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# WWF's Key Priorities for the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee during the Fifth Assembly

JULY 2016

## INTRODUCTION

The decision to leave the EU has considerable impacts on environmental issues in Wales which the Committee will need to consider. However, the Well-being of Future Generations and Environment Acts should provide the framing for any inquiry. These Acts set out a clear vision for the future of the environment and nature. If implemented effectively they can provide some certainty in uncertain times. We share the concerns and uncertainty caused by the loss of EU funding, however using the goals and objectives of these Acts as the frame for the redesign of any support systems such as CAP or CFP would enable Welsh Government to bring about the radical transformational change that these Acts require.

We ask that the Committee also maintains focus on the implementation and enforcement of the existing requirements and protections for environment in Wales (EU and Welsh). The worst possible outcome of Brexit would be that it causes paralysis in efforts, especially where timing of action is critical, such as reducing GHG emissions and protecting our natural resources and biodiversity.

Areas we consider of priority for the Committee over the next year are as follows:

## ENVIRONMENT (WALES) ACT 2016

- Areas of the Act requiring finalisation:
  - **Part 2 regulations** on carbon accounting. We want this undertaken as soon as possible. We want the Committee to ask for input into this process and establish what the Welsh Government's intentions are on public consultation.

- The Welsh Government is required to develop carbon budgets and action plans. To be completed by the end of 2018 . WWF Cymru believes the sooner this is completed, the better.
- Areas of Act requiring scrutiny:
  - Part 1: SONARR on state of the Welsh environment in the autumn. WWF also publishes its Living Planet Report on 27 October, giving the global situation in regard to the health of global biodiversity.
  - National Natural Resources Policy expected in spring 2017. This is a crucial, overarching policy for the delivery of the Resilient Wales goal.
  - Scrutiny of Natural Resources Wales implementation process for both the Well-being of Future Generations and the Environment Acts.

## **WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015**

Government has not yet set ‘milestones’ for the national indicators of progress. It is crucial these clarify the scale and pace of change required.. Committee should scrutinise this process.

Committee should closely scrutinise the programme for government (Autumn 2016) as it should be fulfilling the Act’s requirement to set objectives to meet the Goals. This needs to include an inquiry into Government Ministers' plans for maximising delivery of goals 1 and 2 (environmental outcomes) and goal 7 (globally-responsible Wales (our impacts elsewhere)).

- Key questions and areas:
  - Is a low carbon, resource-efficient economy being developed?
  - Work with other Committees to explore how biodiversity and climate is being integrated and given higher priority. Are really being integrated across government and being in government that the Act requires?
  - The annual Well-being report should identify progress against the objectives set so warrants extensive scrutiny
  - Role of the Future Generations Commissioner – is the Commissioner undertaking her duties particularly around environmental sustainability?

## **MARINE**

Much work on implementation of various statutory Marine requirements is behind schedule.

Important to **scrutinise progress** carefully and challenge the lack of resources being deployed , which will be hampering progress. Examples include:

- Marine Plan (required by Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009), consultation repeatedly delayed, now scheduled for early 2017.
- Designation of Marine Conservation Zones, consulted upon several years ago but only 1 designation. Committee should review the (overdue) NRW report on gaps in the ecologically coherent network of protected areas.
- Lack of resourcing of evidence base for decision making with a lack of capacity in Welsh Government and NRW to collect information and to evaluate status or show progress being made. Opportunity with Review of initial assessment of Marine strategy Framework directive ( due in October 2016). This should also feed into evidence base for SONARR.

## **CLIMATE**

- Scrutinise the Government on its annual progress towards emission reduction and whether sufficient to deliver on its commitments.
- WG have a commitment to 40% reduction by 2020 until new targets are set for 2020 through the Environment Act. UK statistics and Committee on Climate Change progress reports are produced each year and include a Wales section.
- Welsh Government also needs to be developing its adaption plan for the impacts of climate change. The recent Committee on Climate Change report highlighted a number of areas needing substantial action including flood risk, infrastructure, health and housing
- Energy efficiency is a key emission reduction programme. WWF Cymru wants the Welsh Government to commitment to decent homes for everyone and make energy efficiency a major infrastructure project to help achieve this.

## **SUMMARY**

- Scrutinise implementation of Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
- Finalise regulations and scrutinise key implementation stages of Environment Act
- Inquire into progress on statutory marine obligations.

*For more information, please contact:*

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### Timeline of opportunities for Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee scrutiny

Date	For consideration	Comment
Autumn	Programme for government	Essential that this sets good example for rest of public sector in how to fulfil the requirement of the WFG Act to set objectives to maximise achievement of the Goals in WFG Act
Autumn- scheduled for Sept/Oct ( required within 4 months of Environment Act commencement)	Env Act: Part 1 SONARR: NRW assessment of the State of Wales ' natural resources, biodiversity and trends therein	Important basis for decision on the National Natural Resources policy and should also provide evidence for progress on A Resilient Wales Goal in WFG Act and towards Environment Act objective of resilient ecosystems
October  October 27 <sup>th</sup>	Celtic Seas - future trends report (what will seas look like in 20 years)  WWF Living Planet Report, assessing the the health tends info global biodiversity.	Produced by WWF- led Celtic Seas Partnership. Will provide useful input to Wales Marine Plan and WG's Future Trends report  Useful to link Wales' environment with findings globally and is an opportunity to consider A globally responsible Wales Goal in the WFG Act
October 2016	NRW Review of initial assessment of Marine Strategy Framework directive.	This should also feed into evidence base for SONARR.
Early 2017	Wales Marine Plan	Public consultation
Before May, 2017	WFG Act Part 1: sec 11: Future Trends Report	Prediction of trends in social, economic and cultural

		wellbeing
Spring 2017 ( within 1 year of Assembly election	National Natural Resources Policy	This is a crucial, overarching policy for the delivery of the Resilient Wales goal and the whole of Environment Act Part 1.
June / July 2017	NAEI GHG emission figures for 2015  CCC report on UK government progress which includes a section on Wales	There is no requirement in the Env Act for annual reporting from WG on progress of emission reduction (like the legal requirement in UK and Scotland). WG said this would be integrated into WFG Act reporting but worth considering whether NAW can scrutinise WG's progress following publication of these reports.
Spring/ Summer 2017 (tbc)	WFG Act sec 10: The annual Well-being report for financial year 2016 -17	Progress towards achieving national wellbeing indicators and milestones
TBC (currently being debated by WG on whether to wait until after Future trends report. No deadline within Act).	WFG Act sec 10: WG must set milestones for the national indicators	It is crucial these clarify the scale and pace of change required in order to provide guidance and clarity to all public bodies.
Spring/ Summer 2017	WFG Act sec 12: Welsh Ministers' must lay annual report	Progress towards the wellbeing objectives set ( likely within Programme for Government)
TBC – waiting for timetable from WG	Env Act Part 2: Regulations on carbon accounting	How the emissions are measured and accounted determines the scale of reduction in Wales and hence very important to get right. Unclear yet whether WG intends to consult with NAW on draft regulation. We recommend Committee ask WG

		what its intentions are and requests opportunity for consultation asap.
TBC	Carbon budget and targets	Legal requirement for these to be set by end of 2018. No legal requirement for involvement of NAW (as in Scotland). CCC will be undertaking assessment of budgets for Wales and provide advice to WG. Would be useful for NAW to ask Minister about the timescales and process and consider how it can engage.