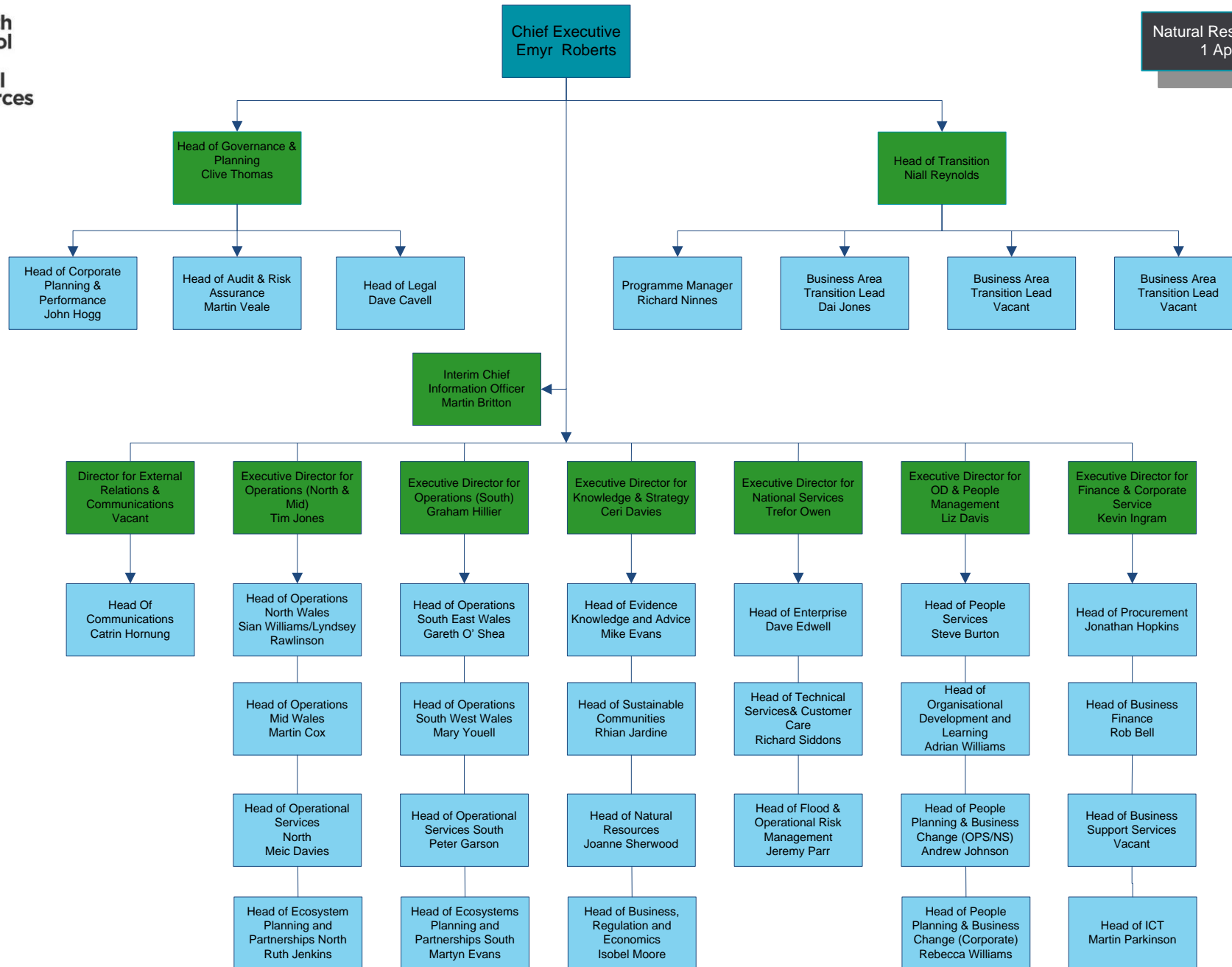
Over the last 12 months we have established a platform for the future which will allow us to improve the environmental, economic and social outcomes for Wales by turning the ecosystems approach into a reality by combining the strengths of our legacy organisations into one organisation delivering multiple outcomes.

Natural Resources Wales
23 April 2014

Annex 2 – NRW Exec Manager organogram



Natural Resources Wales
1 April 2014





Board Paper

12th February 2014

Paper Title	Corporate Dashboard – Second Report August to December 2013
Paper Reference:	NRW B O 4.14
Paper Sponsored By:	Ceri Davies
Paper Authored By:	John Hogg

Purpose of Paper:	To consider the second report of the Corporate Dashboard for August to December of 2013/14.
Recommendation:	The Board is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the performance as given in the Corporate Dashboard so it can be reported to the Minister for Natural Resources & Food.

Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	<p>Impact on the Environment: The Corporate Dashboard indicates progress against our priorities for the first year for the environment</p> <p>Impact on the Economy: The Corporate Dashboard indicates progress against our priorities for the first year to support the economy</p> <p>Impact on Community: The Corporate Dashboard indicates progress against our priorities for the first year to support communities</p> <p>Impact on Knowledge: The Corporate Dashboard provides evidence in support of decision making for the organisation and its work</p>
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Issue

1. The Corporate Dashboard demonstrates our performance in delivering the priorities of the Business Plan and Remit Letter. This paper provides information on performance for the period August to December 2013.

Background

2. The Corporate Dashboard and reporting process was approved for use in monitoring performance against the 2013/14 Business Plan by the Board at its meeting on 9 July 2013. The first report of the Corporate Dashboard, for April to July 2013, was considered at the Board meeting on 4 September 2013. Subsequently a Board sub group reviewed the Corporate Dashboard to offer advice on improving the way the Corporate Dashboard operates. The Corporate Plan 2014-17 and Business Plan 2014/15 will develop a separate Performance Framework using the experience of the first year's Corporate Dashboard.

3. The Corporate Dashboard, in annex 1, displays performance information on 46 prioritised measures. In annex 2, we provide 10 summary reports that give detail on what has been achieved and what is still left to do.

4. The Executive Directors have scrutinised performance for all 46 measures, and have considered the advice of the Board sub group to deliver a Corporate Dashboard which permits a greater level of scrutiny by the Board.

5. The Board has a governance role in scrutinising performance of the organisation and holding the executive to account. The Board additionally has a role in reporting performance to the Minister for Natural Resources & Food.

Proposals and Next Steps

6. The Board is requested to note the performance across the 46 measures:

- 28 green (previously 30);
- 15 amber (nearly (within 10%) on target) (previously 14);
- 3 red (indicating we are not where we planned to be) (previously 2).

7. Points to note in relation to the performance measures are as follows:

- The updating of Natura 2000 Management Plans is reported red and expected to be red at the year-end. The staff time used to undertake this has been diverted to address the significant volume of delayed input to Glastir agreements which supports Welsh farmers and delivers direct environmental improvement. The

Glastir work is time limited and would have affected payments to farmers and land managers. Our Management Plan updating is not subject to statutory deadlines but we will re-prioritise this work next financial year so we are green by year end.

- Our response to planning consultations is reported red, but expected to be amber at the year-end as we continue with efforts to improve the service.
- We are handling our work on Habitats Directive advice by forming project teams to address specific cases so that we give 'single voice' advice on new developments in sensitive locations. Legal advice is being sought to assist in developing the guidance.
- The reporting of Health and Safety lost time incidents was red in the previous period, but is now green. We are continuing to develop this measure following previous Board feedback, which includes reviewing the way information is collected. We are not complacent and recognise this, along with how we report absence, may be under reporting. We are stepping up our actions to reinforce with all staff the reporting requirements using legacy systems until unified systems are implemented.

8. The Board is requested to endorse the performance as given in the Corporate Dashboard so it can be reported to the Minister for Natural Resources & Food. It will additionally be issued to Sponsorship officials within the Minister's department, who will advise the Minister and share with other relevant Ministers.

9. The Executive Directors have carried out accurate reporting along with robust review and challenge in completing the dashboard. In performing their scrutiny role, Executive Directors have reviewed and recalibrated targets where appropriate, and these are noted on the Corporate Dashboard. This, and the drawing out of the issues of Ministerial Priorities, our reputation and our partnership engagement, reflects the advice given by the Board sub group.

Risks

10. Without proper scrutiny of our performance there is a risk that we would fail to deliver the priorities of our business plan which would lead to damage to our reputation.

Financial Implications

11. There are no significant financial implications in providing this performance report.

Legal and Compliance Issues

12. The Board has a legal duty to oversee and direct Natural Resources Wales and is accountable to Welsh Government.

Communications

13. The Corporate Dashboard requires communication to the Minister for Natural Resources & Food.

14. A copy of the Corporate Dashboard performance will be placed on the Natural Resources Wales Website to inform the public.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA)

15. Not Applicable

Index of Annex

Annex 1: Corporate Dashboard (August to December 2013)

Annex 2: Corporate Dashboard Summary Reports

Natural Resources Wales Corporate Dashboard



Reporting period: August - December 2013

Transition and Transformation

	Previous	Trend	Current	Future	Target	Current achievement
We become independent and have the capability to end reliance on Environment Agency and Forestry Commission services	Amber	-	Amber	Amber	[-] Hit Dec milestones and exit EA ICT in May 14	Milestones 85% on track, but significant ICT issue
We make 3-into-1 efficiencies and generate savings	Amber	-	Amber	Amber	[-] Set up £90m of savings	£80.5m savings forecast
We have a new approach to natural resource management	Amber	-	Amber	Green	[-] Draft position statement in 2014/15	Consultation response underway
<u>We benefit regulated customers through a one-stop shop and our handling of casework</u>	Amber	↑	Green	Green	[-] Planning, permitting & enforcement improvements	Improvements on target

People management

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
We manage our staff numbers	Green	-	Green	Green	1,850 FTE (March 2015)	2,058 FTE (November 2013)
Our staff receive mandatory training	Amber	↑	Green	Green	[-] Skills audit completed	Skills audit completed
We manage absence levels	Amber	↑	Green	Amber	7 average days lost per employee (3.1%)	4 average days lost per employee (2.6%)
<i>We reduce health, safety and wellbeing lost time incidents</i>	Red	↑	Green	Green	[-] < 84 Lost time incidents	5 Lost time incidents

Financial management

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
We maintain a low level of debt	Green	-	Green	Green	<= 1.5% of billed charge income (by March)	Current debt 9%, but on target for year-end
We deliver value for money when procuring goods and services	Green	↓	Amber	Green	£500,000 in efficiencies (by March)	£321,000 in efficiencies (to December)
[R] Our payment terms achieve Welsh Government benchmarks	Green	-	Green	Green	>= 95% invoices paid within 30 days	98% invoices paid within 30 days
Our expenditure is on track	Red	↑	Amber	Amber	+/- 2% of profiled expenditure in year	-3.5% of profiled expenditure
Our income is on track	Green	-	Green	Green	-2% (or better) profiled income in year	-0.3% profiled income

Service standards

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
More of our staff speak Welsh	Amber	↑	Green	Green	Implement Welsh Language scheme	Bilingual skills audit completed
[R] We respond to information requests on time	Green	-	Green	Green	80% of all enquiries resolved within CCC	95% of all enquiries resolved within CCC
[R] We learn lessons from customer feedback (and have fewer complaints)	Green	↓	Amber	Green	60% resolved at informal stage	45% resolved at informal stage
[R] We provide a comprehensive online service to our customers	Green	-	Green	Green	Ranked top 1/3rd for Central Gov Websites	Ranked top 1/3rd for Central Gov Websites

Key:

trend columns:	An up arrow indicates an improvement since the last assessment	↑
	A flat line indicates no significant change since with the last assessment	-
	A down arrow indicates a decline since with the last assessment	↓
status columns:	This indicates we are not where we planned we should be	Red
	This indicates we are nearly on target (within 10%)	Amber
	This indicates we are on target	Green
font styles:	Ministerial priorit:	<u>Bold, underlined</u>
	Related to an area of Corporate Risk	<i>Italic</i>
tags:	Reputation related measures	[R]
	Partnership working related measures	[P]
	Suggested change in target/wording, following Board member feedback regarding last Corporate Dashboard report	[-]

Notes:
 - The Corporate Dashboard shows the performance position for headline measures
 - The Corporate Dashboard is supported by progress reports to the Executive Directors Team
 - The Corporate Dashboard is also supported by summary reports to the Board

Environmental Quality

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
[R] There are fewer serious environmental incidents	Amber	-	Amber	Green	[-] 100% of serious incidents attended on time	97% of serious incidents attended on time
<i>We resolve issues at "high public interest" sites</i>	Green	-	Green	Green	HPI plans in place on time	No new specific HPI plans required
We deliver marine and protected species licensing	Green	↓	Amber	Green	95% Licenses determined on time	94% Licenses determined on time (324 of 344)
We issue licences on time	Amber	-	Amber	Amber	95% Licenses determined on time	92% Licenses determined on time (2,279 of 2,467)

Environmental Resilience

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
<i>We provide environmental evidence and enable sustainable development in energy projects</i>	Green	-	Green	Amber	[-] Evidence provided on time (100%)	Evidence provided on time
<i>We provide evidence to planning inquiries and progress planned development</i>	Green	↓	Amber	Amber	[-] Evidence provided for inquiry on time	
<i>We update Natura 2000 Core Management Plans</i>	Green	↓	Red	Red	Revised plans published on time	Revised plans will not all be published on time
We maintain woodland certification for the Welsh Government Woodland Estate	Amber	-	Amber	Green	100% of audit actions resolved	80% of audit actions resolved
<i>We respond to statutory planning consultations on time</i>	Amber	↓	Red	Amber	90% integrated responses to LPAs on time	76% integrated responses to LPAs on time
<i>We give expert advice on Habitats Directive</i>	Amber	↓	Red	Red	Written guidance consolidated on time	Written guidance not consolidated on time

Natural Resource based jobs and Enterprise

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
<u>We increase the number of visitors to our key sites</u>	Green	-	Green	Green	50,000 extra visitors	50,650 extra visitors
<u>We help to deliver actions in the Wales Coastal Access Improvement Plan</u>	Amber	↑	Green	Green	[-] Publish report on Wales Coast Path	Published report on Wales Coast Path
Timber is offered to market	Green	-	Green	Green	860,000 m3 of Timber (by Feb)	807,000 m3 of Timber (by Dec)
More woodland estates are thinned	Green	-	Green	Green	2,500 hectares of woodland (by March)	1,700 hectares of woodland (by Nov)
<i>Management plans for the Dee and Burry Cockle Fisheries are in place</i>	Green	-	Green	Amber	[-] Draft plans submitted to Welsh Government	Draft plans submitted to Welsh Government
We further develop our enterprise capabilities	Green	-	Green	Green	[-] Strategy and revenue forecast completed	Enterprise strategy approved

Flood Risk and Incident Management

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
<i>We manage outbreaks of plant health pests and diseases</i>	Green	-	Green	Green	[-] 95% SPHNs served on time	96% SPHNs served on time, 11% comply with these
<u>We deliver innovative flood risk management solutions</u>	Green	-	Green	Green	Action plan produced	Action plan produced
We improve protection from flooding to more properties	Green	-	Green	Green	500 more households and businesses	652 more households and businesses
We protect more people from flooding in high risk locations	Green	↓	Amber	Green	Asset at target condition (99% for high risk)	Asset at target condition (97.6% for high risk)
We increase flood warning coverage in high risk communities	Green	↓	Amber	Green	58.2% people registered	56.7% people registered
We help manage the risk of tidal surge flooding	Green	-	Green	Green	Evidence provided	Evidence provided

Health, Wellbeing and Community Involvement

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
<u>We identify specific actions to improve Wales' urban environment</u>	Green	↓	Amber	Green	[-] Draft strategy by March for Board subgroup	Strategy being developed following Board discussion
[P] <u>We help deliver the Rights of Way Improvement Programme</u>	Green	-	Green	Green	ROWIP external evaluation completed	ROWIP external evaluation completed
[P] <u>We complete the iTree Eco project and partnership tree planting pilots</u>	Green	-	Green	Green	[-] iTree Eco project data analysis complete	iTree Eco project data analysis complete
[P] <u>We help deliver the Come Outside Project</u>	Amber	↑	Green	Amber	[-] Implemented Stage 2 workshops	Implemented Stage 2 workshops
<u>We encourage more people to prepare for flooding</u>	Green	-	Green	Green	16,000 more people more aware	9,902 are more prepared and 8,190 are more aware

Understanding our impact

	Previous status	Trend	Current status	Future status	Target	Current achievement
We provide evidence and advise on the Marine environment	Green	↓	Amber	Green	[-] Evidence provided on time	Marine SPA report preparation
We understand, and control, our own impact on the environment	Green	-	Green	Amber	[-] NRW is ISO14001 registered	NRW EMS in development

Corporate Dashboard Summary Reports August to December 2013



Portfolio: Transition and transformation

Delivering benefit to regulated customers supports one of the four Ministerial Remit Letter priorities; supporting jobs and businesses.

What has been achieved:

1.1 Overall, the programmes associated with **becoming independent** and having the capability to end reliance on Environment Agency and Forestry Commission services are progressing. Some significant issues have arisen, particularly around building the Information Communication Technology access back into Environment Agency systems. These issues are being addressed by the programmes although they often require significant staff input to resolve.

1.2 The **Llanelli Laboratory** has been fully established on target, and in record time (United Kingdom Accreditation Service has not had a laboratory seek accreditation at this pace or scale before).

1.3 We have forecast that annual savings generated in 2013/14 and 2014/15 will accumulate at least £80.5M of **cash realisable benefits** towards the 10 year revised business case target of £127M. This is 89% of the £90M that the revised business case anticipated at this stage. Over half of the savings are expected to come through a staff Voluntary Exit Scheme that is forecast to save £36.8m over the first 10 years.

1.4 We have been providing advice and support to Welsh Government throughout the year, in particular on the **Environment Bill** White Paper published in October. We will continue to provide advice through the various groups we attend with Welsh Government.

1.5 To **benefit regulated customers** we now provide a single response to planning consultations. We have also developed a new operating model for Planning Advice, which we are on target to implement from 1 April 2014. We are making good progress towards streamlining for permitting applicants during 2014 and for compliance with Hampton principles. We are ready for audit by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners, having established our independent enforcement capability with secure Information Communication Technology, staff training and issue of our warrants.

1.6 The Gateway Reviews amber status gives assurance that the current programme can deliver our independent capability provided we resolve the Information Communication Technology issues.

What is still to do:

1.7 We recognise that **Information Communication Technology is the highest priority** and are working closely with the Environment Agency to develop an action plan to tackle the current issues and implement the transition off Environment Agency's Information Communication Technology network.

1.8 Preparations are being made to exit 18 Environment Agency and Forestry Commission services by 31 March 2014. Options for transition of Flood Risk Management are being considered.

1.9 Solution design can now commence for the new **Human Resources and Finance System**, following contract signing at the end of last year.

1.10 Implementation of the **Accommodation Strategy** to deliver accommodation related business case benefits can now commence, following approval of the strategy. This is a long term strategy delivering over five to ten years.

1.11 A position statement on **Natural Resources Planning** has not yet been drafted as the Environment Bill White Paper was not published until end of October 2013 and the priority has been to formulate and agree our response to the consultation. Drafting has begun in 2014.

1.12 The **cash realisable benefits picture** for 2013/14 and 2014/15 is only what we have achieved and forecast to date. There will be further savings to add when forecast is possible from current and new change initiatives. There will also be non-cash realisable productivity improvements to contribute to the business case overall financial benefit target of £158M.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: People management

What has been achieved:

- 2.1 The **Voluntary Exit Scheme** has now concluded with 100.8 full time equivalent staff members expected to leave by 31 March 2014.
- 2.2 We have delivered and collated data from our skills audit, identifying core mandatory **skills gaps** across the organisation. We are identifying lead coordinators for mandatory skills to help develop training.
- 2.3 We continue to achieve fewer **absences** than our target level.
- 2.4 We continue to progress a **Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy** and have recorded fewer **Lost Time Incidents** than for the combined legacy bodies in previous year.

What is still to do:

- 2.5 Another “Invest to Save” bid is being submitted with a view to running another **Voluntary Exit Scheme** in the next financial year.
- 2.6 A core set of corporate Health and Safety skills has been identified and role specific mandatory **training** needs will be investigated by March 2014. We will develop a corporate training programme to ensure all staff are offered the training that meets their mandatory training needs.
- 2.7 Further development of the system for recording **absence** and **Lost Time Incidents** will be undertaken as they may be under reporting. We are stepping up our actions to reinforce with all staff the reporting requirements using legacy systems until unified systems are implemented.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: Financial management

Payment Performance contributes to our overall Reputation

What has been achieved:

- 3.1 **Debt levels and payment performance** remain within target and are in line with previous years. We expect this to continue.
- 3.2 **Income** is on target, and the front loaded nature of this means we expect this to continue. Welsh Government has approved Grant in Aid carry forward and an additional £2.5m for *Phytophthora ramorum* work.
- 3.3 We have achieved efficiencies of some £321,000 via our **procurement** activity. With contracts that remain to be let in the last quarter we are confident that we will be very close to the £500,000 target at year-end.

What is still to do:

- 3.4 **Expenditure** is 3.5% behind profile at the end of November. Main areas of underspend are on revenue projects (10.5%) and capital projects (13.2%). The capital project underspends are in the Flood and Coastal Risk Management Programme and on ICT infrastructure. Both are expected to catch up by the end of the financial year. We also have a projected year end deficit of £0.8m, and are targeting further savings from budgets to help eradicate this and take forward a positive balance to help next year's financial position.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: Service standards

Customer Care, Complaints and our Online Service contribute to our overall Reputation

What has been achieved:

- 4.1 All staff were asked to complete a **Welsh Language** training response. As a result of this, some 380 staff have requested Welsh language training.
- 4.2 We have set up a weekly monitoring and reporting process by the **Customer Care Centre** against their Service Levels for call and email handling. We have run our first major campaign registering farmers for agricultural waste exemptions as part of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010, and have undertaken a mystery shopper assessment. At the time of writing this has only just been completed and we await the results.
- 4.3 Two late unresolved **complaints** have resulted in reputational issues with escalation via emails to Ministers, Welsh Government Officials and Board members. Based on this evidence, our 1 April 2013 interim approach to complaint handling has been found to have weaknesses and work to develop an agreed policy has been prioritised. We will adopt a policy based more clearly on the Public Service Ombudsman model process, with a simpler two stage process. This policy is founded on the principle of informal resolution at point of service delivery, backed up by 'Investigate once, Investigate well' if resolution is not achieved.
- 4.4 Our interim **intranet** and public **website** remain in place and work on these ensures our interim public face remains robust. The public website acts largely as a signpost, whilst the intranet contains a good deal of information, but has issues with content quality, bilingualism and site navigation. New website architecture, design elements and template shape have been created for both the intranet and the public website. Our core social channels are open [Facebook, Twitter, Flickr etc.], though they require much further engagement. Yammer rollout internally is progressing well.

What is still to do:

- 4.5 We will develop the Learning Programme for 2014/15, which will include both formal and informal **Welsh Language** training opportunities. Welsh language learning, will ensure we deliver targets as set out in the Welsh Language Scheme. Additionally, we will secure training for as many of those who want to learn Welsh as possible.
- 4.6 A short customer questionnaire is under development for early January 2014. This will help benchmark our service standards and be the first of annual **customer surveys**. The **Customer Care Centre** will be heavily involved in the transfer of the high volume permit exemption registrations plus the waste carrier and broker work from Environment Agency.
- 4.7 The first Annual Report to the Board on **Complaints Handling** is scheduled for May 2014.
- 4.8 We will carry over and further develop the public **website** products and build on these ahead of identifying any new publishing system from March 2014. Intranet development is ongoing, with the target launch date of March 2014. Our core social channels will be evolved and social publishing will be an

important element in our ongoing digital strategy, represented within the editorial board. We will aim to develop Yammer further, ensuring sufficient integration with the intranet.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: Environmental quality

Attending Serious Environmental Incidents contributes to our overall Reputation

What has been achieved:

- 5.1 We attended 97% (39 of 40) of **serious environmental incidents** (Category 1 and 2) on time (July – September 2013). As this measure is part of the overarching reputation issue we have established a Strategic Incident Management Group and are in the process of establishing Regional Incident Management Groups. These will be responsible for ensuring a consistent approach to incident management and ensuring that we comply with our duties under the Civil Contingencies Act.
- 5.2 Our register of **High Public Interest Sites** is up to date and all have plans.
- 5.3 Current performance in **issuing licences** and in issuing specific **marine licences** is slightly below profile. We consider that bringing overall licensing performance up to the 95% target will be difficult due to lower performance in our early months. Improvement plans were put in place earlier in the year and have delivered; with performance for three months (August, September and October) at 95% for all licences and 96% for marine licences.

What is still to do:

- 5.4 To ensure we comply with our duties under the Civil Contingencies Act we will be working to ensure consistency in our approach to **Incident Management** across the organisation through the process of restructuring.
- 5.5 We will undertake stakeholder feedback on handling of long term **High Public Interest Sites**.
- 5.6 We will maintain both the level of resource and the skills base used to **issue licences** to ensure the improvement plan delivers the performance target. Moving systems away from legacy systems will be an increasing part of the Permitting Services workload during the remainder of the year and for 2014/15. Our objective is to maintain the high level of performance whilst undertaking these changes. There are new regulatory functions, such as Industrial Emissions Directive, that we need to deliver whilst maintaining standards and performance. We will continue to standardise our approach to the permitting process to develop a single permitting service that delivers to a common set of principles and standards.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: Environmental resilience

What has been achieved:

6.1 This reporting period we have been engaged with 23 **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects**. Four of these are in pre-examination or examination during July-November 2013. A fifth project, where consent has been given, continues to require significant input. Forward forecasting shows over 10 projects expected to submit for examination later this year/early next year. Where there has been a statutory response needed, we have responded within deadline. We have successfully worked with the hydropower sector to revise the guidance which was launched on the 7 January 2014, and we have successfully provided clarification of our role and remit in onshore oil and gas, and the regulation of this sector. We have provided a formal response on the draft list of wave and tidal lease sites.

6.2 We continue to provide advice in preparing for the Mid Wales Conjoined **Public Inquiry** to meet the set timetable.

6.3 We are behind target in updating **Natura 2000 Core Management Plans**. Excellent progress has been made on 27 plans. However delays to reviewing and updating of 24 plans have been caused by prioritising Glastir management plan work which has an inflexible deadline and would impact on funding for the agricultural sector.

6.4 We continue to maintain our **woodland certification** with 80% of corrective action requests and observations from the 2012/13 audit completed on time. Three remain open, of which two will be closed by February 2014. We are in discussion with the auditor on the remaining action. The 2013 audit was successful, the full report is due after February 2014 but early indications are no major issues with some minor issues and observations which is in line with normal results.

6.5 **Responding to initial planning consultations** from Local Planning Authorities is below target. Resources have been redeployed to casework and high profile cases which means we have not been as proactive as we would have liked in securing decision notices and assessing if our advice has been effective. For those we have secured, we are showing that we are effective.

6.6 Consolidating written guidance on Article 6.3 and 6.4 of the **Habitats Directive** is proceeding and legal advice is being sought. A project team approach is being used to join the various arrangements and ensure internal consultations prepare 'single voice' responses. A number of workshops and training events have helped embed a common understanding of this approach.

What is still to do:

6.7 On **Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects** we will meet with the Planning Inspectorate to progress a Memorandum of Understanding, or equivalent, in early in 2014. Additionally we will undertake a lessons learned exercise from the withdrawn project "Atlantic Array", develop a program of work to test and implement process improvement options and deliver internal operational guidance needed. We will review the approach to pre-application and permitting of hydropower permits to identify efficiencies, provide greater clarity for customers and embed new ways of working.

6.8 Updating **Natura 2000 Core Management Plans** is a two year work programme, which, while important, does not have statutory deadlines associated with it. We will not complete 50% this financial

year and the target will still be red by the end of the financial year. We are considering how we can catch up by the end of 2014/15 financial year by re-prioritising this work so we are green by year end.

6.9 We have undertaken an analysis of the performance of our **response to initial planning consultations** since 1 April 2014 based on our best available information. Allowing for ‘initial start up’ the key conclusions of this review are:

- The average number of initial consultations being logged by the Customer Care Centre is 149 per week. The most we could expect would be 218 per week. These numbers appear stable and are not showing significant variation over time.
- We believe we have now a stable business process in operation. On average we turnaround our first response within 23 days but it could take as long as 45 days. These figures are predictable and are at present a true reflection of our current level of service we offer to our customers.
- The three key dependencies to turnaround are input, resource availability and process. Put simply we will only improve if we reduce the input, make better use of what we have and develop more efficient processes. These three dependencies will be our focus going forward.

6.10 Following sessions with the Environment and Economy Board Sub Group a paper went to the Board in December 2013 endorsing the proposed **approach to providing our planning advice**, including how we apply our statutory purpose and agreement on our strategic objectives for engagement in the planning system. We intend to produce and publish revised guidance to staff.

6.11 We are talking to our customers about our approach to **planning consultation responses**; we have had generally positive feedback and customers recognise that it will take a little time for new ways of working to bed in. We are seeking new opportunities to influence economic regeneration earlier in the process by establishing closer working relationships with key partners.

6.12 We will consider legal guidance and carry out a systematic appraisal of extant **Habitats Directive Advice** handling processes to identify any significant inconsistencies in handling, interpretation of relevant legislation, or documentation, and recommend any changes.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: Natural Resource based jobs and enterprise

Increasing visitor numbers and delivering Coastal Access Improvements supports one of the four Ministerial Remit Letter priorities; access and recreation.

What has been achieved:

7.1 To date we have had an extra 50,650 **visitors** at our Coed y Brenin centre. The end of year figures will give us a better indication of actual numbers.

7.2 Reports on the **Wales Coastal Path's** benefits to business and the economy are complete and were formally published in November 2013. We continue to work with Welsh Government to manage delivery through to the year end, and in particular manage any potential carry-over of money, if deemed necessary.

7.3 We put to the **Timber Marketplace** 807,000 cubic metres as of end of December 2013 against the sale intention of 860,000 cubic metres. We sit with a six month forward sold position which is an industry norm for timber contracts. We expect to meet the year-end target.

7.4 We have **thinned** 1,700 hectares of **woodland** to end of November 2013 with a 50:50 split between our roadside and standing sales operations.

7.5 **Cockle Fishery Management Plans** have been submitted to Welsh Government for both the Dee and Burry inlet. At the Dee, a formal response from Welsh Government and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is awaited. The Burry Management Plan is likely to undergo the approval process in line with Welsh Government review of an "All Wales Cockle Strategy" in 2015/16. Final implementation will be subject to Ministerial approval. We are therefore unlikely to implement the plans in March 2014 as originally expected

7.6 Under the **Enterprise Framework** we have agreed heads of terms on four long term timber contracts, which should lead to multi-million pound investment and job creation in the timber industry within Wales.

What is still to do:

7.7 We will meet the target of putting **timber to market**.

7.8 We will complete the predicted total area of 2,500 hectares of **woodland thinning** although we will complete more in North Wales than South due to the different amounts of Larch disease. We intend to be more resilient on spatial thinning performance next year once risk register actions have been fully implemented.

7.9 We will implement the new **Cockle Fishery Management Plan** when approved. We will make amendments to the Burry Inlet Management Plan if required as part of the approval process.

7.10 In line with the **Enterprise Framework** we are researching the feasibility of new revenue opportunities in Field Sports, Country Pursuits and Fisheries.

7.11 We remain on target to deliver forecast revenue from **timber sales** this financial year taking account of the impact of *Phytophthora ramorum*.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: Flood Risk and Incident Management

Delivering flood risk management solutions supports one of the four Ministerial Remit Letter priorities; Flood Risk Management.

What has been achieved:

8.1 On 5 December 2013 we experienced a severe **coastal flooding event** along the North East Wales coastline caused by a combination of high tides, storm surge and wind/wave action. Initial indications suggest it was the worst event in over 20 years. We forecast the event, issued warnings to the public and professional partners including Network Rail, highlighted the risk in national and local media, briefed local authorities and the emergency services to allow them to prepare and respond on the ground. We checked our own defences and offered support to our partners responding to the flooding.

8.2 On 3 January 2014 we experienced another severe **coastal storm**, this time affecting communities along the West and South Wales coastlines. It was the worst event for this part of the Welsh coast in over 15 years with flooding affecting communities as a result of a combination of high tides, storm surge and powerful wind/wave action. Significant localised damage occurred in some communities, for example Aberystwyth. Again, this significant event was forecast, flood risk identified and early liaison carried out with professional partners. At the height of the morning tide on 3 January 2014 we had issued over 23,000 warning messages to those at risk. We also carried out repairs to our assets immediately after the storm so communities remained protected during subsequent, stormy high tides.

8.3 Surveillance of *Phytophthora ramorum* has continued and the early indications of a major increase in Larch areas affected by the **disease** have been confirmed with over 3000 hectares found so far this year. Due to this major increase, and its implications for practical disease management, we have made a proposal to Welsh Government to change the existing strategy and agree a new strategy. Surveillance has been continued at the *Chalara fraxinea* outbreak site in West Wales to understand the rate of development of the disease

8.4 An Action Plan for **innovation in flood risk management** in 2013-14, and beyond, has been developed and implementation has begun to take forward the application of the ecosystem approach by Flood Risk Management. The action plan has four distinct elements:

- Identifying Flood Risk Management's existing ecosystem approach delivery work.
- Identify and integrate (where relevant) Flood Risk Management into our ecosystem approach.
- Increasing Flood Risk Management understanding of the ecosystem approach, and innovative solutions/ working with natural processes and the potential for application of these techniques in Wales.
- Reviewing our Environmental Impact Assessment/Capital Programme procedures to increase Flood Risk Management's effectiveness and delivery of the ecosystem approach.

The action plan sits within our overall work programme on the ecosystem approach and helps promote integrated working. Implementation of the finalised action plan is now well under way and all actions are on schedule.

8.5 We have reduced the **risk of flooding** to 652 homes and businesses across Wales and met our target. We have completed projects at Crofty, Higher Ferry, Balderton Brook and Ystradgynlais.

8.6 56.7% of properties at risk of flooding are signed up to our **Floodline Warnings Direct** services.

8.7 At the end of November there has been a slight improvement on the number of our **flood risk assets** passing in High Risk Systems.

What is still to do:

8.8 We are leading a **post flood review** for the December flooding in North Wales with input from Lead Local Flood Authorities at the direction of the Minister, Natural Resources and Food. We will identify lessons learnt from the coastal flooding in North Wales and we are expected to report in the spring. We have also been asked to lead an urgent review to provide an assessment of the damage caused to coastal defences during the January storm and the scale of repair works required. We are working with Welsh Government officials to determine the detailed scope of this review, recognising the importance is to provide an early assessment of damage and options for repair. The review will cover defences owned by ourselves, local authorities and other third parties.

8.9 A revised strategy for *Phytophthora ramorum* **disease** has been developed by our staff, with Welsh Government involvement, and accepted by the Welsh Government. We are awaiting an announcement from the Minister about the proposed strategy as well as the funding for 2014/15.

8.10 There are three **flood alleviation projects** due for completion: Prestatyn, Llanfair TH and the Fairbourne Flood Alleviation Scheme. These will reduce the risk of flooding to an additional 553 properties.

8.11 We have plans in place to sign up an additional 2410 properties. We predict that our end of year performance will be 58%. To achieve this we would need an additional 325 properties to sign up to **Floodline Warnings Direct**, have no further people de-register, and no changes to the extreme flood outline to achieve 58.2%. We have four new Flood Warning Areas: Llanyrafon, Dinas Powys, Porthmadog and Tremadog, which will be offered the services. We have four communities in South East Wales which will go through the Extended Direct Warnings and will be signed up unless they opt out.

8.12 **Flood Risk Asset** Inspections will be taking place following the recent tidal flood events to identify any damage sustained to our structures. There is the potential for asset performance figures to be affected.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: Health, wellbeing and community involvement

Delivering rights of way improvements supports one of the four Ministerial Remit Letter priorities; Access and Recreation. Additionally, delivery of urban projects including iTree Eco and Come Outside! support a further Ministerial Remit Letter priority; Urban Environment.

Rights of way improvements, iTree Eco and Come Outside! all contribute to our overall partnership approach.

What has been achieved:

9.1 We continue to deliver the legacy body projects, programmes and initiatives in **urban** areas. The Board have considered proposals for developing a future strategy.

9.2 **Rights of way improvement** work is ongoing and we ensure our local authority partners deliver in line with the programme conditions. An external review of the funding programme has been completed and recommendations for the future of the programme submitted to Welsh Government.

9.3 Alongside the **iTree Eco** project, a longitudinal, 3 year research project has been commissioned to assess the policy and wider attitudinal impacts of the survey on Wrexham's urban forest. Through documentary analysis and qualitative methods it will generate a description of the current policy setting in Wrexham prior to the information becoming available from the i-Tree survey.

9.4 A series of first and second phase **Come Outside!** workshops started in May, leading to the formation of Come Outside! Networks in Newport East, Cardiff West, Wrexham, Barry, Gwynedd, Caerphilly and Swansea. As a result of the workshops, delivery to beneficiaries has been initiated in Newport East and Cardiff West. Following initial meetings with relevant partners, scoping exercises have begun in Rhondda Fach and Merthyr Tydfil.

9.5 The Minister for Natural Resources and Food, visited communities in North Wales in September, to see the progress of the **Flood Awareness Wales** programme and the ongoing work to reduce flood risk in the area. The Minister met with representatives from DangerPoint – a charity that teaches children about the dangers of flooding. The Minister visited the interactive centre and saw our working model which simulates the flooding of a village, and teaches children how to respond safely. The Minister also visited Triangle wood Caravan Park, which has developed a flood plan for the site that advises on the actions visitors and staff should take during a flooding emergency.

9.6 In October 2013, we held 3 successful **Flood Warden Training** events in conjunction with professional partners, which were attended by 81 wardens. Many of these wardens played key roles within the recent North Wales Floods.

9.7 We have developed and launched a Cub & Scout **Flood Awareness badge**, which is promoted through all Wales networks, and encourages children to take practical actions to prepare for flooding as well as involving their parents. The first pack to complete the badge received their awards from Emyr Roberts, Chief Executive, in October 2013.

9.8 At the end of November 2014, 9,902 people are more prepared through our **Flood Awareness work**.

What is still to do:

9.9 A draft **Urban and Communities strategy** will be developed for consideration by a sub group of the Board before the end of March. Planning workshops have been held to establish high level urban Corporate Plan targets for 2014-15 and beyond. This will form the basis of a delivery programme and specific Contribution Statement actions. It will involve the use of datasets and mapping to support decision making about where to focus investment to deliver the greatest benefit for our most deprived communities and the environment.

9.10 We expect to complete and report on the **iTree Eco** survey as planned and start work on the iTree Eco Impact Assessment. We will complete, publish and launch the Wales Urban Canopy Cover report and continue to support Coed Aber tree planting work.

9.11 Subject to partner agreement, we will complete scoping, deliver workshops and establish **Come Outside!** networks in Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Fach, Bridgend, Rhyl and Torfaen. We will hold Monitoring and Evaluation Workshops subject to progress in each target cluster. We will continue to develop the ability of network members to deliver programmes of outdoor opportunities with target beneficiaries.

9.12 We are on track to meet this year's **Flood Awareness work** targets. We are currently reviewing and assessing how to make further improvements to our delivery, which include targeting strategic stakeholders.

Corporate Dashboard Summary Report

Portfolio: Understanding our impact

What has been achieved:

10.1 We continue to align our **marine** work programmes with Welsh Government's recently published Marine and Fisheries Strategic Action Plan and Marine Transition Programme. We have completed a report on our role in marine planning and resource management, including available evidence base. We are making progress on identifying our contribution to the programme of measures, which will be assisted by confirmation requested from Welsh Government of our role in delivery of all aspects of the Directive.

10.2 We have secured **ISO 14001 accreditation** for 2013 for 2 of the legacy elements. The new Environmental Management System documentation is 90% complete and a robust internal audit programme has been established. We have a baseline for reporting energy, water, waste, travel & CO2 emissions.

What is still to do:

10.3 We will finalise an audit of our contribution to the **Marine** Strategy Framework Document programme of measures and confirm our formal role in delivery across all aspects of this.

10.4 **Special Protection Area colony extension** consultation has commenced in January 2014. We will work with Welsh Government to agree a work programme for delivery of formal site proposals for further marine Special Protection Areas, and potentially also for harbour porpoise Special Areas of Conservation. We will continue to play an active role as part of the United Kingdom Marine Monitoring & Assessment Strategy Community, including the Marine Assessment and Reporting Group and associated Evidence Groups.

10.5 We have arranged external audits for **ISO14001** certification in March/April 2014. We will be setting 2014/15 Environmental Management System objectives & targets using the 2013/14 baseline data.



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol**
Cymru
**Natural
Resources**
Wales

Corporate Plan

// 2014 - 2017



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// We are on a long
journey - and this
is just the start...

Foreword

Wales' environment is one of our most valuable assets. Cherished by the people of Wales and beyond for its wildlife, landscapes and seascapes, it is vital for the range of services it provides – food and water, energy, even the air that we breathe. Our environment is where we live, work and play; it is part of our culture and key to our economic prosperity and sense of community. We all have a responsibility to care for Wales's environment, and its natural resources, both now and for future generations.

But these are challenging times – the effects of climate change, declining biodiversity and the status of our rivers sit alongside issues like improving people's health and wellbeing, tackling poverty, and green growth – creating more sustainable jobs for Wales. Our recent weather and the outbreak of larch disease has brought some of these challenges into stark reality. We need to be able to use our natural resources wisely and efficiently to improve the quality of life for the people of Wales, while at the same time enhancing the resilience and diversity of our environment.

We in Natural Resources Wales believe that there is a great opportunity to respond to these challenges – not alone, but by working with partners like the Welsh Government, businesses, the voluntary sector, and local communities. With sustainability as a central principle, together we can help make Wales a more prosperous, joined up and resilient nation.

To develop this Corporate Plan, we have gathered a wide range of information and evidence from our staff, our stakeholders, our customers, and the people of Wales. Last year we ran a series of events and a public consultation on our ideas, priorities and how we can work better together in future. We were pleased with the level of response and the broad support for our proposals. We have used this information to develop our Corporate Plan. This important feedback will also be used in our future work.

We are a new organisation – we're just a year old and this is our first Corporate Plan. We are on a long journey – and this is just the start. We have a focus on delivery. In the first year we will concentrate on integrated and collaborative working, and designing and embedding the ecosystem approach. We will be reaping the benefits set out in the Business Case for creating Natural Resources Wales over the next ten years or so. We will deliver our purpose – ensuring that the environment and the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, sustainably enhanced and sustainably used, now and in the future.

We hope that you find our Corporate Plan interesting and informative. And we hope to work with you in the future for the benefit of our environment and the people of Wales.



Professor Peter Matthews
Chairman



Dr Emyr Roberts
Chief Executive

Our Purpose...

// is to ensure that the environment and natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, sustainably enhanced and sustainably used, now and in the future.



Our Purpose...

// is to ensure that the environment and natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, sustainably enhanced and sustainably used, now and in the future.

We want Wales...

to be a place where our air, land and water are managed sustainably.

We use

- **Good Knowledge:** gaining wisdom and understanding of our natural resources and how we affect them – using evidence and applying learning from experience, so that we make good decisions.

so that what we do is

- **Good for the Environment:** ecosystems are resilient and secured for the future, wildlife and landscapes are enhanced, and the use of our natural resources is carefully managed
- **Good for People:** people are safe, and enjoy and benefit from our natural resources and understand their relevance in our day to day lives
- **Good for Business:** a 'location of choice' for business and enterprise, and a place where best practice environmental management is adopted and encouraged

and that we are a

- **Good Organisation:** well led and well managed, with suitably skilled and experienced staff and effective underpinning systems and processes; transparent in our decision-making and continuously improving our service to customers and partners, benchmarking ourselves against the very best.

These five 'Goods' give rise to the five 'Good' Programmes that we use to organise our work. The 'Good' Programmes are closely integrated; work we do in one programme provides multiple benefits and helps to achieve our work in the others. They are interdependent and cross cutting. We will be providing this maximum benefit across the board, not just for one particular 'Good' programme. Key to this approach is the use of integrated natural resource planning which we are currently developing with Welsh Government.

// Our Corporate Plan 2014-17 sets out what we plan to achieve over the next three years...

Who we are and what we do

Natural Resources Wales is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body and came into being in April 2013, largely taking over the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales, and the Environment Agency in Wales, as well as certain Welsh Government functions.

We have a wide range of roles and responsibilities:

Adviser: principal adviser to Welsh Government, and adviser to industry and the wider public and voluntary sector, and communicator about issues relating to the environment and its natural resources

Regulator: protecting people and the environment including marine, forest and waste industries, and prosecuting those who breach the regulations that we are responsible for

Designator: for Sites of Special Scientific Interest – areas of particular value for their wildlife or geology, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), and National Parks, as well as declaring National Nature Reserves

Responder: to some 9,000 reported environmental incidents a year as a Category 1 emergency responder

Statutory consultee: to some 9,000 planning applications a year

Manager/Operator: managing seven per cent of Wales' land area including woodlands, National Nature Reserves, water and flood defences, and operating our visitor centres, recreation facilities, hatcheries and a laboratory

Partner, Educator and Enabler: key collaborator with the public, private and voluntary sectors, providing grant aid, and helping a wide range of people use the environment as a learning resource; acting as a catalyst for others' work

Evidence gatherer: monitoring our environment, commissioning and undertaking research, developing our knowledge, and being a public records body

Employer: of almost 1,900 staff, as well as supporting other employment through contract work.

About this Plan

Our Corporate Plan 2014–17 sets out what we plan to achieve over the next three years, together with a set of indicators showing wider environmental trends in Wales.

We also have a one year Business Plan with targets and measures to accompany the Corporate Plan and provide more detail.

The **indicators** in the Corporate Plan aim to monitor trends across Wales as a whole. They look at **outcomes** and give us the **big picture** – what is

// Our unique differences as an organisation can be used to make the changes demanded of us.

happening in Wales and further afield. We are not solely responsible for these. Our work makes a contribution, but they are the result of the work of a wide range of organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors, and changes in the behaviour of individuals.

The **measures** in the Business Plan look directly at what we in Natural Resources Wales are doing – **our outputs**. They measure our own performance, are in our control, and we usually show this in the form of a ‘dashboard’.

The Corporate Plan and its indicators, together with the Business Plan and its measures, will form our **Performance Framework**. We can then monitor both what we do ourselves and the wider picture in Wales, to ensure that our work is really making the difference that we want.

The Business Case for setting up Natural Resources Wales identified a number of savings and benefits that we need to make as our organisation develops, and these are highlighted in both our Corporate and Business Plans.

Although covering three years, we intend to publish a rolling Corporate Plan, with updates as required. After this first three year period, we will publish five year rolling Corporate Plans, which will align with National Assembly elections and changes in administration. We will publish our Business Plan every year.

Our Risks, Pressures and Opportunities

We have an innovative purpose and significant short-term challenges in developing our standalone capability in Wales. The case for our formation identified a range of benefits and financial efficiencies that we will need to show clearly that we have delivered.

In addition to unique challenges, we also share the wider pressures affecting the public sector across Wales and the UK. Managing in an era of austerity is an added responsibility, as will be the wider economic prosperity of those we serve and work with. Despite this backdrop, we have some fantastic opportunities to exploit. Our unique differences as an organisation can be used to make the changes demanded of us. We will adopt an ecosystems approach to inform all our decisions at all levels – whether we are setting priorities or delivering specific operational activities.

We also have fabulous assets in Wales’ natural resources and environment, many of which are under our direct management. These assets can help us deliver our priorities through our own management and by supporting the delivery of others.

We are confident that we can deliver what is expected of us. The priorities set out in this Corporate Plan are a key step to making this happen.

// We are committed to being close to our communities in Wales.

Our People

We have almost 1,900 full-time equivalent staff (FTE) located throughout Wales – scientists, engineers, foresters, environmental managers, recreation and education experts, people working with local communities, as well as many others who enable our organisation to work effectively and efficiently.

We are a new organisation. We know what sort of organisation we would like to be, but it will take time for us to get there. Talking with our staff, we have developed the following set of values:

- **Passionate and ambitious** about our work and the positive impact we will have
- **Disciplined and focussed** in our prioritisation and delivery
- **Trusted and professional** in our relationships with stakeholders, staff, and their representatives
- Taking a **common sense** approach to our work and being **responsible** and **accountable** for our actions.

Our People Strategy describes how we intend to improve our capability and performance, work more flexibly and develop our organisation in line with our business. We also have a workforce plan that shows how our workforce will change over time. True partnership with the trade unions is essential – with shared objectives and trusted and open relationships.

Over the next three years we expect to see:

- A net reduction in our workforce to 1,850 FTEs in line with our efficiency savings targets
- An increase in retraining and re-skilling as we offer our staff opportunities to change the work they do
- An ageing workforce that has a wealth of experience which means that we need to plan carefully for the future and consider entry level schemes for key roles.

To change and grow with our changing business priorities, everyone will need to be flexible, responsive and clear about our performance expectations. A new, simple approach to performance management will seek continuous improvement, exemplifying our values of being focussed and ambitious. We will invest in the learning and development of our people.

Many of our staff across Wales are fluent in both Welsh and English. Our Welsh Language Scheme is helping us to strengthen our bilingual capability further.

We are committed to being close to our communities in Wales and want to reflect the communities we serve. Valuing and supporting diversity and action to ensure equality for people with protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010) is vital and will form the cornerstone of our Equalities Plan. We want to become a good practice employer in relation to equality and we are committed to promoting and advancing equality for all citizens and visitors in Wales.

We wish to be an employer of choice, with pay and conditions that reflect our business needs and are affordable, and agreed with trade union representatives in true partnership.

// The current Corporate Plan has been developed against a backdrop of a challenging financial environment.

Our Finances

The current Corporate Plan has been developed against a backdrop of a challenging financial environment. Public sector austerity has been a reality for the last couple of years and is predicted to continue for the foreseeable future.

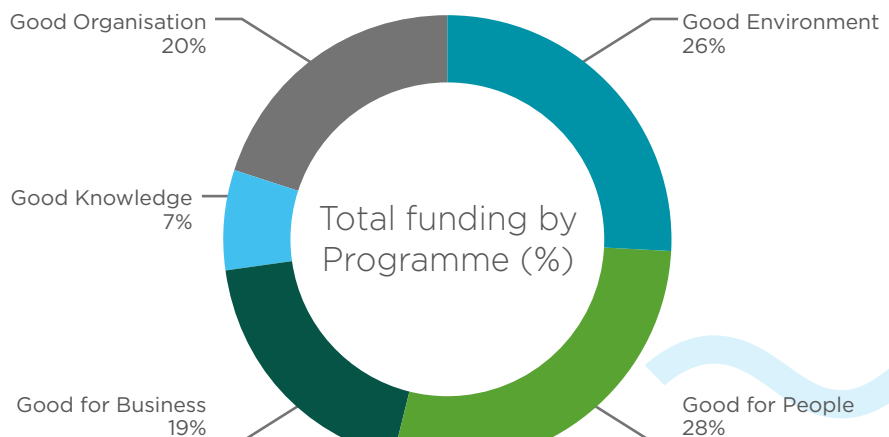
The financial focus of the initial Corporate Plan is on funding the establishment, then changing Natural Resources Wales into a standalone organisation. After this initial investment, the benefits will be delivered over future years so that the focus of the next Corporate Plan will be on how these savings can be reinvested to provide additional environmental benefits.

To achieve our outcomes in these challenging financial times we will need to:

- **Deliver** significant cash savings and efficiencies to achieve the benefits targets set by the Welsh Government over our first 10 years
- **Maximise** income opportunities by developing innovative approaches to enterprise
- **Develop** joint working to make best use of resources and expertise, and maximise benefits delivered with our partners
- **Prioritise** our activities and consider different ways that we can fund them.

Over the period of the Corporate Plan we will reduce our corporate services costs to achieve 'best in class' benchmark standards. We will also undertake a significant programme of work to establish our standalone capability. The savings we make will then be reinvested into improving environmental outcomes.

Our resources have been shared across our five 'Good' Programmes in 2014/15 as follows:



The table below summarises the income and expenditure budgets for 2014/15.

2014/2015 Summary	£m
Income	
Grant in Aid	115
Charge Schemes	38
Commercial	19
Other	8
Total Income	180
Expenditure	
Staff Costs	70
Operating Costs	70
Ex-Parent Body Service Level Agreements	12
Capital Projects	28
Total Expenditure	180

// Our work can benefit the environment, people, and business, often in the same place at the same time.

How we work and who we work with

We work with a wide range of people and organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors; umbrella organisations and networks; communities; as well as academic and professional bodies. We make an important contribution to virtually all aspects of life in Wales. We also work with others in a UK, EU and international context to ensure that our 'cross border' working is appropriate and joined up. We are keen to work with new and existing partners in innovative ways so that we can achieve even more together.

We are ambitious but realistic. The financial situation is causing us to reassess our priorities. We've had great feedback during the consultation process and this Corporate Plan gives us the opportunity to ensure that we focus our efforts on delivering our outcomes through our programmes.

So that we can provide clear direction to our business, and where possible reinvest in new activities and new ways of working, we've identified areas where we will seek to streamline our activities. These are shown in the introduction to each 'Good' programme.

How we work with Welsh Government

We are a Welsh Government Sponsored Body. We have functions which are independent of Government, coming to our own views. We also work closely with Welsh Government and we have an agreed set of shared outcomes for Wales:

- Enhancing our environment
- Protecting people
- Supporting enterprise and jobs
- Improving the nation's health
- Viable and vibrant places
- Delivering social justice
- Supporting skills and knowledge.

These shared outcomes are cross cutting, as are our 'Good' programmes and everything that we do. Our work can benefit the environment, people, and business, often in the same place at the same time. The shared outcomes also lie at the heart of the priorities for action set out in 'Shaping a more Prosperous and Resilient Future', the 2013 autumn statement made by Alun Davies AM, Minister for Natural Resources and Food. These priorities are delivering **green growth, managing our natural resources more efficiently and effectively, tackling poverty and enhancing the resilience and diversity** of our natural resources.

Contributing to the delivery of these shared outcomes and priorities locks us into the wider life of Wales, provides us with an enduring focus, and connects us with a range of partners. Our work not only contributes to plans and strategies dealing with the environment, climate change and the transition to a low carbon economy, but also those strategies

// Ensuring that our work is clearly aligned with changing legislation is important.

dealing with health and wellbeing, poverty, education, equality and diversity, and building resilient communities.

Ensuring that our work is clearly aligned with changing legislation is also very important, as the Environment, Future Generations, Planning, and Heritage Bills are all developed.

We receive a Remit Letter at the start of each financial year setting out what the Welsh Government wants us to achieve during that year. The current Remit Letter can be found in the publications section of the Welsh Government website.

The Business Case for Natural Resources Wales

The business case that supported the decision to establish Natural Resources Wales identified the benefits that we need to achieve over our first decade. These are an integral part of our corporate and business planning and they are spread across our programmes. We are expected to deliver three types of benefits:

- **Better delivery for Wales:** so that we align our work more clearly with Wales' priorities, with sustainable development at the heart of all that we do
- **Better outcomes for Wales:** so that we provide joined up advice and clearer guidance in our roles as adviser and statutory consultee as a single organisation
- **Better value for money:** we expect to generate benefits of £158 million over our first 10 years through the greater efficiencies gained by bringing three organisations into one.

We will monitor these closely against the business case and have already begun to deliver these benefits.

// Adopting the ecosystem approach in Wales will mean considering and regulating the environment as a whole, rather than dealing with individual aspects separately...

Integrated Natural Resource Planning and the Ecosystem Approach

In both our Corporate Plan and our Business Plan we have referred to *Integrated Natural Resource Planning* and the *Ecosystem Approach*. The two concepts are interdependent – the ecosystem approach is the way that we think about managing the environment and its natural resources, while integrated natural resource planning and management are the ways we do this in practice.

The ecosystem approach has been defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity as ‘a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way’. This means having a more joined up approach to how we all manage the environment and its natural resources.

Adopting the ecosystem approach in Wales will mean considering and regulating the environment as a whole, rather than dealing with individual aspects separately; it will involve weighing up and setting priorities for the many competing demands on our natural resources.

Our five ‘Good’ programmes

Our five work programmes capture the crosscutting nature of our work, where many of our activities help to deliver multiple outcomes across a number of the programmes. It is important that the work we do has a clear ‘line of sight’ or ‘golden thread’ from our shared outcomes with Welsh Government through our Corporate and Business Plans, right through to the work of an individual staff member.

These ‘Good’ Programmes are the link between delivering outcomes for Wales, and organising ourselves as a new body.

More detail can be found in our Business Plan 2014-15, available on our website.

Good Knowledge...

// What 'Good' looks like:
gaining wisdom and
understanding of our
natural resources and
how we affect them
- using evidence and
applying learning from
experience, so that we
make good decisions



Good Knowledge

// What 'Good' looks like: gaining wisdom and understanding of our natural resources and how we affect them – using evidence and applying learning from experience, so that we make good decisions.

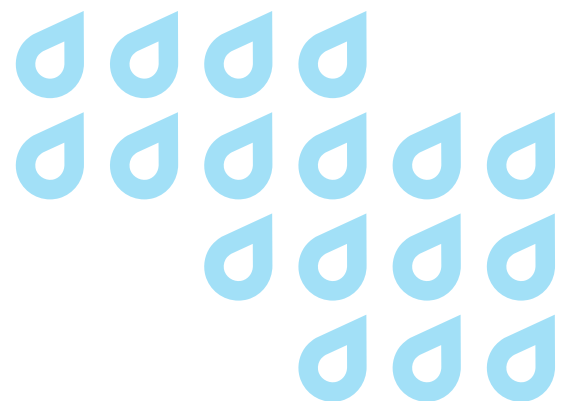
Challenges and Opportunities

Knowledge is fundamental to the successful delivery of all our work. It is important that all decisions taken that affect the Welsh environment are based on sound evidence. We have an important role to play in this: contributing to the evidence base, sharing our information with others, and providing a more joined up approach to evidence gathering. Our knowledge is the basis of our credibility and accountability for our decisions and actions.

We need to become more innovative, efficient and effective in the ways that we generate and use data if we are to work at our best within our budget. Working extensively in partnership will ensure that we use the 'collect once, use many times' principle. This means we will be an evidence-based organisation, making transparent and timely decisions for Wales, based on our knowledge, evidence and experience, underpinned by the ecosystems approach.

How we will work differently:

- In partnership with others, and particularly Welsh Government, we will develop the ecosystem approach and integrated natural resource management so that our natural resources can continue to support us into the future. We will trial and showcase this work so that others can use what we've learned and apply it to their own work
- In partnership with others, we will build our evidence base, make it available and keep it under review, by working with Welsh Government, academia and the voluntary sector as well as using 'citizen science'
- By understanding our role in providing evidence, we will generate information where appropriate, and help others if they are better placed to undertake research or gather relevant evidence.



// It is important that all decisions taken that affect the Welsh environment are based on sound evidence.

What we will do less of:

- We will rationalise our monitoring programme where appropriate so that we can concentrate on the essentials, and look at innovative ways to bolster our information. We'll use others' information where it is suitable and meets our needs
- Using available science and research in line with our priorities, we will only use our resources where we are the right organisation to fill any gaps
- Our modelling will be fit for purpose and we will encourage the academic and private sectors to invest in strategically assessing, reviewing and developing new modelling capability, working with Welsh Government.

Our indicators

Indicator Ka: Development of the ecosystem approach and integrated natural resource management

- Number of Natural Resources Wales work areas that reflect the needs of Wales based on integrated natural resource management
- The area covered by natural resource planning will be a longer term indicator as the approach is developed and the proposed Environment Bill is enacted.

Indicator Kb: Our data is used by others for decision making

- Number of raw datasets that are published for reuse by us or on our behalf
- Number of Access to Information requests.

Indicator Kc: Building our expertise

- We build our evidence base, securing and using the intellectual capital of our organisation and increase the level of qualification, professional membership and continuing professional development of our staff.



Our commitments

K1: We will develop Wales' approach to integrated natural resource management, using the ecosystem approach as a basis for decision making by, for example:

- Working with Welsh Government and other partners to develop the overall approach
- Developing a 'toolkit' to embed the ecosystem approach and integrated natural resource management and planning in our work, and running three trials in areas around the Dyfi, Rhondda and Tawe rivers
- Advising on sustainable land and water use and integrated natural resource management to embed good practice
- Working with Welsh Government to help ensure that integrated natural resource management provisions in the proposed Environment Bill are supported in other legislation, such as the Future Generations, Heritage, and Planning Bills, as they are being developed.

K2: We will ensure we have a good understanding of our environment, economy and people in Wales, and of Wales' place in the world, and will continue to review our evidence to ensure that it is fit for the challenges facing the natural resources of Wales by, for example:

- Working with Welsh Government and others to identify sources of evidence, understanding where there are gaps and, where we can collaborate to fill these gaps, sharing information and expertise and supporting others to fill them
- Reviewing our monitoring strategy and applying recommendations to our operational work
- Working with Welsh Government to develop natural resources policy, including the delivery of a State of the Environment and, in the longer term, a State of Natural Resources, report with an interim report by November 2014.

K3: We will develop and manage a sound evidence base to support our strategic and operational decision making and inform decision making by others by, for example:

- Developing our modelling and forecasting capability, and working with others to increase our use of futures techniques such as horizon scanning and scenario planning
- Developing our social and economic capability and evidence base, to provide information for our natural resources management and ecosystem approaches, and to help understand and overcome barriers to using the environment faced by the different sectors of society and local communities
- Developing our ability to better explain and communicate complex issues to a wide range of stakeholders by using a wide range of communication tools and formats, including guidance.

Resources for 2014/15:

Expenditure: £13m Staff: 185 FTEs

Good Environment...

// **What ‘Good’ looks like:** ecosystems are resilient and secured for the future, wildlife and landscapes are enhanced, and the use of our natural resources is carefully managed.



Good Environment

// What 'Good' looks like: ecosystems are resilient and secured for the future, wildlife and landscapes are enhanced, and the use of our natural resources is carefully managed.

Challenges and Opportunities

Our environment in Wales faces many challenges: the effects of climate change, pests and diseases, loss of biodiversity, pollution, and competing uses for land and water. We must manage our natural resources to meet these challenges and increase ecosystem resilience, ensuring we meet our national and international responsibilities.

Climate change is real and Wales must play its part; we must reduce our contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and protect and enhance our carbon sinks. Wales must adapt to the consequences of climate change that will affect people directly and have a major impact on Wales' environment and natural resources. Outbreaks of pests and diseases, such as *Phytophthora ramorum* in larch trees, are increasing, perhaps aggravated by climate change. We want to understand the impacts of climate change and be an exemplar in how we manage land and water to both adapt to and mitigate its effects. We will keep our own carbon footprint as low as possible in our day to day business.

Many of our habitats and wildlife species are in trouble, as highlighted in the State of Nature report (2013); we need to help slow and, where possible, reverse habitat and biodiversity loss, helping to meet UK, EU and international biodiversity targets. We also need to care for our protected landscapes, including AONBs, National Parks, and historic landscapes.

During 2013, there were around 100 significant pollution incidents in Wales and 36 per cent of our surface waters were classed as having 'good or better' ecological status. For the same period, 92 per cent of bathing waters were classified as 'good' or 'excellent'.

The challenges are huge. Achieving progress will not be easy and we do not have the resources to tackle all of these issues by ourselves. By making the most of opportunities to working collaboratively we will have the best chance of sustainably managing our environment.

By making the most of opportunities to work collaboratively we will have the best chance of sustainably managing our environment.

How we will work differently:

- Prioritising our efforts where they can make the biggest difference
- Applying the ecosystem approach and integrated natural resource planning and management as it develops
- Using the land and water we manage to demonstrate this approach
- Accept that the spread of non-native species or disease outbreaks can be unpredictable and may require additional resources if we are to halt their spread.

What we will do less of:

- We will review our land management and operational activities and use the ecosystem approach to deliver more with less and in partnership with others
- We will review our work on air quality and the strategic advice we provide to local authorities; and use our regulatory role to ensure the best performance from those that we regulate
- We will focus our most robust enforcement, inspection and permitting activity on those who operate below a level of compliance. We will use earned recognition and lighter touch approaches with those whose performance is at, or goes beyond, compliance
- We will review our approach to salmon stocking in Welsh rivers and implement any changes that better deliver the ecosystem approach.

Our indicators

Indicator Ea: Water environment

- Compliance with good status under the Water Framework Directive.

Indicator Eb: Sustainable forest management

- Woodland known to be managed to UK Forestry Standard (UKFS).

Indicator Ec: Biodiversity

- Bird population indices and other UK biodiversity indicators for sites or habitats which can be disaggregated to a Wales level.

Indicator Ed: Climate change

- Greenhouse gas emissions in Wales.

Indicator Ee: Marine, terrestrial and freshwater environment

- Condition of features of marine, terrestrial and freshwater Natura 2000 sites.

Our commitments

E1: We will be an exemplar in the way that we manage sustainably the land and water that we are responsible for, and help others do the same by, for example:

- Using the ecosystem approach and integrated natural resource management principles to develop plans for the land and water that we manage directly, understanding the context within which these plans sit
- Ensuring the sustainable management of land and water we manage including:
 - Welsh Government woodland estate
 - National Nature Reserves we own/manage directly
 - Historic assets
 - Flood defence works and assets
 - River Dee conservancy
- Delivering sustainable fisheries and their associated programmes, subject to funding.

E2: We will help protect and improve the quality of our air, land, sea and water by, for example:

- Considering streamlined innovative approaches and working with others where appropriate to implement EU Directives, UK and Wales legislation such as:
 - the Water Framework Directive
 - revised Bathing Waters Directive
 - Habitats Directive
 - Marine Strategy Framework Directive
 - Natura 2000
 - Industrial Emissions Directive
 and waste and water quality legislation and conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the European Landscape Convention
- Influencing the development and implementation of legislation, regulation and strategic policies and practice for sustainable land use, including Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Rural Development Plan (RDP), and other aspects of agriculture and forestry
- Working with Welsh Government to respond to risks and issues from pests, diseases and invasive non-native species
- Contributing to the development and implementation of the Welsh Government Marine Transition Programme and Marine and Fisheries Strategic Action Plan.

E3: We will play our part and work with others to halt biodiversity loss in order to help ensure that, by 2020, ecosystems are more resilient by, for example:

- Playing our part in the delivery of Aichi and EU Biodiversity targets as part of our commitment to the ecosystem approach
- Developing mechanisms to improve the delivery of strategic management and restoration of Wales' designated sites focussing on actions which yield the best outcomes, including projects such as Life N2K programme
- Improving the connectivity and restoration of priority habitats (such as deep peat) and their linkages as part of area-based natural resource management plans.

E4: We will help to make Wales more resilient to climate change and other impacts, as well as supporting global efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by, for example:

- Understanding our contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change using the land and water we manage and our other assets, and aiming to be an exemplar in carbon management
- Ensuring climate change adaptation is embedded in all areas of our work
- Continuing our approach to flood risk management in the light of climate change and take account of future flood risk when making our decisions. Implementing innovative solutions, and working with the natural environment to reduce flood risk in urban and rural or agricultural areas.

Resources for 2014/15:

Expenditure: £46 million **Staff:** 571 FTEs

Good for People...

// **What 'Good' looks like:**
people are safe, and
enjoy and benefit from
our natural resources
and understand their
relevance in our day to
day lives.



Good for People

// What 'Good' looks like: people are safe, and enjoy and benefit from our natural resources and understand their relevance in our day to day lives.

Challenges and Opportunities

There is a huge potential to use our environment and natural resources to improve people's health and local surroundings, support local communities and jobs, and to provide opportunities for recreation. We also need to help protect people from environmental incidents such as flooding and pollution. This has been brought into focus recently with serious coastal flooding: 208,000 properties in Wales are at risk of flooding.

Healthy life expectancy varies hugely across Wales (57.1 years in Blaenau Gwent to 68.2 years in Monmouthshire). Increased activity can improve both physical and mental health, while experiencing the natural environment can also be beneficial. Encouraging more people to get more active using the outdoors has the potential to have positive effects on people's health and wellbeing.

Tackling poverty is a key priority. Although poverty is often thought of in an urban context, rural poverty is also an important issue.

The Welsh environment is a great place to learn in and learn about. Schools, universities, colleges and the public all use our natural resources as a fantastic learning resource. We will help people to reconnect with, and understand the importance of, our natural resources and their relevance to day to day living. Raising awareness of environmental issues can help people make better informed decisions and help protect our environment for the future.

It is essential that the opportunities that we provide, or help others to provide, are as inclusive as possible, considering people of different ages, of different races or faiths, with disabilities, or with any of the other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act, 2010. We want to cater for a wide range of people and provide opportunities for the communities we serve.



// We will help people to reconnect with, and understand the importance of, our natural resources.

How we will work differently:

- Ensuring that we integrate the recreation opportunities on land and water we offer with other providers, complementing rather than competing with them
- Building on our existing work in urban areas to ensure that areas of greenspace are valuable assets for our towns and cities
- Working more closely in partnership with communities, and listening to, and working with, local citizens, including people from protected characteristics groups, focussing our efforts on the most deprived communities.

What we will do less of:

- We will focus our access and recreation development activities on those sites which are the most popular with people or are in our poorest communities
- We will reduce more costly visitor infrastructure where demand might suggest a more user-led, lower key approach, supported by good information provision
- We will embed our role to educate in our core delivery activities and support educational professionals in outreach work, paying attention to our commitment to promoting and advancing equality for all people in Wales.

Our indicators

Indicator Pa: Flood risk and management

- Number of properties with a reduced probability of flooding.

Indicator Pb: Recreation and health and well being

- Percentage of people living in Wales using outdoors for recreation for the minimum advised levels of physical activity required for a healthy life.

Indicator Pc: Proximity of greenspace

- Percentage of population with access to natural greenspace, such as woodland, parks and open space.

Indicator Pd: Volunteering and skills development in the environment

- Number of volunteers directly hosted by Natural Resources Wales or facilitated through Woodlands and You (and successor approaches).

Indicator Pe: Education, learning and sector skills

- Number of educational settings supported by Natural Resources Wales to use the environment for education, learning and sector skills.

Indicator Pf: Economic impacts

- Benefits and economic impact of recreation in Wales using the Coast Path as an example
- Value of local small scale commercial opportunities enabled by Natural Resources Wales on the land and water it manages.

Our commitments

P1: We will deliver an effective and co-ordinated response to environmental incidents and risks, such as flood events, pollution and disease outbreak, and help decrease the risk of flooding to people and properties by, for example:

- Building, maintaining and operating flood defences and implementing innovative ways of managing uplands and lowlands to hold and slow down water to help reduce flood risk to communities
- Raising people's awareness of their flood risk and what actions they need to take
- Reducing the number of serious pollution incidents using a prioritised, risk based approach
- Maintaining our liabilities to help ensure public safety in our forests, National Nature Reserves and the flood defences we manage.

P2: We will provide and enable recreation and access opportunities which contribute to improving people's health and wellbeing by, for example:

- Developing and delivering our recreation and access strategy, covering all aspects of our recreational functions and relevant business outcomes
- Using recreational opportunities on the land and water that we manage to improve people's mental and physical wellbeing. This is to be done by working in an equitable way, with a programme of activities agreed with our stakeholders, including health professionals and outdoor recreation networks
- Implementing initiatives on behalf of Welsh Government including the Wales Coast Path Development Programme.

P3: We will help ensure people are able to live, work in, and visit a good quality environment, including those in urban areas and those in our most disadvantaged communities, and will channel economic benefit to help tackle poverty by for example:

- Working with other organisations to develop a programme of projects, including the Welsh Government 'Cynefin' project, to improve local environmental quality and provide opportunities for disadvantaged communities. This includes urban regeneration projects
- Working with local communities to get more people involved in place-based decisions, and developing future plans together using a principle of community ownership and co-production, particularly close to land and water we manage
- Maximising the economic benefits of our work, focussing particularly on Communities First areas and other communities with evidence of deprivation.

P4: We will provide and enable opportunities for people to learn in, and about, and enjoy the environment by, for example:

- Providing learning and skills opportunities, advice and guidance, in and about the environment, including visits for all ages and abilities and in particular for young people
- Establishing links with Welsh Government to ensure curriculum-linked educational material and visits are appropriate and Welsh Government priorities are addressed
- Developing our approach to volunteering by working in partnership with others, and working with existing volunteer networks.

Resources for 2014/2015:

Expenditure: £50 million **Staff:** 428 FTEs



Good for Business...

// What 'Good' looks like:
a 'location of choice' for
business and enterprise
and a place where best
practice environmental
management is adopted
and encouraged.



Good for Business



What 'Good' looks like: a 'location of choice' for business and enterprise and a place where best practice environmental management is adopted and encouraged.

Challenges and Opportunities

Our stakeholders have told us that most of the businesses we work with share our environmental aims and would welcome a more collaborative and streamlined approach. This means working together right from the start, sharing information and advice, linking into trade bodies or partnerships, and considering rural and agricultural businesses as well as industry. Working together, we will look for solutions and timely responses, while protecting and improving the environment. We will be consistent, fair and transparent in all our dealings and will take into consideration cross border issues. We need to use our natural resources more efficiently and effectively as we move towards a low carbon economy, including energy generation.

'Green growth' is a priority for action, and is key to Wales' future. As well as economic growth, it creates local opportunities for community renewal, and the ability to use our natural resources to deliver on Welsh Government's priorities of creating jobs and growth and tackling poverty. Consideration of procurement practices which can allow access to small scale, local and social enterprises are important here, as well as getting value for money. As well as jobs, the environment can provide opportunities for training and skills development which can lead to employment in other sectors.

Some 1,700 industrial, waste and water sites are regulated across Wales. 48 per cent of commercial and industrial waste is currently reused or recycled, but there are 36,000 instances of fly tipping each year. Waste can be a valuable resource – providing energy, or material for construction, for example.

We market over 878,000 cubic metres of timber each year, fulfilling 300 harvesting contracts, and providing employment in the forestry sector through our contractors and the businesses that add further value to the timber that we sell. We also generate income through car parking and other visitor facilities at our principal recreation sites. We run a permit charging scheme which works on a cost recovery basis. We host businesses and enterprises on the estate we manage, including renewable energy such as wind farm developments and hydroelectric power. As well as looking to further develop these opportunities, we are also looking at new ways to generate income, which we can then reinvest for the benefit of our natural resources and environment.



// Working together, we will look for solutions and timely responses, while protecting and improving the environment.

How we will work differently:

- We aim to increase our use of a risk based ecosystems approach that will involve new ways of working with our customers and within the organisation
- Providing well evidenced, clear, planning advice and decisions in good time will help achieve the highest environmental standards and the sustainable management of our natural resources. This will mean that we will focus more on influencing strategic national and local plans and less on tactical responses. We will also aim to create a framework that supports the development of renewable energy projects at appropriate scales and locations
- We will develop and implement a new regulatory strategy that will encourage improved environmental performance by regulated businesses and reduce the number of unpermitted sites posing significant risk to the environment, by providing information and advice, and considering cross border issues
- We will work with others to identify new business and job opportunities, especially in disadvantaged areas, and grow our income to reinvest in our highest priorities. The sustainable management of our directly managed natural resources will enable and support innovative business development and investment.

What we will do less of:

- We will provide strategic local and strategic national planning responses, relying on standing advice and whole area approaches for most individual planning applications
- We will streamline our permitting processes, relying on simpler permits for those whose performance is compliant with the standards required
- We will consolidate and enhance the management of protected sites so that they are as effective, resilient and diverse as they can be before seeking new ones. We will also streamline the process for their designation
- We will consult on proposals for charging for pre-application advice and ensure our regulatory charges comply with the 'polluter pays' principle and cover the cost of regulation in its widest sense.

Our indicators

Indicator Ba: Applications processing

- Determination of permit/licence/consent applications within statutory timescales.

Indicator Bb: Managing sites

- Proportion of sites carrying out regulated activities with improving environmental performance.

Indicator Bc: Bringing sites into management

- Number of unpermitted sites posing significant risk to the environment brought into a permitting regime, or closed down.

Indicator Bd: Our role as statutory consultee

- Proportion of planning consultations responded to within agreed standard of service.

Indicator Be: Generating income

- Income from Natural Resources Wales enterprise activities.

Our commitments

B1: We will, as a regulator, provide evidence based advice and clear decisions in good time to enable businesses in Wales to operate effectively and achieve the highest environmental standards by, for example:

- Continuing to develop our Customer Care Centre as a single point of contact for our customers and continuously increasing our knowledge base
- Developing our regulatory systems, including opportunities for Better Regulation to streamline the service and lower costs for customers
- Streamlining our administrative procedures for designating Sites of Special Scientific Interest and declaring National Nature Reserves to make these more efficient.

B2: We will work with business, industry and government to support the development of critical infrastructure and encourage development in the right places to ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources by, for example:

- Developing a single permitting, licensing and consenting service, based on common standards and processes, to be co-designed with our stakeholders
- Implementing our transition plan for Town and Country Planning including our new approach to planning consultation advice
- Advising on Local Development Plans, regional strategies and the emerging Welsh Government development framework.

B3: We will work closely with others to identify, develop and support new business opportunities and new opportunities for jobs and training to create a skilled workforce in Wales by, for example:

- Facilitating new business opportunities, developing our enterprise capability, and working with Welsh Government and others to support schemes and future plans, including renewable energy generation, as well as recreation and tourism opportunities
- Commission a study of our impact on the socio-economic benefits arising from energy developments
- Supporting the wind energy programme and delivering our hydropower programme on land that we manage.

B4: We will grow our income within our purpose, reinvesting that income to provide further public benefit by, for example:

- Completing our feasibility studies for new ideas in our Enterprise Framework, looking at motor sports, value added timber, housing, telecommunications, visitor centres, filming, minerals, and recreation
- Marketing timber from the Welsh Government woodland estate in accordance with our marketing strategy: some 878,000 cubic metres over bark standing, of which 332,000 cubic metres will be larch
- Generating external income by providing an analytical service through our laboratory.

Resources for 2014/15:
Expenditure: £34 million Staff: 388 FTEs

Good Organisation...

// What 'Good' looks like: well led and well managed, with suitably skilled and experienced staff and effective underpinning systems and processes; transparent in our decision-making and continuously improving our service to customers and partners, benchmarking ourselves against the very best.



Good Organisation

// What 'Good' looks like: well led and well managed, with suitably skilled and experienced staff and effective underpinning systems and processes; transparent in our decision-making and continuously improving our service to customers and partners, benchmarking ourselves against the very best.

Challenges and Opportunities

As a new organisation, we need to develop ourselves and our ways of working. We need to develop our strategic and technical standalone capability, making decisions in Wales for Wales by reducing our dependence on legacy systems. Many of our business challenges can only be tackled by adopting an ecosystems approach to support our decision making. We will need to develop our most critical asset, our staff, to help them understand what this means in practice and to support them in delivering this new way of working.

We need to keep improving our service to customers and work ever more closely with stakeholders. We want to be fair, consistent and transparent in our transactions with partners and work with them to get the best results for them and for the environment and its natural resources. We intend exploiting the potential of digital technology to drive down our costs and improve services externally for customers and internally for staff.

In order to maximise the resources we have available for our work, we need to become more efficient, entrepreneurial and innovative. We need to generate more income to reinvest in our services, where we can exploit opportunities that are in line with our purpose and priorities. We need to work with our staff and unions to create shared expectations of performance and commitment to our values and purpose.

We have a significant programme of change to establish our full standalone capability as well as to develop our culture, ways of working, systems and processes, and ensure that we make the savings and efficiencies that we need to over the next ten years. We want to be an organisation that is flexible in its approach, responsive to the needs of customers, and delivering outcomes in the most cost effective way. When we have made these changes, improvements in the quality of our service delivery and increased efficiency will be apparent across all of our business.

// We want to be an organisation that is flexible in its approach, responsive to the needs of customers, and delivering outcomes in the most cost effective way.

How we will work differently:

- We will have a sharp focus on delivering our business priorities for Wales; our decision making, allocation of resources, and performance management will be aligned to achieve this
- Joining up our services internally will help us improve our efficiency
- We will become more entrepreneurial in our approach to both the delivery of our core services and also in the development of new opportunities that are in line with our purpose
- We will look at different ways of delivering our business support services that are more efficient and joined up with other partners and organisations.

What we will do less of:

- We will reduce the multiple points of contact with our organisation or internal facing approaches that are inefficient and unfriendly
- We will rely less on process and more on empowering and trusting our staff to deliver our priorities
- There will be fewer paper based transactional systems; we will invest in digital approaches which are more efficient and effective
- There will be less non-statutory publishing that does not directly support the delivery of our priorities
- We will review our financial governance models and streamline them so that we are easier to do business with and our processes are simpler to run. Wherever possible, we will seek to meet, or better, Cabinet Office benchmark levels for our support functions.

Our indicators

Indicator Oa: Customer and stakeholder satisfaction index

Indicator Ob: Staff engagement index

Indicator Oc: Progress towards Welsh Government/Cabinet Office benchmark targets for support services including accommodation

Indicator Od: Achievement of revised Business Case tracking cash and non-cash releasing benefits

Indicator Oe: Reduced organisational carbon footprint

Our commitments

O1: We will continuously improve our services to customers and our relationships with stakeholders and partners through open and collaborative approaches by, for example:

- Providing efficient and effective business support and customer care to both staff and customers
- Ensuring that our communications and work with stakeholders is effective and aligned to our Business Plan
- Delivering our Welsh Language Scheme.

O2: We will work more efficiently and grow our income, within our purpose, so that we can use these savings to provide greater public benefit by, for example:

- Implementing a self-service and digital approach to our services to customers where this improves performance and reduces cost
- Delivering our strategies on our transport fleet, facilities management, security and accommodation, to ensure that we provide the most efficient and customer focussed service
- Gaining and maintaining ISO 14001 accreditation for our environmental management and being an exemplar in areas such as carbon use, waste and water.

O3: We will develop a culture that supports our values, increases our skills base, enhances our flexibility and diversity, and improves our standards of health and safety by, for example:

- Developing the organisation, and helping staff reflect our desired values, diversity and culture
- Enhancing the overall capability of the workforce, including strategic leadership through investment in learning and development
- Continuing to provide high quality skilled jobs in Wales through ongoing development of existing staff and continuation of apprenticeship schemes, and working in partnership with learning and training providers to promote and develop employment in the environment sector.

Resources for 2014/15:
Expenditure: £37 million Staff: 301 FTEs

How well are we doing? Reporting our progress

As a delivery organisation, we need to be able to demonstrate how well we have performed, both individually and in conjunction with our partners, and whether people and communities are better off as a result.

Our conversations with our stakeholders and staff have given us clarity about what our customers want us to do, what success will look like, and have allowed us to develop a set of indicators to demonstrate our contribution to our shared outcomes with Welsh Government. Our Corporate Plan includes these high level indicators.

We will also publish a set of performance measures, derived from our Business Plan, to show our outputs – how much we have done, how well we have done it, and what the results are. We will publish this as our Corporate Dashboard.

Directorate Delivery Plans for each of our Directorates, and individual contribution statements for each member of staff, sit below the Business Plan and Corporate Plan so that there is a clear link from our own outcomes and those shared with Welsh Government right through to the job of an individual member of staff.

The Corporate Plan with its indicators and the Business Plan with its Corporate Dashboard together provide us with a Performance Framework to monitor our work and its impact on our environment.

We will be open about reporting our delivery against our Corporate Plan and Business Plan. We will publish results in our Annual Report and our Board will publicly scrutinise performance at least three times a year.

For any further comments or queries, or to obtain this document in an alternative format, please contact corporate.planning@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk





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Budget Management Report - December 2013

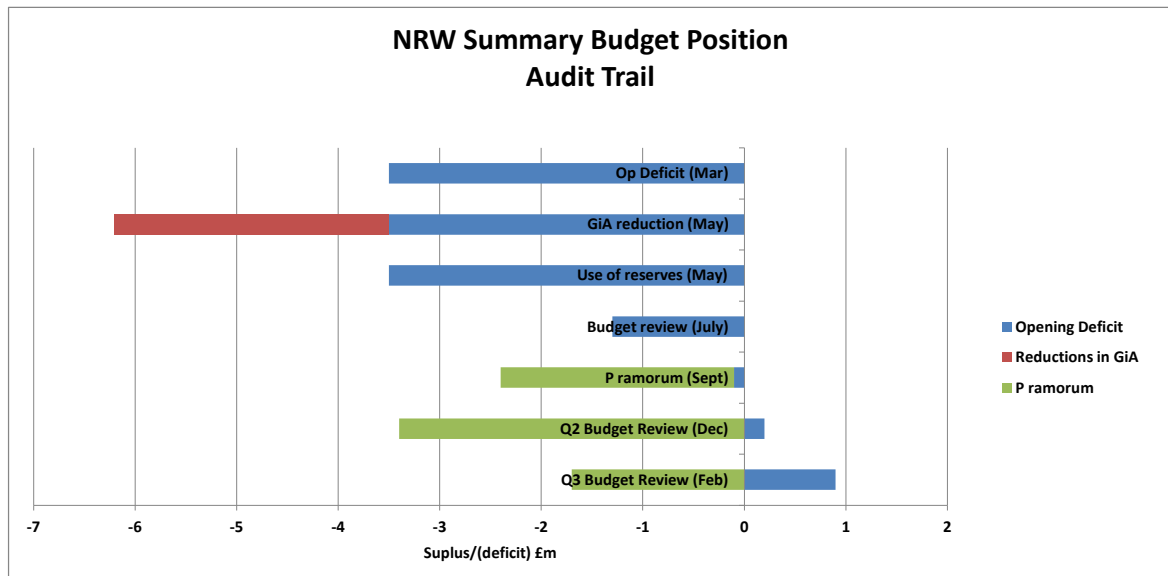
	Actual to Date	Budget to Date	Variance	Variance	Annual Budget
	£000's	£000's	£000's	%	£000's
<u>NRW - EXPENDITURE SUMMARY</u>					
Staff	52,118	52,285	167	0.3%	68,879
Other Operational Costs	48,482	48,543	61	0.1%	73,048
Revenue Projects	12,160	12,889	729	5.7%	23,574
Capital Projects	19,529	20,015	485	2.4%	31,203
Total Expenditure	132,289	133,732	1,442	1.1%	196,704
<u>Expenditure by Directorate</u>					
Chief Executive Office	308	321	13	4.1%	422
Transition	5,067	4,721	-346	-7.3%	8,940
Governance & Communication	2,188	2,220	32	1.5%	3,022
Operations North & Mid Wales	16,316	16,451	136	0.8%	24,161
Operations South	23,261	23,510	249	1.1%	33,162
Knowledge, Strategy & Planning	19,307	19,785	478	2.4%	31,004
National Services	35,360	36,385	1,024	2.8%	53,398
OD & People Management	6,606	6,691	85	1.3%	7,736
Finance & Corporate assets	23,876	23,647	-229	-1.0%	34,860
Total Expenditure	132,289	133,732	1,442	1.1%	196,704
<u>NRW INCOME SUMMARY</u>					
Charge Income - EPR	-12,288	-12,492	-204	-1.6%	-13,110
Charge Income - WR	-19,732	-19,755	-23	-0.1%	-19,755
Charge Income - Fisheries	-730	-1,079	-349	-32.3%	-1,385
Charge Income - Other	-3,618	-3,769	-151	-4.0%	-4,752
Commercial & Other Income	-12,717	-11,889	828	7.0%	-19,000
European & Other External	-6,148	-6,043	104	1.7%	-10,178
Total - Income	-55,233	-55,028	205	0.4%	-68,179
Total - Grant in Aid	-89,702	-89,701	0	0.0%	-127,736

Deficit	789
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NRW Budget Position 2013/14
Summary Audit Trail of Movements

ANNEX 6

	Board Meeting						
	Mar 2013 £m	May 2013 £m	July 2013 £m	Sept 2013 £m	Oct 2013 £m	Dec 2013 £m	Feb 2014 £m
Opening Surplus/(Deficit)		-3.5	-3.5	-1.3	-2.4	-2.4	-3.2
Pressures:							
WG - JNCC to be funded from baseline budget		-0.7					
WG - EAW GiA clawed back in 12/13		-0.9					
WG - reduction in additional GiA		-1.0					
Other		-0.1					
Reduction in original income budget						-1.0	
P Ramorum increase in budget allocation				-2.0		-1.4	-0.8
Q2 Budget Review						-0.7	
Q3 Budget Review							-0.2
Total Pressures		-2.7	0.0	-2.0	0.0	-3.1	-1.0
Relievers:							
Remaining GiA c/fwd allocated to budget		1.9					
Use of ex-CCW and FCW reserves		0.8					
Headcount/structure review - reduction in salaries budget			1.5				
May Budget Review			0.7				
Q1 Budget Review				0.9			
Q2 Budget Review						1.4	
Use of charge income to fund transition						0.9	
Additional WG funding (P ramorum)							2.5
Q3 Budget Review							0.9
Total Relievers		2.7	2.2	0.9	0.0	2.3	3.4
Closing Surplus/(Deficit)		-3.5	-3.5	-1.3	-2.4	-2.4	-0.8



Annex 7.1

Natural Resources Wales' strategic objectives for engagement with the planning system

We propose a new approach, with increased emphasis on working at the strategic level and adopting a solutions-based culture. The recommended strategic objectives approved by our board are as follows:

(i) Principles

We will:

- Engage proactively with the planning system - this is an important means of delivering sustainable development, natural resource management and positive outcomes for Wales' natural heritage
- Engage proactively with regeneration and economic development initiatives - to ensure that initiatives take account of environmental constraints and natural resource management and that consequential developments are sustainable
- Focus our efforts on providing evidence and advice on strategic and spatial plans – to steer development to appropriate locations and minimise future conflicts at the individual application level
- Use the same natural resource evidence base throughout NRW – to ensure consistency of advice
- Encourage early engagement with developers - to influence and identify any problems and creative solutions at an early stage.
- Ensure our statutory advice is a reasoned opinion reached after due consideration, weighing our full range of relevant purposes, duties and guidance – to ensure we comply with our legal duties. Specific duties must be complied with, where these are engaged
- Provide objective and expert environmental advice, based on good place-based knowledge - to assist decision makers in discharging their duties. We recognise that in balancing their duties, decision-makers may come to a different conclusion to NRW on the acceptability of any residual risk or impact of a particular development.

(ii) Ways of working

We will:

UNCLASSIFIED

- Ensure our responses are as clear, unambiguous, and consistent as possible
- Ensure that our internal processes in providing statutory planning advice are designed and implemented to prevent conflicts of interest (for example where we are the applicant or landowner as well as the statutory consultee)
- Ensure transparency of decisions by being able to explain the reasoning behind our advice, and by publication of decision documents in contentious cases
- Adopt a positive approach. This means trying to find the right solution for the environment and the developer. It means avoiding objecting if we can. However, if it is not possible to find the right solution for the environment, either because the applicant is unwilling or unable to modify proposals, or because the development is sited in the wrong place, we may need to object. If the impact raises issues of national importance, we would need to object.
- Use a risk-based approach in our reactive work, responding to individual applications. This means directing our resources to developments likely to produce significant effects and affecting important and sensitive sites/areas
- Use standing advice where appropriate as it has value in responding to less complex applications and can reduce workloads; however, this does not replace the need for place-based and bespoke advice, particularly in more complex cases
- Charge for non statutory (eg pre-application) advice - where we can demonstrate that this will deliver improved customer service and better environmental outcomes
- Work in partnership with the LPAs and PINS - to deliver joint outcomes, training initiatives and to manage the consultations which are sent to NRW
- Work with developers and their sector groups to clarify the role of NRW (viz providing advice not making decision); identify common evidence needs and solutions
- Work with other statutory consultees such as Cadw to clarify our respective roles in planning and share evidence

(iii) Outcomes:

UNCLASSIFIED

- Developers seek and take our advice at an early stage so that the siting and design of new development is influenced, encouraging development which avoids negative impacts, is within environmental limits and sustainable
- Decision-makers are taking natural resources into account as a result of our clear and well-targeted advice, so protecting these resources and achieving sustainable development
- Opportunities for environmental enhancement are identified and delivered through the planning system
- Improved relationships and customer satisfaction due to the quality and clarity of our responses and provision of the right information at the right time.
- NRW's role in the planning system is understood by our customers and stakeholders
- Improved compliance with response deadlines



Planning Bill Team,
Planning Division,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF103NQ

(Via email)
planconsultations-d@wales.gsi.gov.uk

26 February 2014

Dear Sir/Madam

Positive Planning - A consultation on proposals to reform the planning system in Wales. Response from Natural Resources Wales

This letter contains Natural Resources Wales' response to the proposals to change the planning system in Wales as set out in the Positive Planning consultation. Our response to the specific consultation questions are set out in Annex 1 attached.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on these proposals which, together with the proposed Environment and Future Generations Bills, represents a once in a generation opportunity to significantly improve the statutory framework for the management and planning of environmental and natural resources in Wales. This response should therefore be considered alongside our response to the consultation on the Environment White Paper where we highlighted the importance of the Environment Bill, the Future Generations Bill and the Marine Plan being complementary and mutually supportive in order to ensure a joined up approach to addressing the environmental, social and economic challenges we now face.

These challenges include the effects of climate change, the depletion and deterioration of natural resources including the continuing decline in biodiversity, and the inequality in the access that the people of Wales have to the benefits that the environment provides.

Addressing these challenges needs to be delivered within the context of the wider processes affecting the delivery of public services across Wales.

The Planning system is an important mechanism to deliver shared outcomes within a spatial context. We welcome the aspiration for planning to be repositioned as a

Annex 7.1 – Positive Planning – Letter from Natural Resources Wales

tool to manage change in the public interest and support sustainable development by guiding it to appropriate locations.

Natural Resources Wales has developed Strategic Objectives for Planning Advice, which were endorsed by our Board on 18 December. These reflect the overall approach set out in 'Positive Planning'. They emphasise the need to move towards an enabling, solutions based approach, working strategically and through early engagement with developers and decision makers to enable the right development in the right location whilst respecting environmental limits i.e. adopting the ecosystem approach. A copy of our Strategic Objectives is attached at Annex 2 for your information.

Natural Resources Wales has a key role to play in supporting the proposals in 'Positive Planning' through providing evidence and guidance, and in our continuing role as a statutory consultee providing advice on the environmental impact of development, and solutions, to inform developers and decision makers to ensure the right development is directed to the right place.

Our response highlights the importance of:

- Integration of legislation, policies and plans;
- Parallel tracking of planning and connected environmental consents and permits;
- Integration of outcomes to optimise the benefits from development;
- Strategic engagement with the National Development Framework and other strategic plans to provide evidence and advice to direct nationally important development and infrastructure to the most suitable locations;
- Early engagement in the development management process – at the site selection phase;
- Clarity over the proposed future role of statutory consultees and others in the planning process.

Finally, whilst we are supportive of the overall approach and direction of travel towards an enabling, strategic, front-loaded integrated planning and consenting process, we need to better understand the resource implications for Natural Resources Wales as a result of these proposals. Affordability needs to be considered alongside their desirability, especially during the transition period between the current and future way of working.

We look forward to working with Welsh Government to establish the full extent of these new responsibilities, our respective roles, particularly in relation to the connected consents process, and how best to resource them so as to maximise our effectiveness in delivering the Welsh Government policy objectives in relation to the Planning, Environment and Future Generations Bills, and the emerging Marine Plan.

We also want to work with you in developing cross border approaches, where the legislation and policy in Wales interfaces with that in England, particularly for those aspects that aren't devolved.

We will continue to work with the Welsh Government and other stakeholders to develop further the details of this important piece of legislation and associated secondary legislation, policy and technical guidance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emyr Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

EMYR ROBERTS

Prif Weithredwr, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Chief Executive, Natural Resources Wales

emyr.roberts@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

Natural Resources Wales,
Ty Cambria, Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0TP

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Ty Cambria, Heol Casnewydd, Caerdydd CF24 0TP

Consultation reference: WG20088

Consultation Response Form

Positive Planning - A consultation on proposals to reform the planning system in Wales

We would like your views on our proposals to change the planning system in Wales. This requires changes to primary legislation, secondary legislation, and policy and guidance.

Please submit your comments by 26/02/2014.

If you have any queries on this consultation, please email:

planconsultations-d@wales.gsi.gov.uk or telephone Switchboard on 0300 0603300 or 08450103300.

Data Protection

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response or tick the box at the end of this form. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

Consultation reference: WG20088

Positive Planning - A consultation on proposals to reform the planning system in Wales		
Date of consultation period: 04/12/2013 – 26/02/2014		
Name	Dr Emyr Roberts	
Organisation	Natural Resources Wales	
Address		
E-mail address		
Type <i>(please select one from the following)</i>	Businesses/ Consultants	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Local Planning Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Government Agency/Other Public Sector	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Professional Bodies/Interest Groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Voluntary sector (community groups, volunteers, self help groups, co-operatives, social enterprises, religious, and not for profit organisations)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (other groups not listed above) or individual	<input type="checkbox"/>

Supporting Culture Change

Q1	Do you agree that the proposed remit for a Planning Advisory and Improvement Service will help local planning authorities and stakeholders to improve performance?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales welcomes the establishment of the Planning Advisory and Improvement Service. It provides a mechanism to help support cultural change and performance improvement and management. It needs to focus both on output and outcome delivery. Its scope and work programme needs to integrate environmental, social and economic aspects of the planning service in Wales. NRW would welcome an opportunity to participate in the PAIS steering group and advisory/stakeholder group and would be able to advise on technical issues and related training needs related to our role and remit including, for example, flood risk, landscape, biodiversity and natural resource management and planning. Natural Resources Wales would be particularly keen to work with the PAIS on flood risk assessments. We believe the PAIS would be a particularly effective way of disseminating good practice and training on complex but important considerations such as flood risk assessments and applyibf the ecosystem approach. The PAIS’s co-ordination and dissemination role would create a more efficient approach to informing and supporting LPAs than the current approach of NRW briefing each LPA individually.</p>			

Q2	Do you agree that existing Welsh Government support arrangements for the built environment sector in Wales should be reviewed?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>No Comment</p>			

Q3	Do you agree that competency frameworks should be prepared for planning practitioners and elected representatives to describe the skills, knowledge and behaviours necessary to deliver planning reform?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>NRW supports in principle the preparation of competency frameworks for both planning practitioners and elected representatives. The competency framework should incorporate environmental, economic and social skills and knowledge. For planning practitioners the RTPI competency framework provides a good basis for</p>			

Consultation reference: WG20088

the proposed competency framework. Consideration needs to be given to whether or not this should also apply to non planning practitioners who engage with, and provide advice on, the planning and development management process. NRW would welcome the opportunity to work with the WG on developing the frameworks, utilising our technical expertise and knowledge on a wide range of environmental issues linked to the requirements of the proposed Environment, Heritage and Future Generations Bills.

Active Stewardship

Q4	Do you agree that the National Development Framework will provide a robust framework for setting national priorities and aid delivery?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>NRW welcomes the proposal to introduce a NDF to replace the Wales Spatial Plan. The NDF provides an opportunity to direct nationally strategic development and infrastructure to the most appropriate locations. NRW notes and welcomes the development plan status of the NDF and that it will be informed by an SEA and HRA. This will help ensure clarity, certainty and consistency throughout the planning hierarchy in Wales and avoid unnecessary conflict and delay arising from inappropriate development in inappropriate locations. Specifically some environmental issues such as flood risk manifest themselves at regional or national spatial scales, such as large river catchments and coastal process cells. These should be firstly addressed at the national spatial planning level in order to most effectively influence strategic and local development decisions. Investment in such development and infrastructure will need to be founded on robust environmental evidence to ensure that proposals are directed to locations that can deliver intended outcomes for the long term, whilst being resilient to current and future challenges such as climate change impact.</p> <p>The NDF will need to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -clearly define the role of the land use planning system in delivering the national outcomes of government and any long term goals arising out of the forthcoming Future Generations Bill. -set out a long term vision focussed on the delivery of sustainable development goals and outcomes to ensure a resilient economy and environment -clearly articulate the relationship between the different tiers of plans and processes -clearly articulate the relationship between the NDF, Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan and the Wales Transport Strategy and the spatial expression of major development and infrastructure arising out of non devolved Plans and programmes eg National Policy Statements -clearly articulate the relationship between the NDF and the Natural Resources Policy proposal for the Environment Bill and between the NDF and the Marine Plan. Section 60A of the Planning(Wales)Bill should make provisions for the Minister to have regard to, or consider ,natural resources policy and the Marine Plan in the preparation of the NDF. -clarify that the NDF will set out a spatial expression of Natural Resources Policy including green infrastructure and strategic recreation and access provision, flood defence and other flood risk management measures, such as upland catchment management measures together with pressured environments and National and Internationally important designations. -clarify if Developments of National Significance will be criteria led or reflected spatially in the NDF, informed by the WIIP, Wales Transport Strategy and Natural Resources Policy. -highlight the key natural resource requirements that target setting and land allocation further down the planning hierarchy will need to take into account eg water resource availability when setting housing allocation targets for SDP`s and Local Development Plans -align the review period with that proposed for the Natural Resources Policy and 			

Consultation reference: WG20088

State of Natural Resources Reporting.
 The proposals for the scrutiny , and review of, the NDF will need careful consideration particularly if the intention is to include the spatial elements of existing TANS, such as TAN 8 and 15, within the NDF.
 NRW would welcome an opportunity to meet with WG officials to discuss how we can help provide a common evidence base to inform both the Natural Resources Policy and the National Development Framework.

Q5	Do you agree that Planning Policy Wales and Minerals Planning Policy Wales should be integrated to form a single document?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>NRW supports the integration of Planning Policy Wales and the Mineral Planning Policy Wales document to form a single document. This will help ensure an integrated approach to natural resource management.</p> <p>NRW notes the intention to review the TAN series and would welcome an opportunity to meet with WG to discuss the potential implications of including the spatial elements of the existing TANS , TAN 8 and 15 for example, within the National Development Framework.</p> <p>To assist with the integration of the Marine Plan and the land use planning system a TAN, based on the Scottish Government draft circular `Planning Scotland`s Seas-the relationship between the statutory land use planning system and marine planning and licensing`, would help provide clarity in relation to the interface between the Marine and Land Use Planning systems.</p>			

Q6	Do you agree that a core set of development management policies should be prepared for consistent application by all local planning authorities?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Support in principle. It provides a mechanism to ensure national consistency in relation to the specific policy and legislative requirements of key natural resource interests relating, for example, to Natura 2000 sites, flood risk and national landscape designations thereby providing national certainty and clarity for developers and decision makers. NRW would welcome an opportunity to work with Government to prepare core development management policies relevant to our role and remit that can be applied consistently across Wales including the role of the land use planning system in delivering the ecosystem approach and natural resource management as proposed in the emerging Environment Bill.</p> <p>NRW notes the emphasis on greater Town and Community Council engagement in the process together with the proposed Place Plans.</p> <p>Guidance would help establish and clarify their role together with the status of</p>			

Consultation reference: WG20088

place plans in the decision making process.
 NRW would welcome the opportunity to be involved with the reassessment of the number and scope of TAN`s, in particular any proposed changes to TAN5,TAN8,TAN14 and TAN15.However we would strongly advise that a specific TAN about development and flood risk should be retained. Strategic and local planning decisions about new development and regeneration have a crucial role to play in minimising the social and economic impacts that flooding has on the communities of Wales. The magnitude of those impacts (running into many tens of millions of pounds just in the period from June 2012 to February 2014) justify a specific TAN in future about managing all sources of flooding and coastal erosion in light of more extreme weather events predicted as a result of inevitable climate change.

Q7	Do you agree that the proposed development hierarchy will help to ensure that planning applications are dealt with in a proportionate way dependent on their likely benefits and impacts?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:
 Yes, the proposed hierarchy will provide a framework to enable stakeholders and decision makers to focus resources strategically and at early stages of project development to ensure the right development in the right place respecting environmental capacity .
 For completeness the document and flowchart needs to include Development Consent Orders for NSIP`s which are currently consented by the UK Government.
 With regard to paragraph 4.37 (first bullet point), please be aware that there may be some instances in which applicants may submit a certain level of information, which results in ourselves requesting further clarification or information. In such circumstances we may not be aware that further information is needed until a first tranche of information is submitted. The finalisation of a development proposal may be iterative. For example, an applicant may submit a species survey, which necessitates either no further submissions, or information of varying detail on mitigation measures.
 With regard to paragraph 4.37 (second bullet point), we welcome the opportunity for us to prioritise our resources towards applications which have the greatest potential benefits and impacts. We note the references in paragraph 4.35 to the multitude of objectives that you expect the planning system to deliver, including promoting sustainable development. We agree with these. However, please note that supporting economic prosperity, addressing the challenges posed by climate change and delivering good quality homes and a good quality environment are all components of sustainable development in the first instance, as is set out in Chapter 4 of Planning Policy Wales. “Promoting sustainable development” should not be viewed as a separate objective.

Consultation reference: WG20088

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Q8	Do you agree with the proposed categories and thresholds for Developments of National Significance set out in Annex B?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The proposed categories, Development of National Significance, Major and Local are logical and supported in principle. However there will be a need to clarify the extent to which the categories and thresholds will address impact from a development that may have significant adverse impact on interests of acknowledged international or national importance.</p> <p>There will also be a need to clarify, in addition to the proposed categories and thresholds, how specific locational development set out in the NDF, informed by the WIIP, Natural Resources Policy and Area Based Natural Resource Management Plans or the Wales Transport Strategy, will be reflected.</p> <p>The consultation draft Scottish Third National Planning Framework provides a useful model to consider in this respect.</p> <p>Annex B-need to clarify what is meant by gas, natural gas or CO2.</p> <p>PARA 4.41-clarify what is meant by developments of national significance outlined in Natural Resources Policy.</p> <p>We suggest that the threshold of the last application type in Annex B(Generating Stations) should be amended to read `Anything 25 megawatts to less than 50 megawatts`. The current wording implies Local Planning Authorities would determine proposed generating stations between 49 and 50 megawatts.</p>			

Q9	Do you agree with the proposed categories and thresholds for Major Developments set out in Annex B?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The proposed categories, Development of National Significance, Major and Local are logical and supported in principle. However there will be a need to clarify the extent to which the categories and thresholds will address impact from a development that may have significant adverse impact on interests of acknowledged international or national importance. The impact of major and local development proposals may also have significant international and national implications for sites /areas of acknowledged importance. There will also be a need to clarify, in addition to the proposed categories and thresholds, how specific locational development set out in the NDF and SDP, informed by the WIIP, Natural Resources Policy and Area Based Natural Resource Management Plans will be reflected.</p>			

Consultation reference: WG20088

The consultation draft Scottish Third National Planning Framework provides an useful model to consider in this respect.
 The categories should also consider wind turbine development.
 For clarity and completeness the thresholds for NSIP`s should be added either as a separate column or table in future documentation.
 NRW would welcome an opportunity to meet to discuss the practical implications of the statement `statutory consultees must prioritise major development` particularly with respect to our comments above in relation to development with significant adverse impact on interests of acknowledged importance and statutory response times.
 NRW would welcome an opportunity to participate in the proposed review of the Use Classes Order.

Q10	Do you agree Developments of National Significance applications should be subject to mandatory pre-application notification, and consultation?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

The principle of mandatory pre application notification and consultation is supported. This provides a degree of consistency between the DNS and NSIP process.

However more detail is required on the proposed process, which we assume is similar to the DCO process for NSIP`s, and on the level of detail required for a preliminary verification of the planning application. NRW would prefer to be involved as early as possible to help inform both the location as well as the detailed design and layout of the development.

With regard to the permitted development issues outlined in section 4.51-4.53, we do have concerns over this with regard to flood risk. Converting a commercial building into residential use greatly increases the vulnerability of its occupants if the building had not been designed to be safe according to TAN15 in the event of a flood. This is particularly the case if the residential use is for a vulnerable group in society, e.g. granny flats. We urge WG to ensure that TAN15 requirements are applied to changes of the use of an existing building. In addition, the cumulative replacement of gardens with hard, impermeable surfaces is already proven to significantly increase flood risk from surface water and sewer flooding. Evidence for this is available from Dwr Cymru’s Rainscape project. The planning system should allow an LPA to designate areas exempt from permitted development for a specified range of reasons, one of them being flood risk particularly as a result of the predicted impacts of climate change. This would ensure that the planning system remains an effective tool in preventing flood risk from increasing in known problem areas whilst still allowing permitted development to proceed elsewhere.

NRW welcomes and supports the move towards the coordination, or parallel tracking, of ancillary consents and associated development and environmental permits and would welcome an opportunity to discuss further with WG. We would also support the use of a Memorandum of Understanding between the applicant, Welsh Government, PINS and ourselves on DNS applications.

Consultation reference: WG20088

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Q11	Do you agree that a fee should be charged for pre-application advice for prospective Developments of National Significance applications?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:
Pre application advice can involve significant work for NRW therefore this proposal is welcomed in principle. NRW welcomes and supports the proposed integrated DNS and related consents process and would welcome an opportunity to discuss further with WG.

Q12	Do you agree that the Planning Inspectorate Wales is the most appropriate body to undertake the processing of a Development of National Significance application?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:
Yes
It would be useful to clarify the process for preparing Local Impact Reports to ensure that statutory consultees will be engaged at an early stage to ensure that we can advise on appropriate conditions and legal requirements together with the interrelationship between related permitting and consenting processes and Environmental Impact Assessment.

Q13	Do you agree that only one round of amendments to an application for Developments of National Significance should be permitted after it has been formally registered?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments:
Our experience of the current arrangements for NSIP`s leads us to caution against one round of amendments to an application for DNS. Flexibility is required during the process to enable negotiation to identify solutions to ensure the optimisation of environmental, economic and social outcomes. Furthermore, we often have informal discussions with developers on major applications, on issues such as flood risk, between the formal submission of information. We believe that the proposals in the Bill should still allow for these types of discussions; developers should still be allowed to have informal discussions with ourselves between the two proposed points at which they can submit information to PINS or the Welsh Ministers. This would help avoid unintended consequences. For example, a developer would be able to check with us that the redesign of a site layout based on the advice of others does not have negative implications for issues we advise on, such as flood risk or protected species.

Consultation reference: WG20088

Q14	Do you agree with the proposals for handling connected consents?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:
The principle of one examination process for connected consents is supported. An integrated process can avoid conflict between separate development and consent proposals eg between wind turbines and grid connections.
Paragraph 4.66: We note the provisions in the Bill (Section 18, para 62J) for an applicant to make a direct application to the Welsh Ministers for connected applications. We welcome the intent behind this provision, as we believe it would streamline the planning and permitting regimes and enable a common environmental evidence base to inform both the planning and connected consents process .

We are currently in discussion with Government with regard to the scope of connected consents, the process for coordinating and timetabling the determination of consents and respective roles in the decision making process. The model developed for coordinating the consenting process relating to the Hinkley C Power station provides an useful model to follow.

Q15	Do you agree that examination should follow a similar procedure to the proposed call-ins and appeals?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:
Agree-the examination of DNS should follow the NSIP model

Q16	Do you agree with the proposed division of responsibilities between the Welsh Ministers and the local planning authority at the post-determination stage?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:
Agree

Consultation reference: WG20088

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Q17	Do you agree that the statement of case and draft statement of common ground should be produced when submitting an appeal?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>In principle, yes. However there will be a need to reconsider the timeframes for the submission of appeal statements especially for technical and complex applications where expert input is required and there are links and dependencies to the internal decision making timescales of interested parties.</p>			

Q18	Do you agree that the Planning Inspectorate should decide how to handle the examination of an appeal?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes, subject to the provision of clear criteria and process to determine what is handled at inquiry or written representations.</p>			

Q19	Do you agree no changes should be made to the content of an application post appeal submission?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The aspiration should be early engagement to negotiate and resolve issues thereby removing the necessity for an appeal. If this is not possible our experience of the appeal process suggests that negotiation continues between the developer and a statutory consultee to resolve issues during the post appeal submission, often resulting in agreement on positive solutions/outcomes before Inquiry. Therefore if continuing negotiations can potentially resolve issues then they should be allowed to continue.</p>			

Annex 7.1 – Positive Planning – Response from Natural Resources Wales

Consultation Response Form

Positive Planning - A consultation on proposals to reform the planning system in Wales

Consultation reference: WG20088

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Q20	Do you agree with the proposal for the Welsh Ministers to be able to initiate awards of costs?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Yes			

Q21	Should fees be introduced to cover the costs of the Welsh Ministers resulting from an appeal?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: No comment			

Q22	Do you agree that a Commercial Appeals Service (CAS) should be introduced?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: No comment			

Consultation reference: WG20088

Improving Collaboration

Q23	Do you agree that local planning authorities should be merged to create larger units?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>NRW supports the principle of strategic and cross boundary working and notes that the recommendations of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery moves this debate forward with regard to setting out options for local government mergers.</p> <p>Linked to the Williams recommendations there is a need to consider how to work collaboratively and in partnership on a regional basis to organise a pool of shared expertise/technical experts across a range of local authority advisory functions such as biodiversity, landscape, access and built heritage to build internal capacity thereby reducing pressure on NRW and other statutory consultees being expected to provide this advice.</p> <p>The structures and governance arrangements established to coordinate and deliver a regional context for educational services within local government in Wales may be a possible model to consider.</p>			

Q24	Do you think that a national park authority should continue to have responsibility for planning in their area?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The evidence base, Delivery of Planning Services in Statutory Designated Landscapes in Wales (Land Use Consultants, October 2012) and analysis of the Planning Performance Indicator Dashboard indicates that the NPA Planning Service is comparable to other local planning authorities .The Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery highlighted the need for service delivery to reflect the direct legislative and functional requirements of an administrative area for National Parks and did not identify a convincing case for transferring their functions to local authorities whilst emphasising the importance of collaboration and partnership with local authorities.</p> <p>WG propose to undertake a Governance Review of National Parks in Wales, commencing in the autumn. The issue of whether or not National Park Authorities should continue to have responsibility for planning its area should be taken forward and considered within the overall context of the proposed Governance Review.</p>			

Q25	Do you agree that strategic development plans should only be prepared in the identified areas?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Comments:

The Williams Recommendations moves this debate further with regard to recommendations setting out options for local government merger to create larger more strategic Local Authorities. It will be important to clarify the potential implications of these recommendations on the need for Strategic Development Plans given that Local Development Plans for larger authorities will be more strategic in nature.

The interrelationship between SDP`s and the proposed city regions in Wales will need to be clarified.

Should the proposed SDP proposals be taken forward in the Bill the NDF will need to provide an adequate strategic framework for Local Development Plans in areas such as Rural Wales identified as not requiring SDP`s.

There will be a need to consider coordinating processes and timetables between the NDF, SDP, Natural Resources Policy, the LDP, Area Based Natural Resource Plans, SIPS, National Park and AONB Management Plans and Regional Transport Plans.

Paragraph 5.26 of Positive Planning states `SDP`s will be informed by national natural resources policy and the area based approach for natural resources management`. However, the Planning (Wales) Bill does not currently include a legislative requirement for this. To ensure that the Planning (Wales) Bill and the emerging Environment Bill are integrated and mutually supportive, we recommend that Regulation 60G(6) of the Planning (Wales) Bill should be amended to ensure that SDP`s` have regard to, or consider, national natural resources policy and the area based approach for natural resources management.

NRW would welcome an opportunity to meet with Government to discuss how best to provide a common evidence base in relation to natural resource management to inform the above plans and processes.

Q26	Do you agree that the scope of Strategic Development Plans should be limited to the key issues identified in paragraph 5.29?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

We welcome the identification of strategic environmental opportunities as key issues for SDP`s. In light of the multiple social, economic and environmental opportunities they afford we consider that strategically important green and blue infrastructure should be identified, protected and where appropriate enhanced to complement the delivery of planned gray infrastructure and ensure the long term viability and resilience of settlements, infrastructure and environmental assets. To ensure policy integration the SDP`s will need to be informed by, and have regard to, the Natural Resources Policy and the area based approach for natural resources management. There will be a need to integrate environmental evidence on opportunities and constraints in relation to natural resource management and green infrastructure.

NRW can help support the SDP process by providing data, advice and information. Specifically we believe that Flood Risk Management Measures should be included in the scope of SDPs. For example, the A55 corridor is

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subject to both tidal and fluvial flooding. The introduction of SDPs provides a good opportunity to plan strategically and take a cross-boundary approach for flood risk and coastal erosion management. This may be particularly relevant to proposed cross-boundary linear development, such as transport infrastructure. We would also seek to ensure that the issues that you set out in paragraph 5.29 are planned taking flood risk into account. For example, strategic allocations for housing and employment should be made outside areas at risk from flooding. We agree that waste facilities should be identified in the list set out in paragraph 5.29. We also advise that you consider cross-border issues when setting up SDPs. For example the A55 corridor borders England. We advise that any guidance associated with SDPs highlights the importance of liaising with English counterparts and authorities

Q27	Do you agree that a partnership between local planning authorities and social, economic and environmental stakeholders should oversee preparation of Strategic Development Plans?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes. NRW will be able to provide partnerships with evidence and advice, linked to Natural Resource Plans in relation to natural resource management and its integration with economic and social outcomes.</p> <p>We would welcome clarification on the consultation procedures for the proposed SDPs together with our role and status on the Panel and during the consultation process.</p> <p>It would be helpful to clarify and confirm that SDP`s will be informed by SEA and HRA.</p>			

Q28	Do you agree that a light touch Local Development Plan should be prepared in areas where there is a Strategic Development Plan?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>An evidence based, up to date Local Development Plan, provides a framework to enable the right development in the right place whilst conserving and enhancing the environment and natural resources.</p> <p>We understand that the LDP will still need to set out details for specific land</p>			

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allocation requiring careful consideration therefore we are unclear on the merit of a light touch model where an SDP is in place. NRW would therefore encourage a consistent LDP model throughout Wales together with measures to ensure that all Local Planning Authorities have timely, up to date adopted Plans. The Planning (Wales) Bill will need to make legislative provision for new Local Development Plans to have regard to or consider the national natural resources policy and the area based approach for natural resources management.

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Improving Local Delivery

Q29	Do you agree with the essential elements of a good planning service identified in Annex A?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>As you will be aware, Local Planning Authorities and/ or the Welsh Ministers are the decision-maker and we are their advisor on environmental issues. We do not believe that we “wield power” over LPAs; the onus is on them to take a decision weighing up all material considerations, of which our advice is one. The first step for LPA's to decide is whether we need to be consulted on some applications at all. We would be grateful if any advice and guidance produced in future makes this point clear.</p> <p>NRW welcomes the move towards setting up a common performance framework and an emphasis on getting LDP`s in place. This will help improve the strategic framework for decision making and provide greater clarity, certainty and consistency to decision makers.</p> <p>We note the reference to statutory consultees providing `substantive responses`. We would welcome early discussion with WG officials to understand the scope and definition of what is meant by a `substantive response` and potential implications for the delivery of our advice to the planning system.</p> <p>The initial indicators set out in Annex A provides a good starting point but would be improved by a greater emphasis on outcomes as well as outputs.</p> <p>Para 6.13 and Annex A- we note that statutory consultees will be subject to a requirement to produce an annual monitoring report. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss what this will entail at an early stage. This will help us ensure that we set up our systems appropriately to collect the required information. We would be able to report on the indicators set out in Annex A, based on our systems as setup at the present time.</p> <p>It would be useful to clarify the relationship between this process and the auditing process for indicators emerging from the Future Generations Bill.</p> <p>We wish to highlight that currently the Development Management Procedure Order sets out that statutory consultees have 14 days in which to respond to planning applications. However NRW has agreements with LPAs throughout Wales to allow us 21 days to respond. Our preference is therefore for the indicator to be based upon whatever standard has been agreed locally with a LPA.</p> <p>We would welcome further consideration of parallel tracking of planning and environmental permitting so that the ecosystem approach is properly embedded.</p>			

Q30	Do you agree that each local planning authority should produce and publish an annual performance report to agreed standards?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes.</p>			

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Q31	Do you agree that where a local planning authority is designated as poorly performing there should be an option to submit planning applications for major development only to Welsh Ministers?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales has no comment to make on the merit of this proposal. However we would welcome an opportunity to discuss and consider potential implications for Natural Resources Wales given our role as principal advisor to Government on environmental matters if applications are submitted directly to Welsh Ministers.</p>			

Q32	Do you agree that Welsh Ministers should be able to direct preparation of a joint Local Development Plan?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes, particularly where the preparation of a joint plan can provide a strategic framework to resolve conflict between land allocation and the capacity of the environment to accommodate change in relation to, for example flood risk, water resources or Natura 2000 sites.</p>			

Q33	Do you agree that Local Development Plans should plan for at least 15 years ahead and have a set end date beyond which they cease to be the development plan?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes, it provides a long term perspective to the decision making process in line with the principles of sustainable development. The future timeline should be in line with proposals set out in the Future Generations Bill.</p>			

Q34	Do you agree that local planning authorities should work with town and community councils to produce place plans which can be adopted as supplementary planning guidance?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Place Plans can help secure public and community engagement and add local evidence and knowledge to the wider policy and decision making process relating to land use planning but also wider area based natural resource management and community plans in the context of Single Integrated Development Plans. The proposed pilots will help clarify the status, evidence base, process, relationship between other plans and processes, including SEA and HRA, and role of statutory consultees such as NRW .</p> <p>The proposed PAIS will have a key role to play in helping provide Town and Community Councils with the skills and competencies required to produce place plans.</p>			

Q35	Do you agree that where a development proposal accords with an allocation in an adopted development plan a new planning application process should be introduced, to ensure that only matters of detail such as design and layout are considered?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Whilst front loading the development management process via the NDF, SDP and LDP can result in greater certainty about impact of a proposed allocation this may not necessarily adequately cover the range of assessments, or links to other related consents processes, that an outline planning application would be subject to. Further, whilst an outline application would be valid for 3 years an allocation included in an LDP could be in place for up to 15 years during which period environmental evidence and wider policy and legislative provisions may have changed.</p> <p>Should this approach be taken forward, it will be important that sufficient detail is included within an initial allocation. This would need to include detail on the zoning of development within larger allocations. This would help us to advise on the most appropriate layout of a site. For example, we would seek to ensure that any developments of higher vulnerability (for example, housing) were situated on areas of the proposed allocation not at risk of flooding. If such issues could not be addressed at the allocation stage, then subsequent planning applications submitted may not be able to comply with national planning policy and guidance, such as TAN15.</p> <p>We would also question how such allocations will be dealt with when new information has come to light between a site being allocated and a subsequent planning application being made. This is especially given that LDPs have a fifteen year lifespan. For example, if new hydraulic modelling shows that an allocated site is at risk of flooding, when previously it wasn't, how will the planning application be dealt with? Water resources could also be an issue in</p>			

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time and with the accumulated impact of development.
NRW note the proposed consultation on charging options for pre application advice-we are actively considering our options for charging for non statutory advice at the moment and will wish to input to the consultation process in due course.
Further it may be timely to consider wider options for funding environmental improvement and enhancement including the issue of environmental bonds as highlighted in recommendations 87-89 of the Report to the Welsh Government by the Independent Advisory Group `Towards a Welsh Planning Act:Ensuring the Planning System Delivers.
We note that para 6.76 of the consultation document (which refers to Section 14 of the Bill) enables Welsh Government to require NRW to “respond to the consultation in a particular manner and within a particular time, and to report to the Welsh Ministers on their compliance with any such requirements”. We would welcome a discussion about the scope and practical implications of this proposal.

Q36	Do you support the proposal to allow a right of appeal against a local planning authority not registering a planning application?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: We would wish to clarify our role in situations when a Local Planning Authority has not registered an application based on a study or survey on which we would advice eg flood consequence assessments.			

Q37	Should the requirement for mandatory design and access statements be removed?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: No comment			

Q38	Should the requirement to advertise planning applications	Yes	No
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	for certain developments in a local newspaper be removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>NRW will be exploring Memoranda of Understanding and Service Agreements with Local Planning Authorities, these will cover arrangements for consulting NRW over agreed development proposals. We therefore have no comment to make on the substantive question raised here.</p> <p>However, with regards to the paragraphs on statutory consultees set out on pages 76-78 of the consultation document, we would welcome an opportunity to meet to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the scope and definition of what is meant by “a substantive response” (Section 27 of the draft Bill). We request that this be set out in the Bill in the first instance. • any secondary legislation that falls out of Section 15 of the Bill, in particular, legislation about the way in which statutory consultees should respond to requests for pre-application advice. 			

Q39	Should there be any local variation within a national scheme of delegation for decision making on applications?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>NRW support the principle of a national scheme of delegation-this will introduce a greater degree of certainty and consistency into the development management process</p>			

Q40	Do you agree that a minor material change should be restricted to "one whose scale and nature results in a development which is not substantially different from that which has been approved"?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>We agree with the proposals to introduce a new procedure by which applicants can renew planning permissions. We welcome the intention to make application requirements proportionate to the development proposed. Application requirements should also be proportionate to the proposed risk posed to or from the proposed development in cases where new information or data about risks is available.</p>			

Q41	Do you agree that the proposals strike a balance between the need to preserve land used as Town and Village Greens and providing greater certainty for developers?	Yes	No
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>It would be useful to clarify what is meant by `the statutory planning process`. Presumably the Local Development Plan process provides a mechanism and framework to consider the respective merit of land being notified as Town or Village Greens or being allocated for development.</p>			

Q42	Do you agree that the proposals will reduce delay in the planning enforcement system?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes</p>			

Q43	Do you agree with the introduction of temporary stop notices to the planning enforcement system in Wales?	Yes	No
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes it provides a mechanism to halt development activity with potential significant adverse impact on interests of acknowledged importance.</p>			

I do not want my name/or address published with my response (please tick) <input type="checkbox"/>
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Consultation reference: WG20088

How to Respond

Please submit your comments in any of the following ways:

Email
Please complete the consultation response form and send it to: planconsultations-d@wales.gsi.gov.uk (Please include 'Positive Planning – WG20088' in the subject line).
Post
Please complete the consultation form and send it to: Planning Bill Team Planning Division Welsh Assembly Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ
Additional information
If you have any queries on this consultation, please email: planconsultations-d@wales.gsi.gov.uk or telephone: 0300 0603300 or 08450103300

**THE RESPONSE OF NATURAL RESOURCES WALES TO
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER
A SUSTAINABLE WALES
BETTER CHOICES FOR A BETTER FUTURE
Consultation on proposals for a Sustainable Development Bill**

General Comments

1. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) welcomes the publication of the White Paper as a further step in the process of making Wales an exemplar in the governance and application of Sustainable Development.

2. NRW believes that it has a great deal to contribute towards the aims and objectives of the White Paper. Our purpose is defined as being to ensure that the environment and natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, used and enhanced. In this context sustainably means ... with a view to benefitting, and in a manner designed to benefit, the people, environment and economy of Wales in the present and in the future. The Board has affirmed that its focus will be on environment, but as an integral part of a much bigger picture. In managing the environment, we will use and build knowledge, take account of the needs of communities and the economy and be mindful of the impact of environmental management on the economy and communities. The connection is ecosystem services which will be our processes and activities.

3. We have already begun to think and plan for how we can operate according to sustainability principles, particularly in our governance arrangements and in how our decisions will lead to sustainable outcomes in the future.

A Sustainable Development Duty

4. NRW welcomes the proposals in the White Paper that the focus of Sustainable Development should be around:

- a long term perspective;
- social, economic and environmental well-being;
- shared outcomes;
- knowledge and best practice;
- acknowledgement that difficult decisions will have to be made; and
- prevention and early interventions.

5. NRW shares all these aspirations, and intends to build them into our policies and working practices. The conceptual framework upon which we will develop our thinking is based on four pillars - economy, environment, community and knowledge – delivered in balanced ways between ourselves and our partners . This is summarised in our direction of travel ... creating a greener, wiser , wealthier, healthier Wales.

6. We will strive to be a sustainable management exemplar organisation. We therefore welcome the intention in the White Paper to place a duty on us to embed sustainable development as our central organising principle. The key elements of sustainable development as a central organising principle are

- a clear focus on what the organisation is seeking to deliver in support of the future wellbeing of Wales and

Annex 7.2 – NRW response to SD White Paper

- ensuring decisions taken are fully informed by consideration of the effect on economic, social, environmental and long term wellbeing

7. We will, therefore, prioritise working with others, and support the White Paper's conclusion that "Government and the wider public service community cannot find solutions to the challenges faced alone: working in partnership with stakeholders is crucial and effective engagement is needed...." In order to do this effectively, we will adopt transparent and participative decision-making processes and will share its knowledge wherever possible.

8. Central to the Welsh Government's interpretation of sustainable development is the use of the Ecological Footprint as one of the five headline sustainable development indicators for Wales. Natural Resources Wales, as a science based organisation, is well placed to advise the Welsh Government on the many components of the ecological footprint that relate to indigenous Welsh resources, and can access and analyse data to show how Wales uses those resources from elsewhere in the world that now form the major part of our ecological footprint.

9. NRW welcomes the proposals to use Local Service Boards to help plan for shared outcomes, however we have some concerns that environmental outcomes are currently not among the priorities of all LSBs; we also question whether the current geographic bases for most LSBs are the most effective and we would favour a move to a more regional approach.

10. We would like to make some suggestions which might help to strengthen the achievement of the aspirations which the consultation Paper expresses.

a It might help if the definition of sustainable development was strengthened to ensure that there is no doubt that it now embraces ongoing management as well as development per se

b There is always the risk that aspirational legislation like this has no sanctions within it . One way of achieving this would be to add it to the Seven Principles of Public Life – the Eight Welsh Principle if you like. The principle would be something like *Holders of public office in Wales should promote and support the principles of sustainable development as defined in the Act*
The holders of Public Office would be held accountable in the same ways as the other standards

c It would be helpful if ways could be found to migrate the duty on the Welsh Public Bodies to embrace the organisations with whom they do business. It is suggested that it might be possible to embed a general duty of care in legal documents such as consents, licences, and contracts issued or entered into by the Bodies. The Act could impose a duty on Bodies specified in the Schedule in the Act to include a general duty of care to execute the functions which are the subject of any given legal instrument issued or entered into by the Bodies , in a way which is sustainable, as defined in the Act . Clearly these sentiments need developing as more precise legal terms and it is likely that this general duty will have to be restricted to the preamble of any document so as to create the right environment in which the functions are discharged rather, than making it a clause for which a breach would require specific legal remedial action by the specified Body.

An Independent Sustainable Development Body

11. We welcome the proposal to establish an Independent Sustainable Development Body for Wales, and look forward to working closely with it. There are considerable opportunities for complementarity and synergy. In particular, we would wish to work alongside the body in the areas of research and knowledge transfer.

Implementation

12. NRW supports the proposal to enact the proposed duty at the beginning of the financial year. However, the case for phasing its introduction is not well made and may result in confusion; NRW suggests that the duty should apply to all public bodies from April 2015.

13. NRW believed that, in keeping with the proposal for shared outcomes across Welsh Government and public bodies, there should be a single set of high level indicators, which should be based on the current Sustainable Development indicators.

Conclusion

14. NRW looks forward to continuing to work with the Welsh Government and its partners on the development and implementation of the Sustainable Development Bill.

January 2013



RT Hon Carwyn Jones AM
First Minister
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

December 31, 2013

Dear First Minister,

FUTURE GENERATIONS BILL

During a recent meeting with Jeff Cuthbert AM, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, it was suggested that I write to you to make a specific suggestion as part of the Future Generations Bill.

When Natural Resources Wales responded to the consultation on the Sustainable Development Bill earlier this year, we suggested that there should be an Eighth Principle of Public Life to add to the existing Seven Nolan Principles - an Eighth Welsh Principle.

The principle would be something like:

Holders of public office in Wales should promote and support the principles of sustainable development as defined in the Act.

The holders of public office would be held accountable in the same ways as with the other standards. During the discussion with the Minister, I raised this idea in the context

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Annex 7.2.1 – NRW Chairman letter to First Minister re FG Bill

of the Future Generations Bill, and he suggested that I should draw it to your attention, if this finds favour with you, I assume that you will pursue this with the Minister; we stand ready to provide any further assistance required.

May I wish you a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely,



PETER MATTHEWS

**Cadeirydd, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Chairman, Natural Resources Wales**

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BRIEFING FOR STATE OF NATURE SUMMIT - 24TH JULY 2013

Ideas for introduction for summit

“Our purpose is to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, used and enhanced, now and in the future. We will work to maintain and improve the quality of the environment for everyone. We will work towards making the environment and natural resources more resilient to climate change and other pressures.” (Edited down version of NRW’s standard paragraph.)

Key messages

We take biodiversity and geodiversity for granted. But we should conserve them because our survival depends on them, because our economy and lifestyles depend on them, because they inspire and enrich our lives and because to do otherwise is wrong.

If we don’t act now, we will lose the capacity of the natural environment to provide the goods and services in a changing world that we rely on every day and that we get for free.

We need to communicate better about the importance of biodiversity and geodiversity – as issues that affect people personally. Perhaps we could challenge them to see biodiversity and geodiversity declines as a real concern – something that affects their lives and the lives of their children? Biodiversity issues are everyone’s business – not just those of environmental enthusiasts.

The biodiversity and geodiversity of Wales are our responsibility and our legacy for future generations; we need to work together, whatever our roles, to educate, enthuse and enable everyone to contribute to the delivery of our Convention on Biological Diversity, European Union and Welsh targets, using the full range of our current mechanisms (e.g. legislation, protected sites, agri-environment schemes) as well as any new and innovative initiatives such as Natural Resources Planning and the suite of new Welsh Government Bills.

Natural Resources Wales will work with Welsh Government and our NGO partners to identify the steps required to meet our global, European, UK and Welsh targets and the milestones along the way that deliver coherent and resilient ecosystems.

Points expanding the above

Note: Annex 1 provides a short list of habitats and species that could be seen as ‘unique selling points’ for the biodiversity of Wales. These represent the typical Western Atlantic fringe terrestrial communities and the transition between northern and southern marine species ranges that make such a major contribution to the diversity of Wales, but also reflect the range of our important international obligations.

- Biodiversity and geodiversity are key components of all ecosystems, allowing processes such as soil formation, nutrient cycling and primary production to operate while underpinning all provisioning, regulatory and cultural services on which we depend for our physical, mental and spiritual well-being.
- Biodiversity and geodiversity contribute to provisioning services such as food, biochemicals and medicines, raw materials, water; cultural services such as land and seascapes, recreation and tourism,

educational and scientific opportunities and regulating services such as pollination, water regulation, disease and pest regulation.

- Biodiversity provides ecosystems with the capacity to adapt to future changes so its conservation forms an ecosystem insurance policy against future uncertainty.
- Each species, no matter how small, has an important part to play. (Even if we don't know what that role is yet!)
- Geodiversity controls landscape, provides raw materials, soil formation, water regulation and geomorphological processes and underlies biodiversity.
- The statutory protected sites series (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest) is the cornerstone of biodiversity and geodiversity conservation in Wales. These sites are our primary wildlife habitat resource and a reservoir for species and our geodiversity heritage.
- If declines in species and habitats are to be fully addressed and reversed, this needs to be set within the context of the wider environment to ensure that the protected site network is more resilient to environmental change (e.g. climate change, nutrient enrichment, coastal erosion processes).
- Historical habitat losses and changes, due to local and policy-level shifts in land management regimes, have contributed to many of the current declines in species and habitats. Better management of natural resources will help address these and other drivers of change.
- We will work with Welsh Government towards advancing the use of an ecosystem approach to land management via natural resource planning across all sectors of Welsh life.
- We will continue to urge Welsh Government to take this mechanism forward as the primary basis and evidence base for spatial planning in Wales, which reflects the ecosystem approach and acknowledges that maintaining and improving the health and resilience of ecosystems is essential to achieving long term social and economic objectives.
- NRW will continue to develop practical tools for the application of the ecosystem approach in our planning, regulatory and advisory functions.
- We will continue to engage with Welsh Government on developing legislation relevant to biodiversity and geodiversity conservation and, particularly, on developing proposals for the forthcoming Environment and Planning Bills.
- We will examine the tools and mechanisms that enable NRW to deliver its statutory purposes (including experimental powers), addressing weaknesses or barriers in current legislation and enforcement and looking at how we make best use of existing legislation.
- We will also continue to advise Welsh Government on the implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to maximise opportunities to deliver sustainable management of the marine environment and to restore and recover marine biodiversity.

- We will continue to support and encourage the implementation of the Biodiversity Duty (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006) across all sectors of Welsh Government and also at the local level with planning authorities and other bodies.
- NRW will contribute to the periodic reviews of the Section 42 priority habitats and species to inform the multitude of actions undertaken by Local Biodiversity Action Partnerships on behalf of the Wales Biodiversity Partnership.
- We will continue to work with Welsh Government on the implications of the ongoing reviews of the Common Fisheries Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy, particularly the proposed greening of Pillar 1 and the design of incentivising agri-environment initiatives (both whole farm and part-farm) under the new Wales Rural Development Plan for 2014-2020.
- We will contribute to the review of Glastir and work with Welsh Government on the use and enforcement of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations in the wider countryside, as well as the use of Management Notices and Schemes where necessary to restore resilience to our special sites.
- We will build on the success of the Wales Biodiversity Partnership, through the new Wales Biodiversity Strategy and Framework, via the Board chaired by Welsh Government. This high level governance body will oversee the development, delivery and communication of priorities for biodiversity in Wales and ensure that these are aligned with the Convention on Biological Diversity Strategic Plan 2011-2020 targets, the European Union Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and the Wales Environment Strategy.
- Natural Resources Wales will continue to support our NGO partners in the delivery of positive conservation action through collaborative working, technical support and grant aid provision, such as through our Strategic Partnerships.
- Natural Resources Wales will continue to coordinate and administer the Resilient Ecosystem Fund on behalf of Welsh Government. A similar Geodiversity Partnership is needed to drive forward the geodiversity agenda in Wales.
- Natural Resources Wales will continue to develop and demonstrate best practice management on our own sites. We will seek to build on the legacy of successful projects by seeking to expand these where appropriate to a landscape or catchment-scale.
- The State of Nature report highlights the paucity of data (quality and quantity) available to make robust assessments of the changing state of species in Wales. Often, this accords with our own assessment, especially in relation to biodiversity priorities (S42 and Habitats Directive species).
- The situation for habitat data is similarly challenging. Some very localised habitats (such as montane heath), can be picked up by specific site monitoring programmes, but many others are too widespread (such as marshy grassland) and are mostly found outside designated sites.
- We appreciate the huge effort made by thousands of volunteers across Wales to help manage and monitor the natural environment (e.g fifty years of vital work by The Wildlife Trusts) through various projects and recording schemes.
- We also need to support and sustain systematically designed monitoring programmes which provide a powerful means of identifying trends and attaching levels of confidence to them.

- Public understanding and engagement is essential for ensuring sustained support for biodiversity and geodiversity conservation. Natural Resources Wales needs to continue communicating to the wider public through interpretation initiatives, press releases, media coverage, etc, to highlight successes and challenges and ensure that the biodiversity message is reinforced.
- We recognise the important role that our partners play in engaging, enthusing and educating the public, and NRW will continue to support interpretation initiatives across Wales.
- We will continue to manage our own land to increase opportunities for public access and enjoyment without causing damage to sensitive habitats, species and geodiversity. The Welsh Government Woodland Estate provides many services to Wales, including social benefits such as education, recreation and health as well as economic benefits through timber supply and biodiversity benefits. Public access around the entire coast of Wales provides an opportunity for people to engage with the habitats and species of our extensive areas of shore and sea.
- We need to recognise that there are also societal risks of not managing ecosystems appropriately, with resulting unsustainable exploitation of resources and a failure to gain resilience. Some risks, such as the disappearance of a species or the increased costs of flood control are fairly obvious, but others, such as the possibilities of higher incidences of disease (e.g. *cryptosporidium* due to high livestock levels near water sources, algal blooms due to high nutrient run off, etc.) may be less so.

NOTE: The inclusion of geodiversity is often deemed to be implicit whenever biodiversity is mentioned. However, geodiversity should also be discussed in its own right. Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government have the opportunity to drive forward geodiversity work in Wales through supporting a Geodiversity Wales Partnership and embedding geodiversity into the ecosystem approach.

Possible summit questions

1. What does success look like?

- We need to develop an agreed definition of success; so that we know how close we are to reaching it, and when we have met it. It is helpful to have a vision, with more defined targets and milestones.
- Natural resources planning operational across **all sectors** in Wales
- A functional network of protected sites, according to the Lawton¹ principles, has been adopted for Wales as part of the designation review:
 - (i) Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management
 - (ii) Increase the size of current wildlife sites
 - (iii) Enhance connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors, or through ‘stepping stones’
 - (iv) Create new sites
 - (v) Reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering wildlife sites
- Achievement of Convention on Biological Diversity and European Union targets and Wales Environment Strategy targets 19-22:
 - 19: The loss of biodiversity has been halted and we can see a definite recovery in the number, range and genetic diversity of species, including those that need very specific conditions to survive
 - 20: The wider environment is more favourable to biodiversity through appropriate management, reduced habitat fragmentation and increased extent and interconnectivity of habitats
 - 21: Sites of international, Welsh and local importance are in favourable condition to support the species and habitats for which they have been identified
 - 22: Our seas are clean and support healthy ecosystems that are biologically diverse, productive and managed sustainably
- Achievement of the agreed Biodiversity Action Plan targets for Section 42 species and habitats with a surveillance scheme that enables the determination of progress through milestones towards the required outcomes
- Improved understanding of how geodiversity and landscape can control habitat and species distribution
- Successful completion of Marine Protected Areas network: an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas around Wales, the Irish Sea and UK waters that provides ecosystem resilience in a changing climate.
- Establishment of and support for the implementation of the WBP Framework and Wales Biodiversity Strategy
- An engaged and knowledgeable public who support and understand the principles of ecosystem conservation and may take part in actions to improve habitat management and our evidence base

¹ Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.J., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., & Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra.

- Our National Nature Reserves will be jewels in the crown in terms of conserving our geological and biological heritage. The NNRs will also play a key part in enthusing visitors about geodiversity, landscape and biodiversity
- Successful partnerships with our long-established and ‘traditional’ partnership organisations, as well as making new partnerships with other groups across Wales
- Completion of Water Framework Directive (WFD) and River Basin Management Plan measures, especially on our aquatic protected sites, such that our freshwater and marine systems are recovered and in a better condition to provide their ecosystem services
- Invasive non-native species and plant and animal diseases that impact on our native biodiversity are recognised, prioritised and actively managed
- Skomer Marine Nature Reserve will be an outstanding example of marine ecosystem conservation in temperate waters in Europe and a model for local community engagement in marine conservation, education and management
- The Welsh Marine Spatial Plan will be underpinned by a comprehensive seabed map that is generating a range of environmental and socio-economic benefits from improved maritime safety, through the development of a knowledge-based economy built on skilled jobs, and directly improving our environmental evidence base and climate change models
- In the marine environment, natural resource planning will be fully integrated with marine planning in Wales and delivery of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive with shared and well-supported targets
- Commercial fish stocks in Welsh waters are at sustainable levels and underpinning a vibrant local fishing economy
- Native oyster beds have been restored at several locations and become biodiversity hotspots and sustainable fisheries
- Our restored and expanded seagrass beds are recognised for the valuable goods and services they deliver including commercial fish nursery areas and carbon sinks
- The Welsh people are proud of their outstanding natural marine resources and Skomer and Skokholm are still the largest Manx shearwater colony in the world holding in excess of 57% of the population
- We will have introduced a series of community-based projects to tackle the aesthetic problem of marine litter. The Wales Coastal Path will be leading people on to some of the cleanest beaches in the UK and more ‘Blue Flags’ will be flying
- Critical coastal squeeze areas have been eased by a series of phased retreat projects restoring wetland habitat and delivering valuable ecosystem services for society, including protection from floods and sea level rise
- Integrated catchment to coast management has made our coastal waters cleaner, with less polluting nutrients, metals and pathogens

2. Priorities

- Further develop the thinking behind the ecosystem approach alongside the development of natural resource planning across all government sectors
- Suitable habitat management to support the achievement of Convention on Biological Diversity, European Union and Biodiversity Action Plan targets on all Welsh Government Estate (leading by example)
- The State of Nature report carries a “message of hope” that targeted conservation action can help to reverse the fortunes of declining habitats and species. This targeted action work requires identification, prioritisation, resourcing and action
- Analysis of functionally important species that are lost or at unsustainably low levels in order to identify whether reintroduction or population enhancement is necessary or appropriate
- Support for long-term dataset collection and analysis
- Priority research projects identified by Wales Biodiversity Partnership should be championed and promoted with the academic community
- Embedding the need to conserve biodiversity and geodiversity under a wider range of measures within new Wales Rural Development Plan, including farm advisory services and grants as well as agri-environment schemes that incentivise ecosystem service provision

3. Possible new/amended mechanisms

- Five year programme of extended financial support for Resilient Ecosystems Fund with each year funding 2 to 3 year-long projects to enable more coherent and fundamental work to be completed
- Rural Development Plan delivery aligned to biodiversity resilience needs and implementation of natural resources planning. Local authority plans should take full account of biodiversity resilience and support the status of locally important wildlife sites (SINC) through the planning process
- Agri-environment schemes implemented on the basis of incentivising payments for ecosystem services, abandoning incentives that damage biodiversity
- Agri-environment schemes reviewed regularly to ensure delivery of biodiversity resilience, including the use of both whole farm and part-farm schemes on farmland as well as a new grant scheme and advice focussed on the management of non-agricultural land
- Undertake active management on priority invasive non-native species (INNS) with support from UK and Welsh governments
- Landscape-scale projects that encompass the ecosystem approach and deliver improvements in habitat and species condition, with geodiversity integrated into all proposals

Annex 8.2– Briefing for State of Nature summit at RWS 110713

- Continuation and re-invigoration of Welsh Government support for Biodiversity Champions in all local planning authorities to ensure compliance with the NERC Act biodiversity duty
- Make proactive use of the conservation tools in the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) including Marine Conservation Zones, conservation orders and fisheries orders to improve the condition of the marine protected area network and restore and recover marine biodiversity
- Implement the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and ensure integration with marine planning to maximise opportunities to deliver sustainable management and increase the resilience of marine biodiversity throughout the wider marine environment
- The report does not contain any detailed recommendations and Natural Resources Wales would like to work with its NGO partners, Welsh Government and others to develop further mechanisms for addressing the issues highlighted

Compiled by staff from across Knowledge, Strategy and Planning Directorate
10th July 2013

‘LONG’ BRIEFING FOR STATE OF NATURE SUMMIT- 24th July 2013

Key points from the State of Nature report:

- The report is compiled from existing datasets and, as a consequence, has a bias towards well-recorded species groups, e.g. birds, butterflies and vascular plants. The lack of comprehensive data across taxonomic groups and habitats is highlighted in the report as a major concern at both a UK and a Wales level.
- The Wales section focuses on 4 terrestrial habitats; farmland, woodland, lowland heathland and upland. For each, it outlines the importance of the habitats in a UK and European context, the issues they are facing and the impact on species. There are also examples of successes, such as the increase in hen harrier and black grouse populations in the uplands.
- In general, the data show fluxes in species and habitats over the last 50 years, with slightly more species declining than increasing. In particular, declines are more substantive for those species that require specialised habitats and niches, especially those of low nutrient status. This coincides with a combination of nutrient enrichment from atmospheric or local sources that changes the balance of species towards widespread and common generalists, and the decline in traditional management across habitats.
- The report calculates that, of the 6,000 species assessed in the UK, more than 1 in 10 are currently thought to be under threat of extinction. In Wales, for example, the report notes that 1 in 6 species of plant are considered threatened.
- The report carries a “message of hope” that targeted conservation action can help to reverse the fortunes of declining species. Recovery of the high brown fritillary butterfly population in the Vale of Glamorgan is cited as an example of effective management and long-term partnership. But it still only occurs on this single, if large site.
- The State of Nature report does not contain any detailed recommendations and Natural Resources Wales would like to work with its NGO partners, Welsh Government and others to develop mechanisms for addressing the issues highlighted.

How Natural Resources Wales is addressing the loss and decline of biodiversity

NRW recognises that biodiversity is a key component of all ecosystems, allowing processes such as soil formation, nutrient cycling and primary production to operate. These processes in turn underpin all provisioning, regulatory and cultural services on which we depend for our physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

NRW will continue to build on the work of the legacy bodies to protect, maintain and enhance habitats and species through a range of mechanisms including the Living Wales Ecosystem Approach Framework, in order to contribute to the delivery of CBD and EU biodiversity strategy targets. These include:

1. Maintaining and improving the protected site series, providing advice to government and others, contributing to policy and legislation development
2. Addressing the drivers of change in the wider environment
3. Reviewing the legal framework
4. Working in partnership
5. Demonstrating best practice
6. Improving monitoring, surveillance and reporting of environmental change
7. Engaging the public

The establishment of NRW provides Wales with a unique opportunity to take a more joined-up approach to managing and caring for our environment and its natural resources in a way that enhances the health of the environment, while also providing better benefits for society and businesses. A healthy, diverse and resilient natural environment is better able to adapt to threats caused by climate change and other challenges and better able to protect people who live, work and visit Wales from potential negative impacts². Biodiversity therefore forms an ecosystem insurance to future uncertainty because resilience is enhanced where there is diversity at all levels of habitats (types, structure) and species (genetics and ranges) in a well-connected landscape.

We will continue to make use of our existing range of tools to protect the environment, but we will also look to build new ones that will help us achieve even more. NRW, in partnership with Welsh Government, will be developing the ecosystem approach, which demands that, alongside biological/geological diversity and ecological resilience, we give full consideration to the community and the economy as an integral part of managing the environment.

The relative absence of an integrated overview in the management of the natural environment that also encompasses social and economic issues has been at the heart of an approach that previously aided individual drivers of environmental change, while neglecting the bigger picture. The Welsh Government, across its wide range of responsibilities and departments, is committed to natural resources planning, and investing in reversing damage to degraded species and habitats will address a significant risk to the successful achievement of this approach. Taking appropriate evidence-based action in the natural environment to improve the resilience of natural ecosystems is now acknowledged as essential to securing a wide range of services and benefits for society³. Management of different natural resources within landscape areas such as catchments would be coordinated, carefully weighed-up, and informed by national priorities. This would allow the important locations for both biodiversity

² Allison, H.M., Walmsley, C.A., Gaywood, M. & Thurgate, G. (2007). *Conserving Biodiversity in a Changing Climate: guidance on building capacity to adapt*. Defra.

³ Latham, J., Thomas, R & Spode, S. (in prep, 2013). *Ecosystem resilience: a discussion paper on the use of the concept for Natural Resources Wales*.

and the ecosystem services that flow from them to be properly recognised, and for novel solutions to environmental problems to be developed. For example, new woodland might be located in an optimal situation to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, while also reducing flood risk downstream, sequestering carbon, and providing new recreational opportunities.

The importance of conserving and restoring our biodiversity resources cannot be over-emphasised. While it has been suggested in the past that ‘look after the habitats and the species will look after themselves’, the reality is that this approach has not worked in all cases - a good example being the demise to extinction of the large blue butterfly *Maculinea arion* in south west England. Chalk grassland sites with the last butterfly populations were protected and managed to produce flowery swards. However, the subsequent removal of grazing eliminated the hot sunny conditions required by the butterfly’s ant host *Myrmica sabuleti* and the two species became extinct in the UK in 1979⁴. Recognition of the very particular needs of both species led to changes in the approach to management becoming specific for the invertebrates and successful re-introduction projects. The role of rare species in the functioning of ecosystem processes has been questioned, but recent research has shown that rare species disproportionately increase the potential breadth of functions provided by ecosystems across spatial scales⁵.

We have reviewed the role of keystone species and habitats as part of our contribution to the Evidence Workstream of the Natural Environment Framework project. It had been suggested that it might be more beneficial to prioritise so-called keystone species or habitats for conservation effort in order to deliver biodiversity targets, rather than carrying out action on all of the Section 42 species (NERC Act). A thorough review of the literature recommended that this apparent ecological phenomenon was not generally present in our ecosystems and that the concept of keystone habitats was not actually well-recognised. Instead, the advice was to concentrate on restoring ecosystem health and resilience⁶.

Wales has a special responsibility for a range of species and habitats at a UK, European and global level. Sites selected for the Natura 2000 network, for example, support species and habitats that have been recognised as being of European importance. This is especially true of our extreme western examples of habitats such as coastal heath and broadleaved woodland, while species at the western, northern and southern limit of their distribution occur in our coastal, woodland and upland habitats in particular. Annex 1 presents a series of habitats and species that are particularly emblematic of Wales’ biodiversity. This is small selection that could be expanded to show how Wales has a unique selling point in its range and extent of semi-natural habitats (covering around 30% of Wales) and the special species they support. These are not only valuable as attractions for visitors, but essential components of our ecosystems resource that supply services for Wales and beyond the borders.

1. Maintaining, restoring and improving the protected sites series (Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Natura 2000 sites, Ramsar sites and National Nature Reserves)

The statutory protected sites series is the cornerstone of biodiversity and geodiversity conservation in Wales. These sites are our primary wildlife habitat resource and a reservoir for species and are critical to conserve our geological heritage. Recent evidence shows that the designated site series remains essential to the protection of terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats and species in a changing

⁴ Thomas, J.A. (1980). Why did the large blue become extinct in Britain?. *Oryx*, 15: 243-247.

⁵ Mouillot, D. et al. (2013). Rare species support vulnerable functions in high-diversity ecosystems. *PLOS Biology*. Vol. 11 Issue 5.1-11.

⁶ NEF C3 Workstream Paper 4: Keystone Species, can the keystone species and keystone habitats concepts be usefully applied in the Natural Environment Framework (NEF)?

environment⁷. However, if declines in species and habitats are to be fully addressed and reversed, there is an increasing need to set this within the context of the wider environment and ensure that the network is more resilient to environmental change (e.g. climate change, nutrient enrichment, coastal erosion processes). We are addressing this by:

- Continuing the designation and appropriate management of the SSSI and Natura 2000 series, e.g. identifying and designating under-represented habitats and species and identifying management and resource needs on European sites through the EU-funded LIFE Natura 2000 programme.
- Ensuring that sites are large enough to support the necessary ecological and ecosystem processes and offer opportunities for microclimate adaptation.
- Improving connectivity between sites and with the wider environment to facilitate the recovery and adaptation of species and habitats.
- Reducing pressures on the designated sites series by improving the wider environment, including buffering sites.
- Identifying designated sites that are particularly vulnerable to climate change as priority sites for management intervention where appropriate.
- Revising our Natura 2000 site management plans to ensure they deliver in the most effective way possible. In the aquatic environment this includes integrating objectives with River Basin Management plans.
- Providing timely and robust advice in response to proposals that impact on species and habitats.

The marine environment offers different challenges. We need to develop an ecologically coherent network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) which will provide effective protection for the range of habitats, species and ecosystem processes found in Welsh waters.

The current network of MPAs includes European sites (Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)), SSSI with marine components (estuarine and intertidal areas), Ramsar sites (international bird and wetland sites) and Skomer Marine Nature Reserve. The European Commission considers the UK deficient in offshore SPAs for marine birds, and SAC for harbour porpoise. NRW is therefore working with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Welsh Government to assess the evidence for sites in the UK and Welsh waters.

CCW provided advice to Government in 2006⁸ that, to support the delivery of the ecosystem approach, we need to improve the management of our existing MPAs and that the Welsh MPA network should include some highly protected sites, which would improve our understanding of the marine environment and contribute to recovery and resilience of the marine ecosystem. A recent review⁹ indicates that highly protected reserves often provide greater biodiversity benefits compared to partially protected sites, although there are concerns over the potential social and economic impact of these sites if located in the wrong place.

A key part of the protected sites series is the geodiversity site network which provides the cornerstone of geological conservation in Wales. There are more than 480 Geological Conservation Review (GCR)

⁷ Thomas, C., Gillingham, K., Bradbury R.B., *et al* (2012). Protected areas facilitate species' range expansions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 109 (2012): 14063-14068.

⁸ Dernie, K.M, Ramsay, K., Jones, R.E, Wyn, G.C., Hill, A.S., & Hamer, J.P (2006). Implementing the Ecosystem Approach in Wales: Current status of the maritime environment and recommendations for management. CCW Policy Research Report No 06/9.

⁹ Sciberras, M, Jenkins, S.R., Kaiser M.J., Hawkins S.J. and Pullin A.S. (2013) Evaluating the biological effectiveness of fully and partially protected marine areas. *Environmental Evidence* 2013, 2:4 <http://www.environmentalevidencejournal.org/content/2/1/4>

sites in Wales which include features such as the oldest rocks in Wales, active river and coastal processes, disused and working quarries, and former mine sites. GCR sites often overlap with biodiversity sites and management issues can affect geological sites in much the same way. Only their protection and proper management can safeguard these sites. A key challenge for many geological sites is suitable management that ensures visibility and accessibility of the feature.

The fundamental message is that protected sites play an essential role in the establishment and maintenance of resilience in our environment, so the headline outcome of the Lawton Report¹⁰ relating to sites being “*more, bigger, better and joined*” is one that should be adopted in Wales.

2. Addressing the drivers of change in the wider environment

We will address drivers of change and their interactions in the wider environment by better management of natural resources and will work with Welsh Government in the development of natural resource planning. We will continue to urge Welsh Government to take this mechanism forward as the primary basis and evidence base for spatial planning in Wales, which reflects the ecosystem approach and acknowledges that maintaining and improving the health and resilience of ecosystems is essential to achieving long-term social and economic objectives. Natural resource planning should be dynamic and responsive to feedback from monitoring, evaluation and intervention activity. To support this, we will continue to develop practical tools for the application of the ecosystem approach to our planning, regulatory and advisory functions.

Improving the water environment and securing associated ecosystem services for Wales are government priorities. Our work on leading Water Framework Directive (WFD) actions in Wales is a key strategic mechanism for delivering freshwater and wetland biodiversity improvements. Through the first cycle of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), we are aiming for 50% of all water bodies to reach good ecological status (or ‘good potential’ for heavily modified water bodies) by 2015. We are also starting to work on planning and identifying additional improvements that can be delivered through the second cycle of RBMPs from 2015 to 2026. Over one billion pounds have been spent on improving discharges of waste water treatment works to Welsh coastal waters and further improvements are planned. Tightening of standards for contaminant concentrations will be made in 2015 to better reflect their potential for ecological damage.

While point source discharges are regulated by NRW through permitting processes, identifying and reducing the impact of diffuse pollutants is a significant challenge. This is being tackled by NRW and its partners with the impacts of agricultural run-off, urban drainage misconnections and private sewage discharges amongst the issues being addressed.

Identifying ‘reasons for failure’ for the water environment is often complex and time-consuming and restoration measures can take decades to achieve, so we will monitor and report progress through annual reports. This will help our work with our many WFD co-deliverers to gather information on the evidence gaps and develop cost-effective integrated catchment-scale solutions and improved land use management activities to tackle such things as diffuse pollution, inappropriate physical modifications and restoring wetlands.

¹⁰ Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.J., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., & Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England’s wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra.

We will increasingly need to provide advice to landowners on management options that reduce the risks posed by a changing climate, for example, by providing guidance on how to improve woodland resilience through appropriate management. We will produce a progress report on climate change adaptation in Wales' natural environment to comply with the Climate Change Act (2008).

We will implement a programme of restoration on the high priority afforested peat sites that have been identified on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate by the national assessment, 'A Strategic Assessment of Afforested Peat Resources in Wales'. These have been identified on the basis of greatest potential for a range of ecosystem service delivery, including climate change mitigation.

We will continue to support Welsh Government in delivering its target of creating 100,000ha of woodland in Wales to meet the climate change carbon balance target. We will manage the scheme until January 2014.

We will also need to address the growing threat to Wales' biodiversity from pests and diseases. We currently carry out surveillance and control measures to reduce their impacts on our ecosystems and will continue to work with researchers and landowners to implement appropriate responses to ash dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) and *Phytophthora ramorum* in larch. The Welsh Government Estate land will provide a valuable opportunity for demonstrating our contribution to a Welsh Strategy for Invasive Non-native Species, when it is developed.

Marine habitats in both the intertidal and subtidal areas of Welsh seas have been lost, damaged or degraded due to past human influences. We are working on plans to create new intertidal habitat to replace habitats lost due to essential coastal protection work and are looking into options to restore lost and degraded habitats (e.g. native oyster beds), although we currently lack the resources to progress these.

We also plan to work to try and minimise the risk posed by invasive non-native species on all habitats, native species and ecosystem functioning. We have already demonstrated our commitment to this by undertaking a major project to eradicate the invasive sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum* from Holyhead marina and we are currently leading a UK and Ireland project to try and reduce the spread of marine invasive non-native species by managing their pathways of spread (Pathways Project). This project will also help deliver Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) targets. Establishing a UK-wide approach is a key requirement of this work and there is a considerable amount of work to be done to develop a national awareness of this issue.

We will continue to advise land-use and marine policy development, including seeking better biodiversity outcomes from Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy reform, the new Wales Rural Development Plan, agri-environment schemes, addressing sources and impacts of transborder atmospheric pollution, particularly nitrogen deposition and encouraging sustainable fisheries practices.

3. Reviewing the legal framework

We will continue to engage with Welsh Government on reviewing legislation relevant to biodiversity and geological conservation, particularly on developing proposals for the forthcoming Environment Bill. This includes looking at the tools and mechanisms that enable NRW to deliver its statutory purposes, addressing weaknesses or barriers in current legislation and looking at how we make best use of existing legislation. There are several Bills in preparation (Heritage, Sustainable Development,

Planning and Environment) that need to be interlinked to ensure a cross-government approach to delivering ecosystem resilience in partnership with industry, farming, transport and health sectors and, most importantly, local communities. Some potential gains for biodiversity could be guaranteed by linking the Planning and Environment Bills to ensure net biodiversity gain from development plans as a contribution towards achieving biodiversity targets at local and national levels.

In the marine environment, we have worked to influence the development of important pieces of legislation, including the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) to ensure that the ecosystem approach is embedded within these. Welsh Government will shortly embark on the development of marine plans and we will work closely with them to ensure that plans, in particular, maximise opportunities to restore and recover marine biodiversity, deliver sustainable management of the marine environment, and integrate with wider MSFD and Marine Act implementation.

We will seek to ensure that conserving biodiversity and geodiversity remains a core statutory purpose.

4. Working in partnership

We welcome the State of Nature report, as it provides an opportunity to build on the very collaborative relationship that we have developed with the NGO community and other partners in Wales. The Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) has provided a key mechanism for co-ordinating and promoting biodiversity action and we intend to build on its successes through the new Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board chaired by Welsh Government. This high level governance body will oversee the development, delivery and communication of priorities for biodiversity in Wales and ensure that these are aligned with the Convention on Biological Diversity Strategic Plan 2011-2020 targets and the European Union Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. The Wales Biodiversity Strategy will offer a strong foundation on which to evolve the Wales Biodiversity Framework which provides a path from strategy to local delivery, using the distinctive capabilities of all the organisations involved. The Framework provides a connection between biodiversity action and the requirements of Wales, EU and international policies and targets.

NRW has provided funding support for the development and implementation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) across Wales since their inception. This has delivered on many fronts, including practical action, engaging the public, education and cross-sector working, especially since the appointment of Biodiversity Champions at Cabinet level in local authorities and National Parks.

LBAPs have delivered a wide range of essential action for biodiversity, making biodiversity a recognisable issue across Wales, and not only through Wales Biodiversity Week events every year. Wildlife gardening projects, education, volunteering, collecting data, family events, habitat and species management, walks and talks have all been organised and hosted by LBAP groups for the last 15 years. NRW has supported the work of WBP by a strategic partnership agreement that funds 2 members of the Support Team (one is employed in NRW) as well as several operational activities including Wales Biodiversity Week and the annual conference.

NRW will continue to support our NGO partners in the delivery of positive conservation action through collaborative working, technical support and grant aid provision, such as our Strategic Partnerships. The Wildlife Trusts have been working in Wales for 50 years, safeguarding and managing a wide range of Wales' most representative habitats and species.

In addition, NRW will continue to co-ordinate and administer the Resilient Ecosystem Fund on behalf of Welsh Government. The Ecosystem Resilience, Diversity and Compliance Fund 2011/12 (ERDC), the ERD Fund 2012/13 and the Resilient Ecosystem Fund (2013-2015) all focus on supporting positive action for biodiversity and ecosystems, with the aim of improving the resilience of Wales' natural environment. This fund uses the expertise of the WBP to align the funding as far as possible with priorities of the 9 Ecosystem Groups, the Species Expert Group and the Invasive Non-native Species Group. This partnership approach to the fund was a step change to the way funding is managed for this type of work and it has, in a very short timeframe, delivered some excellent projects. For example, ERD 2012/13 funded 34 projects across all the ecosystem and species groups throughout Wales and its seas. ERDC 2011/12 funded 16 projects.

With key partners such as the British Geological Survey and National Museum Wales, NRW is looking to develop a geodiversity partnership along similar lines to the WBP. 'Geodiversity Wales' would bring key statutory bodies that have a geological remit together with voluntary groups such as RIGS (Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites), Geologists Association and Geoparks in order to co-ordinate activity and effort. In Scotland, the Scottish Geodiversity Forum has developed a Geodiversity Charter which sets out the vision on how everyone can contribute to ensuring that geodiversity continues to benefit present and future generations. The Charter is endorsed by the Scottish Government and will be the way forward for Wales.

NRW works closely with Fforest Fawr and GeoMôn geoparks. This UNESCO-backed designation has socio-economic improvement, using geodiversity and geoheritage, as one of its core functions. Geoparks aim to use an area's geoheritage to revitalise the region, mainly through sustainable economic development and geotourism. They also support environmental education and promote training and research in the Earth sciences.

The voluntary geoconservation movement has strong historical links to Wales and the former CCW were much involved in developing and supporting RIGS groups. RIGS groups identify the most important places for geology, geomorphology and soils outside the SSSI network. They are also instrumental in raising awareness of geodiversity through their interpretation material such as their 'Geological Town Trail' series. More recently, through Welsh Government ALSF funding and former CCW support, an all-Wales RIGS audit was completed. NRW continues to support RIGS work in Wales.

We will continue to encourage landowners to manage their land positively for biodiversity and geodiversity through various mechanisms such as s15 Management Agreements, and habitat or species specific schemes, as well as providing information and advice on the larger agri-environment and woodland management schemes.

In the marine environment, we will also build on successful partnerships with commercial organisations such as the Menai Strait mussel industry and through projects such as FishMap Môn, which works with the North Wales Fishermen's Cooperative Ltd, Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd and the Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers. We are also working with the commercial fishing industry in Wales and Welsh universities to look at opportunities for fishermen to become more involved in the collection of marine environmental data, both as a business diversification opportunity but also to establish a more integrated approach to collection, dissemination and utilisation of marine data in Wales.

The benefits of partnership working with a wide range of stakeholders are also demonstrated in relation to management of Marine Protected Areas, with the involvement for many years of stakeholders on

MPA liaison and advisory groups (e.g. Skomer MNR, Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC liaison group). A practical example of this approach is the Porth Dinllaen seagrass project.

In developing evidence to support planning for marine renewable energy, we worked in close partnership with the Crown Estate and Welsh Government to produce data layers on those natural heritage receptors considered most sensitive to impacts from marine renewable energy devices, such as marine mammals, diving birds and sensitive seascapes. These evidence layers were tailored to be compatible with the Crown Estate and Welsh Government's GIS-based planning tools for marine renewable energy. They have directly informed the recent identification of demonstration zones for wave and tidal devices around Wales in areas considered to be of 'lower consenting risk'.

Through our annual Aquatic Biodiversity Improvement Programme we work with others to improve water-related habitats and species and focus particularly on supporting Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Welsh Government aquatic biodiversity priorities. The programme delivers ecosystem benefits by supporting projects at various scales, ranging from river catchment through to community specific initiatives. Last year, for example, we supported 51 projects; most in collaboration with local groups, 3rd sector organisations and other public bodies. These projects created over 23 ha and restored a further 24 ha of aquatic priority habitat, improved over 44 km of river corridor and helped create 13 new ponds. This partnership approach is fundamental for maximising the potential synergies different partners can bring and, as a result, we were able to double the funding for these projects including drawing in Landfill and EU LIFE+ funding. In addition, management and measures to improve our water pollution is being delivered in partnership with other organisations through the River Basin Management Plans of the WFD.

We also use this programme to support essential work for aquatic priority species, including the freshwater pearl mussel, white clawed crayfish and water vole. We have captive rearing programmes for all three species and the pearl mussel captive project is part of our commitment to a large-scale "Pearls in Peril" LIFE+ multi-partner £600k project that runs to September 2016. This project focuses on developing more immediate habitat and species-specific measures, including local community and landowner engagement to improve Welsh pearl mussel populations at key sites in advance of broader, longer-term improvements delivered through the Water Framework Directive, for example.

We will also continue to develop partnerships with academic organisations to promote collaborative research into change in the natural environment, such as through the Environmental Change Network (ECN), the Climate Change Commission and the Climate Change Consortium of Wales, and to explore the developing fields of ecosystem resilience and ecological connectivity.

4. Demonstrating best practice

NRW will continue to develop and demonstrate best practice management, interpretation and education on our own sites. Lessons learned from initiatives such as the highly successful Anglesey and Llyn Fens EU funded LIFE+ Project will be shared with our partners and will help to inform Welsh Government policy. We will seek to build on the legacy of successful projects by seeking to expand these where appropriate to a landscape or catchment-scale.

We will improve our understanding of management needs in the face of environmental change by facilitating the use of the National Nature Reserves for demonstration and research purposes in collaboration with our NGO and academic partners, e.g. dune restoration projects at Kenfig and Newborough Warren NNRs. We will continue to develop adaptive management techniques when

carrying out work on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (managed by NRW) and our other landholdings. Our commitment to managing woodlands through low impact silviculture systems will increase diversity and we are implementing a policy of increasing tree species diversity to improve resilience in woodlands. These measures will provide greater opportunities for biodiversity.

We continually look for innovative ways to support our biodiversity delivery work, identify, understand and maximise ecosystem benefits and provide information to help people take better account of biodiversity in decision-making. As an example we have developed a simple GIS-based Wetlands ‘Opportunities Map’ so people can identify potential wetland opportunities and associated ecosystem benefits that they can use to scope into “protect” proposals. Its high resolution information appears to be particularly useful for helping to identify wetland opportunities within urban areas and it is already successfully influencing initiatives such as the ‘Greener Grangetown’ Water Sensitive Urban Design project, for example. Recent research we have commissioned on the afforested peat resource in Wales helps identify the opportunities for restoration of afforested deep peat and prioritise restoration efforts to give biodiversity, hydrology and greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits.

NRW’s SCCAN project, System Cynorthwyo Cynllunio Adnoddau Naturiol, or Natural Resources Planning Support System, has mapped a range of ecosystem services and areas where improving these is likely to bring most social and economic benefits while maintaining ecological resilience. The work has been developed in association with 2 local authorities, Bridgend and Torfaen CBC, resulting in an information resource that can be used for a variety of purposes, from informing small scale planning decisions to strategic work on climate change adaptation and the planning of green infrastructure. The Cambrian Mountains Initiative has used the Polyscape Spatial Decision Support Tool to highlight opportunities for biodiversity and ecosystem service enhancements at the landscape scale.

We hold the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Wales, published in 2012 and, following best practice, we have made a commitment to restore all the plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate. Restoration is underway in many woods and the current condition all of the resource has been assessed.

We have provided advice to Welsh Government on ways to improve the management of Marine Protected Areas¹¹ and look forward to working in partnership with government and a range of organisations and groups with an interest in the coast to deliver this. We will also continue to advise Welsh Government on shellfisheries for which we are responsible, to ensure a sustainable approach to management.

NRW has, and will continue to advise Welsh Government, other regulatory bodies, landowners/occupiers, industry and business in relation to development control in coastal and marine areas to try and reduce the impacts of human activities on the marine environment. This area of work brings many challenges, particularly in a relatively inaccessible environment and with limited knowledge about the ecology of many marine habitats and species and the interconnections between them and wider ecosystem process and function. NRW will work with others to seek appropriate solutions to future development and ensure that future demands on Wales’ marine natural resources do not damage or degrade them in the long term.

Innovative approaches were used to inform the development of our advice on the proposed deployment of a tidal energy device in Ramsey Sound, Pembrokeshire. Licensing conditions and mitigation, including adaptive management measures were devised, to ensure that marine mammal populations will

¹¹ Currently waiting for a response from WG

not be harmed by the deployment, while also allowing the device to be deployed without the need for it to be shut down when marine mammals are in the vicinity. This provides a unique opportunity to learn about interactions between operating devices and marine mammals, while ensuring that populations are protected from impacts.

NRW has provided advice to Welsh Government on the need for protection of sensitive marine habitats, e.g. horse mussel reefs, where NRW worked with the fishing industry to agree appropriate management measures which have led to significant areas of these reefs being protected from damage by towed fishing gears.

5. Improving monitoring, surveillance and reporting of environmental change

The report highlights the paucity of data (quality and quantity) available to make robust assessments of the changing state of species in Wales. Often, this accords with our own assessment, especially in relation to biodiversity priorities (SSSI qualifying species, S42 and Habitats Directive species). The situation for habitats is similarly challenging. Some restricted types can be picked up by specific site monitoring programmes, but others are too widespread and mostly occur off sites. While the UK level Countryside Survey scheme provides contextual information, its ability to report for Wales is restricted by the number of sample points. Datasets on water quality across Wales over the same time frame also provide a valuable evidence base for monitoring pollution.

In thinking about where improvements might be possible, it is important to make a clear distinction between data that are collected through systematically designed monitoring programmes and data that arise from more casual recording activities. Properly designed systematic schemes provide a powerful means of identifying trends and attaching levels of confidence to them. Analysis of ad-hoc records is more challenging, though there are several newly developed analysis methods that are now being applied, notably in work by the Biological Records Centre.

Systematic monitoring schemes most commonly involve measures of distribution and/or population size. Distribution provides a coarser measure, because large changes in population size might take place before being reflected in a change in distribution. Ad-hoc records usually provide a basis for looking only at distribution.

Much, though not all, recording of species – both systematic and ad-hoc – is undertaken by volunteers. Some of the most successful schemes and related initiatives are coordinated at UK level by JNCC, often with additional support from country agencies. Over a number of years, the former CCW provided funding to such schemes either directly through formal partnership agreements or indirectly through its contribution to JNCC. NRW is continuing to fund or otherwise support such projects. Key projects include a range of bird monitoring schemes (with British Trust for Ornithology and RSPB), the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, and the National Bat Monitoring Programme. Several other schemes are in need of further support in order to deliver Wales level data (e.g. National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme), but currently provide a solid basis for further development.

Our ability to use data from such schemes to detect trends in species in Wales has often been constrained by small sample sizes, reflecting the comparatively lower levels of public involvement. CCW/NRW's investment in schemes such as the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) and UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme aims specifically to improve the ability of these schemes to deliver Wales-specific information. Recent work through the NBMP has increased survey coverage to the point where establishing Welsh trends is now thought to be possible for many more species (including

all species included hibernation surveys). The extent to which novel analysis of ad-hoc records can be used to demonstrate trends in Wales is currently unknown, but work through Welsh Government's Glastir monitoring programme will help to establish what is feasible.

A key set of biodiversity priorities are those species (and habitats) that are listed in the Habitats Directive. Ensuring that monitoring is implemented in fulfilment of the Habitats Directive is the responsibility of Welsh Government. To aid in this, the former CCW provided advice on how this might be taken forward. Linked to this CCW/NRW has worked with other UK partners to develop plans for improving the monitoring of some species, notably the great-crested newt – though arrangements for implementing any plan remain uncertain.

The results of Habitats Directive monitoring are reported every six years (as required by Article 17 of the Directive). CCW/NRW has recently collated and evaluated Welsh evidence in support of the latest Article 17 reporting exercise, and this provides a valuable resource for re-assessing whether existing monitoring is adequate. This will also inform the production of updated advice to Welsh Government to support its obligations under the Directive.

For some species, additional data sources exist that were not used in the State of Nature report, though these may not always lend themselves to the detection of trends. An important source of data for some species arises from NRW's programme of monitoring on some designated sites – here the species that form part of the reasons for a site's designation are the focus of regular condition assessment. For any such species that is restricted to the designated site series, such data has the potential to provide an overall assessment of the state of that species in Wales. Data on selected widespread species are available from several other broader monitoring projects (e.g. Countryside Survey, NRW's Freshwater Fisheries and Water Framework Directive monitoring, and Environmental Change Network (ECN)).

Monitoring of geological and geomorphological SSSI is a key work area for NRW geologists. The 480+ sites are monitored on a rolling 5-year programme with visits varying from 1-5 years depending on the sensitivity of the feature. Periodic monitoring (including fixed point photography) is essential in informing management requirements in order to achieve favourable conservation of the feature of interest.

NRW also continues to improve its marine evidence base in order to better inform and underpin regulatory decision making, marine planning and MPA management. The new challenges of expanding marine development, marine spatial planning and the introduction of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive will be met with increased investment in evidence acquisition and data management.

Survey and monitoring in the marine environment are expensive and logistically challenging and, as a result, our knowledge of the habitats and species in Welsh seas is patchy. However, NRW is fortunate in having previously resourced a comprehensive survey of the intertidal zone of Wales, which produced habitat maps and supporting information for the entire Welsh coastline. This dataset has proved invaluable in many areas of NRW's work. The aspiration for the future is to update this and extend mapping work to cover the whole subtidal zone of Welsh seas to provide fundamentally important data to inform the management of Wales' marine environment.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive should require considerable additional monitoring and surveillance of the marine environment and this should be integrated with existing monitoring programmes to maximise efficiencies.

The value of long-term datasets has been recognised as being of particular importance to understanding environmental change. Datasets have been collected at Skomer MNR for environmental and biological parameters for over 20 years, providing an almost unique insight into long-term trends. The NRW Environment Change Network (ECN) site on Snowdon has been contributing to the UK study for 18 years, providing information on a wide range of biological, chemical and climatic parameters. Increasingly, given the number and influence of future drivers, such as climate change, we need to ensure the availability of long-term datasets (e.g. BICCO-NET, CHAINSPAN) which can inform the necessary management reviews. Often the questions we are asking from data collection are different from the original purposes, so we need to ensure that robust, spatially diverse baseline monitoring datasets are available.

It is essential that we all clearly understand the current state of Wales' marine environment and, to that end, NRW is considering the production of a State of the Marine Environment report to provide clarity about the current state of Welsh seas, what issues need to be addressed, and clear targets for maintenance and recovery of habitats, species and ecosystem processes and function. As a step towards this, NRW will be producing reports on the current condition of important habitats and species within Welsh waters and the current condition of protected features within individual marine SAC in Wales.

Welsh seabirds have not shown the decreases in populations that have taken place in Scotland. Some populations such as guillemots are increasing quite rapidly while our largest kittiwake colony on Skomer and Skokholm is stable, in contrast to the trend across the UK. NRW is working with other statutory agencies and JNCC towards a network of marine SPAs and have also half-funded the seabird tracking work within Wales, which produces data that will help answer questions about marine planning.

6. Engaging the public

Public understanding and engagement is essential for ensuring sustained support for biodiversity and geodiversity conservation. We recognise the important role that our partners play in engaging, enthusing and educating the public. We also appreciate the huge effort made by thousands of volunteers across Wales to help manage and monitor the natural environment. We must however, ensure that we continue to expand our efforts and not just preach to the converted; we must address the detachment from the natural environment that many feel, in rural settlements as well as in urban centres. The national curriculum is an important tool for delivering an understanding of the ecosystem approach and the importance for us all in promoting a resilient ecosystem.

Much effort has been targeted at the farming sector through agri-environment schemes and increasingly the urban environment is being improved for biodiversity and ecosystem services. One possible area of neglect is the increasingly large part of the population that live in smaller rural settlements. A communications plan for biodiversity and geodiversity and the ecosystem approach it supports is an essential part of improving public and government ownership of natural resource planning, to ensure that we all have collective responsibility for our natural capital.

Specifically in terms of geoconservation, NRW will play a key role in raising awareness. NRW will carry on the work of the former CCW in supporting partners such as RIGS groups, Geoparks and the National Museum of Wales in producing leaflets, booklets and on-site interpretation to educate and raise the profile of geodiversity. In addition, NRW supports the publication of *Earth Heritage*, the popular geological and landscape conservation magazine.

We will continue to manage our own land to increase opportunities for public access and enjoyment without causing damage to sensitive habitats and species. The Welsh Government Woodland Estate provides many services to Wales, including social benefits such as education, recreation and health as well as economic benefits through timber supply, geodiversity and biodiversity benefits.

Work on the National Nature Reserves and Skomer Marine Nature Reserve has demonstrated how careful management can help to minimise the impact of recreation while providing opportunities for people to experience some of our most exciting wildlife locations.

We will continue to support projects that use volunteers in the marine environment, such as Seasearch and Shore Thing, which both use volunteers to record valuable information about the distribution of marine habitats and species, contributing important data to the national overview and engaging different stakeholder groups.

On individual MPAs and in wider sea areas, many collaborative and innovative public engagement projects have been implemented which have supported local businesses and worked with a wide variety of different groups and individuals (e.g. supporting training and accreditation for boat operators under the WiSE wildlife watching code of practice, and the Interreg-funded ‘Living Coasts Living Seas Project’ on Pen Llŷn a’r Sarnau SAC). NRW will continue support this work as part of MPA and wider ecosystem management.

Skomer Marine Nature Reserve/Marine Conservation Zone will continue to use teams of volunteer divers for several monitoring projects, including eelgrass (Biodiversity Action Plan habitat) and scallops. The Skomer MNR Advisory Committee (of over 40 interested individuals, NGOs, academic establishments and commercial and recreational interests) has expressed an interest in continuing to provide a forum for public discussion when Skomer becomes an MCZ. MNR staff will continue with public engagement activities both off site and on the water through public talks and weekend boat “patrols”, ensuring that marine wildlife can be enjoyed by visitors with the minimum of impact.

Public consultation and joint delivery measures in River Basin Management Plans will result in improvement in estuarine and coastal water quality and ecology under WFD.

To help improve understanding of the economic value of wildlife in Wales we led an economic evaluation study: ‘Wildlife Economy Wales’ which found that wildlife-related activities are worth over £1,936 million to Wales in any one year¹². This was the first Welsh wildlife-related economic assessment of its kind. Its findings were used by UK’s Natural Ecosystems Assessment report and it is still influencing local level wildlife-related economic development initiatives in Wales today. We also conducted an economic evaluation of our Aquatic Biodiversity Delivery Programme which showed that this creates positive economic benefits for local communities with each £1 contribution to partnership biodiversity projects supporting nearly £3.60 of regional economic output.

The ability to share and display data in a multiplicity of ways, whether collected by the public, scientists, consultants and agencies, is technically much easier than ever before. However, NRW must work with the Welsh Government to ensure that data sharing agreements are simple and transparent and that information collection funded by the public purse is as widely available as possible.

Compiled by staff from across Knowledge, Strategy and Planning Directorate, 10th July 2013

¹² Wildlife Economy Wales: An economic evaluation scoping study (2007). Environment Agency.

Appendix 1: The Natural Glories of Wales

Geological Heritage

The geology of Wales is important at an international level. Major geological time periods namely, Cambrian, Ordovician and Silurian are named after the rocks of Wales, in addition to smaller time divisions such as Tremadoc, Arenig, Llanvirn and Llandovery. These terms are used around the World.

The conservation of our geological heritage is centred on the Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites - a GB-wide assessment of our most important sites. GCR sites include small quarries containing some of our oldest fossils, former copper mines such as Parys Mountain, coastal cliffs at Castlemartin, and sand and gravel pits across Wales which reveal the glacial history of Wales. These sites attract researchers from around the world and continue to be the training ground for future geologists.

Seabird Colonies

The breeding colonies of the Pembrokeshire Islands and Anglesey coast, many of which are included within Special Protection Areas, provide stunning views and sounds of the range of breeding seabirds in the Eastern Atlantic. For example, Wales holds 8% of the world population of gannet (Grassholm has the 3rd biggest colony in the world of northern gannet) and over half the world population of Manx shearwater breed in Wales. The long running guillemot monitoring project on Skomer provides unrivalled data that is being used to look at climate effects on seabirds.

Estuaries

The estuarine environment of Wales is similarly recognised at the international level with Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar designations. The specialised intertidal habitats are home to a wide range of invertebrates, plants and, of course, wintering birds. High tide roosts of waders can provide spectacular sights and sounds.

Coastal Habitats

The coastline of Wales has representatives of every coastal habitat possible, from soft low sand dunes to lagoons and shingle ridges to high hard limestone cliffs. The range of geodiversity is reflected in the range of habitats and vegetation cover; sheets of squill and thrift through to creeping willow and marsh orchids and dense thorny scrub. The coastal strip has often been squeezed in the past by development, sea defences, agriculture and drainage, but it does remain a major attraction to visitors and holds a large part of our biodiversity range.

Seabed Habitats

Mapping and recording the wealth of biotopes in the seas around the Welsh coast is beginning to reveal their important features. The Marine Nature Reserve around Skomer is already recognised, but other work is showing that it is not the only area of interest and importance. For example, the horse mussel reef off the Lley Peninsula covers an area of around 350 ha and is the most southerly example in the UK. The marine environment supports a huge part of the Welsh biodiversity, not least the important concentrations of seals and cetaceans that attract visitors in increasing numbers.

Atlantic Oakwoods

The western, oceanic climate of Wales makes it an important refuge for this habitat. The important assemblages of bryophytes, lichens and ferns are recognised through Special Area of Conservation designations, whilst the current decline in typical western woodland bird species is beginning to cause concern. These woodlands also host spectacular displays of spring flowers, including bluebells, and a wide range of scarce and rare invertebrates, many of them associated with dead wood.

The Red Kite

The continued increase in the only UK native population of this emblematic bird and its spread to England is probably the most important Welsh conservation success story. But Wales also holds important populations of most of the UK's breeding birds of prey along with 75% of the UK population of chough and large populations of raven.

Horseshoe Bats

Both species of horseshoe bat are found in Wales, greater being mostly restricted to the south, whilst lesser are more widely distributed. Wales supports about half the UK population of lesser horseshoe bats in maternity roosts ranging from castles, grand mansions and vicarages to old barns and sheds. Both species take advantage of Wales' geological heritage, hibernating in natural limestone caves and sea caves as well as metal and stone mine adits and tunnels. A lot of research on these species has taken place in Wales, allowing us to better understand their habitat requirements and help inform our responses to road and housing developments.

The Mason Bee, *Osmia xanthomelana*

This attractive Red Data Book 1 mason bee is the rarest solitary bee in the UK and is now known only from small areas of the Porth Ceiriad and Porth Neigwl coast on the Llyn Peninsula. Historically, it was widespread in the UK; recent records are otherwise confined to the Isle of Wight where it has not been seen for ten years. It was seen at other Llyn sites into the 1920s. Survey work funded by CCW has revealed not only its continued presence on Llyn, but also its requirements for soft sandy cliffs with close access to mud for nest construction and *Lotus corniculatus* for foraging - conditions currently available at both Welsh localities. It is one of a few European species of invertebrate known only from Wales within the UK.

Snowdon Lily, Radnor Lily etc

The rare and localised plants of Wales are exemplified by these two attractive species. Snowdon lily, *Lloydia serotina*, is restricted in the UK to the Snowdon range, where populations cling to north-facing cliffs and face threats, along with our other arctic alpines, from grazing animals and climate warming. Radnor lily, *Gagea bohemica* was only confirmed as a British species in 1975, growing on the dolerite cliffs at Stanner Rocks in Powys. A whole suite of 'microspecies' including the hawkweeds *Hieracium radyrense* and *H. holosericeum*, and the whitebeams *Sorbus layana*, *S. domestica* and *S. minima* have their only populations, or large parts of them at very localised sites in Wales. Many of these are the subjects of genetic and ecological research.

The Gwyniad and Glutinous Snail

The Gwyniad, *Coregonus lavaretus* is currently only found in Llyn Tegid. Other populations of this whitefish are found in Scotland and England (where it goes by the names powan and schelly), but the Welsh population is genetically distinct. All are protected on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. The British population is under threat from pollution, water level changes and climate warming. This Ice Age relict has been the subject of a translocation trial to another lake in Snowdonia to provide a back-up population, where monitoring has revealed the presence of juvenile fish. Llyn Tegid also holds the only current UK population of the glutinous snail, *Myxas glutinosa*. It was not seen in the lake for nearly 50 years, before being rediscovered during a CCW and Snowdonia National Park-funded survey in 1998. The snails live beneath stones around the margin of the lake and monitoring has involved divers assessing the available substrate. Searches in other upland lakes in the area have failed to locate further populations. Work in the Tegid catchment to improve the water quality of Llyn Tegid, should have beneficial effects for both of these species.

Raised Bogs

The lowland raised bogs of Wales provide not only a valuable current habitat resource and refuge of a range of specialist plants and animals, but also give us evidence of Wales' past climatic and vegetation history. Their associations with past cultural beliefs (bog bodies and treasure hoards) as well as more recent

exploitation for fuel, make them places to satisfy a wide range of interests. Much active habitat restoration and management is ongoing too, showing the ways in which conservationists can try to restore damage that occurred in the past. Cors Fochno and Cors Caron are among the most spectacular sites in Britain.

Base-rich Fens

The internationally important base-rich fens of Anglesey and Lleyn, with outliers in Pembrokeshire, provide a contrast to the acidic raised bogs of central and north-east Wales. The calcium rich waters support a very diverse range of plants and invertebrates that are often restricted in the UK as a whole, such as the colourful Endangered soldierfly *Stratiomys chamaeleon*, found only on six Anglesey fens and single sites in England and Scotland, and the whorl snails *Vertigo geyeri* and *V.moulinsiana* for which these fens have been chosen as SAC. Many have a range of fringing habitats with transitions to open water, reedbeds and tufa-rich flushes and woodland, which provide a rich mosaic for birds and mammals.

Marsh Fritillary butterfly

This species will feature in many lists such as this. It is an important flagship species for the suitable management of Rhos pastures and their associated flora and fauna of Wales. This attractive butterfly is severely threatened by extinction due to its requirements for suitably managed habitat in large patches that interconnect. Pioneering research sponsored by CCW has led to practical action to restore and maintain habitat for this species in Wales, which makes an important contribution to the UK population.

The Mountains of Snowdonia

This is the major southern outpost of montane habitats and species in the UK. The presence of base-rich rock types provides the ideal conditions for a range of vascular and lower plants including the well known suite of arctic alpine and several very rare ferns and bryophytes. The Snowdon rainbow beetle, *Chrysolina cerealis* is also confined to this area. The geodiversity of Snowdonia, in terms of rock type and geomorphological features, make this an area that has had a profound effect on the development of geological and evolutionary science.



Preliminary recommendations for the ecological scope of the Biodiversity Strategy for Wales and potential future funding for biodiversity

INTRODUCTION

At recent meetings our staff have discussed the possible contents of the proposed *Biodiversity Strategy for Wales*, which will be steered by *Biodiversity Strategy Board* and implemented by all relevant partners in Wales, including *Natural Resources Wales* and *Welsh Government (WG)*. This discussion has been in the context of the *State of Nature* report and the recent Ministerial announcement of additional resources (£6 million). In addition, they have carried out an analysis of the content of the *State of Nature* report, including the factors identified as the cause of wildlife change.

CHALLENGES

It is our conclusion that two main ecological challenges are presented by the *State of Nature* report and we recommend that the *Strategy* and any new resources should be directed at meeting these challenges:

Challenge 1: Addressing the causes of change in the status of our native flora, fauna and the habitats that support them, by the application of ecosystem or landscape scale solutions.

The factors having the greatest negative impact were summarised as lack of resources for conservation action, fisheries management, loss of semi-natural habitat, fragmentation, urbanisation, climate change, inappropriate afforestation, agricultural intensification, atmospheric nitrogen, illegal persecution, habitat management change and invasive non-native species.

Challenge 2: The knowledge gap and measuring the state of nature – we are unable to assess population trends or habitat condition for more than a small percentage of species or habitat areas.

In addition, it is also clearly evident that this report hoped to inspire a greater “interest, curiosity and admiration of nature”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address Challenge 1:

Our overall strategic recommendation to meet this challenge would be to “protect the best, restore what is possible and manage the rest”.

Protection of the “best” of our natural resources (biological, geological and geomorphological) through site designation, and ensuring appropriate management is a core NRW statutory responsibility which will be part of meeting this challenge. However, climate change and the ecosystem approach means we need to go further and think bigger, by developing a connected ecologically coherent network of sites across the land surface and seabed, in the context of the *Making Space for Nature* report.

Strategic habitat and species restoration projects with long-term funding should be core components of the response to this challenge and there are plenty of ideas and opportunities that could also help deliver other NRW business priorities.

For example:

1. Agri-environment schemes - refocusing of *Glastir* schemes on outcomes rather than on prescriptions and implementation of the recommendations of the *Tir Gofal* Monitoring Report.
2. High Nature Value (HNV) farming - development of a strategy and funding mechanisms to support HNV farming (as another strand of agri-environment action). This could include land that falls outside current agri-environment schemes but which has significant interest, e.g. pony paddocks, small grassland sites, etc.
3. A strategy to meet woodland expansion targets which would be a proactive approach to woodland expansion that could look at connectivity and ecosystem services, while resolving the current tension between tree planting and other biodiversity priorities (links to 4 below).
4. Development of the *Upland Framework*, including expanding this work to make links to wider ecosystem services, such as flood prevention, carbon storage, etc. In particular, this could be used to look for positive opportunities for woodland expansion in the uplands and ffridd zone.
5. A strategy for integrated management (grazing, habitat management, coastal defence, dune mobility, etc.) of the *Wales Coastal Path* to improve and enhance habitats (and associated species) while improving path management and visitor experience - linking into coastal tourism, e.g. *Llyn Connectivity Project*.
6. Development and implementation of an integrated strategy to manage and enhance connectivity in the ffridd, which includes post-industrial coal, slate, aggregates and metal mine landscapes. For example, development of a South Wales Coalfield demonstration project as a model for other industrial landscapes and ffridd.
7. Reducing catchment nutrient run-off by habitat and river restoration projects to benefit water quality and amenity use.
8. Modelling favourable conservation status for European protected species and integrating outputs into strategic local authority plans for better species protection.
9. Additional species and habitat connectivity and restoration projects:
 - Strategic assessment, restoration and management of peat resources in Wales including C storage capacity, in the context of current *IUCN* and *WG* ambitions;
 - Beaver introduction and river floodplain restoration, which could deliver flood protection as an ecosystem service;

Annex 8.2.1 – NRW State of Nature Response FINAL

- Restoring connectivity over weirs and bridges to enhance fisheries;
- Native oyster and crawfish projects could come with support for local jobs and economic opportunities;
- Restoration and management of the sand dune resource in Wales;
- Landscape-scale approach to lowland grasslands and heathlands;
- Restoration of island bird habitat to support conservation objectives and eco-tourism;
- Expansion of Annex 1 native woodlands with ecosystem services benefits;
- Landscape-scale implementation of appropriate habitat management for species of conservation concern (European protected species, Section 42 species, etc.).

10. A strategy for Wales-wide activity on invasive non-native species in line with national and evolving EU policy.

11. Central support for the establishment of local *Regionally Important Geological Sites* groups and *GeoParks* and their activities.

12. Continued progress on the UK co-ordinated geological review of our earth heritage.

With sufficient forward planning for any large-scale restoration projects, it might be possible to use the financial resources to generate match funding, e.g. from LIFE.

Our staff are very supportive of our continuing to buy key areas of land or working with landowners by securing positive management for nature conservation, e.g. through section 15 agreements. We have a track record of land management on our *National Nature Reserves (NNRs)*. In addition, we could consider the added benefit of giving or leasing the purchased land to NGOs for long term management. Our regional colleagues maintain a watching brief on opportunities like this in their local areas.

To address Challenge 2:

There is an obvious connection here to the additional proposal in the Ministerial announcement to develop a data hub. We recommend that this area of work should build on what already exists in terms of systems and software (e.g. *Local Records Centres*, *The National Biodiversity Network*) and focus on the development of biodiversity trend indicators for future reporting.

We think that this challenge represents an opportunity to make a case for direct support for key NRW areas of work related to environmental monitoring, especially in the context of habitats, species and state of the environment reporting. In addition, the report illustrates the importance of the continuation of long-term monitoring efforts (e.g. the *Environmental Change Network* and the *Environmental Change Biodiversity Network* on *NNRs*) and having new programmes in place to monitor emerging pressures, such as the effects of climate change and invasive species.

There are clear gaps in our evidence base for some environments and their biota. For example, we think the production of a seabed habitat map for Welsh waters is an immediate priority area.

Associated with the aspiration to generate public interest in nature, we suggest that additional resources might be made available to new or ongoing citizen-science projects, such as those being taken forward at *Skomer Marine Nature Reserve*.

Finally, in the spirit of inspiring the next generation of environmentalists, we suggest that the *Biodiversity Strategy* should fully address the provision of environmental education and interpretation. As well as directly promoting biodiversity through the curriculum, we should also support the continued positive role played by publications such as *Natur Cymru* and *Earth Heritage* in promoting the natural world to the general public. Other initiatives could include the development of a marine school road show and interpretation linked with the *Wales Coastal Path*.

THE NEXT STEPS

Given the scope and content of the work described above, we recognise that the limited resources available will only go so far and that further discussion is required between *Natural Resources Wales* and *WG* to agree priority areas. We recognise that the Minister might prefer to focus on certain areas or work with particular partners. Finally we also hope that we have demonstrated the importance and potential opportunity that the *Biodiversity Strategy* and new financial resources represent for *Natural Resources Wales*.

Natural Resources Wales
12 September 2013



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Background

1. It is important that the people of Wales have confidence in our work and in our ability to deliver value for tax payers’ money. Building that confidence relies on good practice across all our business at all levels and on building trust between the organisation and the people we work with and whose lives our work affects. One way to build this trust is through effective stakeholder engagement. This is why Natural Resources Wales needs a strategic, proactive and coordinated approach to this work.

2. Evidence from the experience of the founding bodies for Natural Resources Wales, suggests that it is crucial to invest time and effort into stakeholder engagement. The three founding organisations all have experience of where stakeholder engagement has paid dividends or has not been particularly successful. We will learn from each other and from our past experiences and take the good practice forward.

3. Stakeholder engagement will be required at a strategic and operational level. The principles and approaches set out in this strategy are applicable to any form stakeholder engagement.

4. Effective stakeholder engagement is about building sustainable relationships with people who are affected by what we do and the services which we provide, and who have a contribution to make with regard to what we do. It relies on a mutual commitment to engage, listen, respond and communicate openly and honestly with stakeholders.

Why we need to engage

5. Successful stakeholder engagement enables better planned and more informed policies, projects and services. This will result in benefits for us and our stakeholders. We realise that we cannot reach our goals alone and that we need the support and expertise of others.

6. Good public and stakeholder engagement has the following benefits for the organisation:

Benefits of stakeholder engagement for Natural Resources Wales	Benefits of stakeholder engagement for stakeholders
Improved decision-making and outcomes as a result of input by a wider range of stakeholders and	Greater opportunities to contribute directly to programme development

communities. We recognise that others have experience and expertise that we should learn from.	
Increased efficiency and effectiveness as we have a better understanding of the issues that face individuals, communities and other organisations	More open and transparent lines of communication and increased accountability of Government
Improved risk management practices – allowing risks to be identified and considered earlier, so reducing future costs.	Better access to decision making processes, resulting in the delivery of more efficient and responsive services
Challenging of established methods and ideas and encouragement of innovation and creativity;	Early identification of synergies between stakeholder and Government work, encouraging integrated and comprehensive solutions to complex issues.
Better informed prioritisation and scheduling	Increased sense of ownership of issues and of being valued
Improved evidence resources and enhanced organisational confidence.	Better knowledge, awareness and understanding of issues and processes.

Stakeholder engagement objectives

7. The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Build, strengthen and nurture mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders;
- Ensure that the organisation proactively seeks productive engagement with stakeholders to shape programmes and services;
- Ensure that all relevant stakeholders are given sufficient and appropriate opportunities to consider and influence plans and decisions made by the organisation
- Ensure our engagement activities are prioritised and relevant audiences are clear on how we make our decisions and how they can influence them;
- Make certain that our stakeholder engagement work is closely identified with our business priorities and that our decisions are evidence based;
- Engage a diverse range of customers, communities and partners (old and new) in the organisation’s work so that views come from a wide

constituency of people. We will learn from the expertise and experience of others.

Our ways of working

8. Our aspiration is that any individual, community or organisation will have appropriate opportunities to express their views and to understand how we consider those views in our decision making processes. We must understand that we don't always have all the answers and so we must harness the knowledge and expertise of our stakeholders and communities. It is about "having a conversation" about what we want to achieve together and ensuring that we feedback how we reached our final decision.

9. There is no one size fits all model for stakeholder engagement. We must be able to tailor our process tailored to the particular need of the situation, work undertaken and stakeholders selected. Ensuring appropriate engagement requires a judgement – asking what, who, when and how are essential in determining the most appropriate way to engage stakeholders.

10. We will follow the "Working with others" approach - working with stakeholders as early as possible, in order to understand their concerns, interests and priorities. This approach allows us to be flexible, working with stakeholders creatively and in ways that suit their needs.

11. We will practice equity and equality in all our stakeholder engagement work.

12. Whilst all staff will have a responsibility for engaging with stakeholders, the Communications team has a key role to provide advice to staff to enable them to engage successfully. This will vary from provision of guidance and toolkits to hands-on involvement and facilitation as well as overseeing the information flow throughout the organisation. The level of involvement of the Communications team will be proportionate to the level of risk associated with the issue.

13. Board members will share with senior staff their professional and personal networks. We will then ask Board members to support offices as appropriate.

The Principles of stakeholder engagement

14. Our stakeholder engagement processes will adhere to the ten National Principles of Public Engagement in Wales. These principles, developed by Participation Cymru in consultation with other public

sector organisations in Wales, were endorsed by the Welsh Government in March 2011.

- **Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference**
Engagement gives a real chance to influence policy, service design and delivery from an early stage.
- **Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose**
The people affected by an issue or change are included in opportunities to engage as an individual or as part of a group or community, with their views both respected and valued.
- **Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way**
The engagement process is clear, communicated to everyone in a way that's easy to understand within a reasonable timescale, and the most suitable method/s for those involved is used.
- **Work with relevant partner organisations**
Organisations should communicate with each other and work together wherever possible to ensure that people's time is used effectively and efficiently.
- **The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable**
People are well placed to take part in the engagement process because they have easy access to relevant information that is tailored to meet their needs.
- **Make it easier for people to take part**
People can engage easily because any barriers for different groups of people are identified and addressed.
- **Enable people to take part effectively**
Engagement processes should try to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all participants.
- **Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective**
Appropriate training, guidance and support are provided to enable all participants to effectively engage, including both community participants and staff.
- **People are told the impact of their contribution**
Timely feedback is given to all participants about the views they expressed and the decisions or actions taken as a result; methods and form of feedback should take account of participants' preferences.
- **Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement**

Annex 9 – NRW Stakeholder Strategy

People’s experience of engagement should be monitored and evaluated to measure its success in engaging people and the effectiveness of their participation; lessons should be shared and applied in future engagements.

Our stakeholders

15. A stakeholder can be defined as any person, or group, or organisation who believes they could be affected by, interested in or could affect or influence the work of Natural Resources Wales.

16. Stakeholders will vary in the impact, significance, interest, longevity and relevance in relation to our objectives. We also realise that stakeholders are not confined by geography or sectoral interests. For this reason, it is important for us to map our stakeholders regularly and even more so when we are starting new projects and activities or moving through phases of projects.

17. Annex 1 describes how we will undertake our corporate strategic analysis, along with the types of approaches to engagement. Once complete, we will develop an engagement plan.

18. Local teams will also use this strategic framework to identify local stakeholders. They will then develop specific engagement plans.

Tools

19. We recognise that tools and mentors are required to help in the understanding of stakeholder engagement.

20. We will follow the “Working with Others” approach and a toolkit that provides guidance for staff on how to plan and manage stakeholder engagement is available on our intranet. Communications staff will advise all staff as they develop engagement plans.

21. In addition, Natural Resources Wales has a call off contract for facilitation support where we can call upon the service of the contractors for advice, designing and running stakeholder engagement events. The Communications Team can assist advise on using this service.

Evaluation of the Strategy

22. Evaluating the stakeholder strategy will allow Natural Resources Wales to capture lessons learned, allowing us to drive continuous improvement in future engagement processes

23. Whilst evaluation of engagement activities will be incorporated into normal operations, the Communications Team will also review

Annex 9 – NRW Stakeholder Strategy

effectiveness of our stakeholder engagement efforts on three main elements – stakeholder participation (involvement in process); stakeholder alignment (compatibility with Natural Resource Wales’ priorities) and Natural Resources Wales’ commitment (our willingness to act on stakeholders’ proposals)

Annex 1: Strategic Stakeholder analysis and levels of participation

At a corporate level, the first step will be to develop a single inventory of the organisations we will or should work with. Following that we can analyse our stakeholders in two ways:

- **Proximity mapping** – the stakeholders are plotted according to our relationship and communication with them. The stakeholders with whom we have a good relationship and frequent communication are plotted closer to the centre, while those we have little communication with are on the outer circle.
- **Interest / Influence Matrix** – the same stakeholders are then plotted on a matrix where **Influence** represents the potential influence stakeholders can exert upon our ability to deliver the strategy and meet our targets and **Interest** reflects the stakeholders' current level of concern for our agenda and strategic direction.

Once this analysis is complete, then we can map them on to a quadrant to determine the level of engagement required.

High	Level of influence	High Influence Low interest Stakeholders who need to be actively involved in and supportive of our work. Aim to increase their level of interest	High Influence High interest Stakeholders we need to work in partnership with. Focus most effort on this group
Low		Low influence Low interest Stakeholders who need to be aware of our work and kept informed of the main developments	Low influence High interest Stakeholders we need to consider for particular areas of our work.
		Level of interest	
		Low	High

Once we have undertaken a stakeholder analysis, it is vital to have a good understanding, and indeed consider what level of participation is actually being sought.

Annex 9 – NRW Stakeholder Strategy

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Stakeholder engagement goals	To provide balanced, objective, accurate and consistent information to assist stakeholders to understand the problems / issues, alternatives and / or solutions	To obtain feedback from stakeholders on analysis, alternatives and / or outcomes	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and needs are consistently understood and considered	To partner with stakeholders including the development of alternatives, making decisions and the identification of preferred solutions	To place final decision making in the hands of the stakeholder. Stakeholders are enabled and equipped to actively contribute to the achievement s of outcomes
Promise to stakeholders	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how your input influenced the outcome	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the outcome	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the outcomes to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide where we can. We will support and complement your actions

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Agenda Item 3

Environment and Sustainability Committee

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

Meeting date: **Thursday, 1 May 2014**

Meeting time: **09.30 – 11.45**

This meeting can be viewed on Senedd TV at:

http://www.senedd.tv/archiveplayer.jsf?v=en_400000_01_05_2014&t=0&l=en

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Concise Minutes:

Assembly Members:

Alun Ffred Jones AM (Chair)
Mick Antoniw AM
Russell George AM
Julie James AM
Julie Morgan AM
William Powell AM
Antoinette Sandbach AM
Joyce Watson AM

Witnesses:

Alun Davies AM, Minister for Natural Resources and Food
Kevin Austin, Welsh Government
Nicola Thomas, Welsh Government

Committee Staff:

Alun Davidson (Clerk)
Catherine Hunt (Deputy Clerk)
Nia Seaton (Researcher)
Elfyn Henderson (Researcher)

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

1.1 Apologies were received from Llyr Gruffydd. There were no substitutions.

2 Sustainable Land Management – Evidence from the Minister for Natural Resources and Food

2.1 The Minister responded to questions from members of the Committee.

2.2 The Minister agreed to write to the Committee with further information on the data and monitoring project launched by Cardiff University.

3 Papers to note

3.1 The Committee noted the minutes.

Inquiry into the Welsh Government’s proposals for the M4 around Newport – Friends of the Earth consultation response and legal advice

3.2 The Committee noted the paper and agreed to write to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport to seek clarification on the status of the consultation process.

Letter from Wales Environment Link – Climate Change

3.3 The Committee noted the letter.

4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for items 5 & 6

4.1 The Committee agreed the Motion.

5 Sustainable Land Management – Consideration of evidence

5.1 The Committee discussed the evidence.

6 Marine policy in Wales – Draft follow up letter to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food

6.1 The Committee agreed the letter.

Jeff Cuthbert AM
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty
Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

24 April 2014

Dear Minister

The Future Generations Bill: Proposed Goals

We very much welcome your Government's commitment to sustainable development as the central organising principle for public sector policy and decision making in Wales and, hence, to your forthcoming Future Generations Bill (FG Bill).

We see this as a vital opportunity to ensure decision-making across Wales supports a healthy, resilient environment in which nature thrives – an outcome that is vital to support sustainable social and economic progress. However, we are very concerned that the suite of goals proposed for inclusion in the Bill does not reflect the imperative of a proactive response to secure the health of the natural environment in Wales. **We propose that 'Wales has a resilient and biodiverse natural environment' be added to the suite.**

The recent White Paper setting out proposals for the Environment Bill acknowledged the critical role the natural environment plays in support of a sustainable economy and society. This encompasses the provision of services such as carbon storage (contributing to climate change mitigation), and regulation of water flow and quality, as well as, for example, physical and mental health benefits to individuals and developmental and educational benefits for children, and direct employment opportunities through land management and tourism.

The White Paper also acknowledges the deterioration of Wales' natural environment – as evidenced, for example, in the recently published *State of Nature* Report (May 2013), showing the alarming scale of biodiversity loss in Wales and the UK over recent decades. Of the 3,148 species assessed in this landmark report, 60% have declined over the last 50 years. One in ten species assessed in the report were found to be at risk of extinction. In Wales we are at risk of losing iconic species of birds, butterflies, moths and plants. This health check of our wildlife showed that we cannot continue business as usual if we want future generations to be able to enjoy a country rich in nature, and the benefits this brings.

We believe the proposals in the Environment White Paper represent a major opportunity to secure the environmental management that will protect and restore biodiversity as part of resilient ecosystems, which in turn will provide the basis for sustainable development in Wales. Their success will depend, in part, on fostering broader understanding of the importance and value of ecosystems, and will require the commitment

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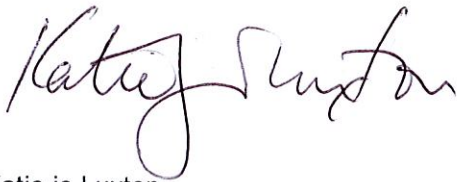


Mae'r RSPB yn aelod o BirdLife International, partneriaeth o gyrrff cadwraeth sy'n gweithio i sicrhau cartref i fyf natur o amgylch y byd.
The RSPB is a member of BirdLife International, a partnership of conservation organisations working to give nature a home around the world.

of the whole Welsh Government and the wider public sector. Biodiversity is currently the best measure we have of the health of the natural environment, and is already used as a key sustainable development indicator. This is why we feel it is absolutely critical that the FG Bill sets the necessary context, and establishes a resilient, biodiverse natural environment as a sustainable development goal.

We would welcome a meeting with you to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely



Katie-jo Luxton
Director, RSPB Cymru

Cc: Alun Davies AM, Minister for Natural Resources and Food
Alun Ffred Jones AM, Chair, Environment and Sustainability Committee
Matthew Quinn, Director for Environment, Welsh Government
Emyr Roberts, Chief Executive, Natural Resources Wales

Agenda Item 3.2

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:

Alun Ffred Jones AM
Chair of the Environment & Sustainability Committee
Committee Service
ES.comm@wales.gov.uk

27 April 2014

Water Strategy for Wales

Thank you for your letter of 8 April noting the launch of the water strategy for Wales and your request that the recommendations for the Committee Inquiry in to water policy t be considered alongside the development of the final strategy.

In developing the water strategy, the Welsh Government worked closely with a number of organisations across the water industry as well as reviewing a wide range of evidence to develop our policy proposals. The Committee report in to the findings of your enquiry in to water policy was one of the documents that helped to inform the strategy.

The water strategy will be out to consultation until 4 July 2014, at which point we will analyse the responses and aim to publish the final strategy in Autumn 2014.

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

Alun Ffred Jones AM
Chair of Environment and Sustainability Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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29 April 2014

STUDY INTO THE POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF WIND FARMS AND ASSOCIATED GRID INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE WELSH TOURISM INDUSTRY

In June 2012 the National Assembly for Wales Environment and Sustainability Committee published its report "*Energy Policy and Planning in Wales June 2012*" following a review of Energy policy and Planning matters. Recommendation 18 of the report stated: "*The Welsh Government should commission research to measure the economic impact of wind farms and associated grid infrastructure on the tourism industry in Wales*".

Accepting the recommendation, the Welsh Government commissioned Regeneris Consulting and The Tourism Group to undertake the study in June 2013.

The study focused on areas where wind farms have been established for a relatively long time, such as Powys, Anglesey and the South Wales Valleys and did not find any evidence of a significant impact on tourism.

While the study did find that most local tourism economies will face minimal or no threat from wind farm development, it does acknowledge that the nature of the visitor economies in some parts of Wales mean they are at greater risk of negative impacts. In these instances, the study highlights the need for developers to undertake thorough research and consultation to understand the nature and extent of any risk, and identify the actions which need to be taken.

However, the study also notes that the development of wind farms can provide opportunities for linked tourism development, for example, investment in bike trails, and highlights instances where this has been successful with existing developments.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1NA

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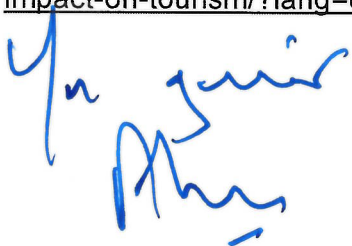
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Previous research on the impact of wind farms on tourism in Wales has also shown that for the majority of visitors, the existence of wind farms in the countryside does not significantly impact upon their decision to visit or return to Wales on holiday. The report notes that the tourist industry is influenced by a diverse range of factors, mostly unrelated to wind farm development.

Therefore the overall conclusion from the study is that there is limited evidence of impacts on tourism for Wales as a whole due to the presence of wind farms and their associated infrastructure.

You may wish to note the study is now available on the Welsh Government's website at: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/energy/renewable/wind/economic-impact-on-tourism/?lang=en>



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

Agenda Item 5

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Agenda Item 6

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Agenda Item 7

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