

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales  
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate  
Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee  
Ymchwiliad i bolisi coedwigaeth a choetiroedd yng Nghymru | Inquiry into  
Forestry and woodland policy in Wales  
FWP 36a  
Ymateb gan : Tilhill  
Evidence from : Tillhill

Additional information following stakeholder event  
Gwybodaeth ychwanegol yn dilyn digwyddiad i randdeiliaid

**Can you expand on the view put forward by Confor that a lack of scope to increase commercial forestry elsewhere is a barrier to restoring Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites? The Committee has heard evidence that this is not a concern for landowners, and if a woodland has been managed properly the landowner will make money as expected.**

Lack of scope to increase forestry elsewhere is a barrier to restoring PAWS if considering the whole of the forest estate in Wales. Restoration of PAWS reduces the long term ability of Wales plc to produce utilisable timber to supply our thriving processing industry, substitute for imports and provide the woodland owner, whether state or private, with a return. The WG Strategy “Woodlands for Wales” (WfW) recognises this issue and states that PAWS restoration requires new productive woodland to be created to compensate for the loss of future timber from restored PAWS sites. If this were to happen on a national basis, then PAWS restoration can be accommodated. However, at the individual scale the owner of a PAWS property is going to be disadvantaged and restoration will cost them in lost production and consequent income. We have the example in Wales of a previous PAWS restoration programme that saw limited uptake with grant rates contributing to the cost of restoration. Grant rates were progressively increased and when they reached 100% and just over the uptake increased significantly. It appeared landowners were willing to restore PAWS if it didn’t cost them to undertake the work and they were prepared to bite the bullet in terms of future lost production. It was often the larger woodland owners who had part of their woodland PAWS who took up the grant along with small woodland owners who were less concerned about future income and amenity value of the woodland was their primary objective.

There is currently Glastir grant available to replant Larch sites which are often PAWS. Contrary to evidence you have heard we manage woodland for owners who have foregone the Glastir grant which requires restoration of the PAWS simply because to do so would destroy the potential of their woodland to produce future income. As managers of approximately 20 000ha of forestry in Wales, for a wide variety of owners, I think we are better placed to report owner attitudes than some of those who have previously given evidence from the side-lines?

Broadleaved woodland in Wales, due to climatic and site conditions and grey squirrels is rarely able to produce much in the way of timber other than firewood.

There are exceptions but the statistics for hardwood production tell their own story. Additionally hardwoods are much slower growing than the commercial conifer species which means they are much less adaptable to a changing climate. In the time it takes to grow a broadleaved tree in favourable conditions a conifer could have been felled and re-planted 3 times!

**Do you think that NRW and the Welsh Government are doing enough to manage tree health issues, such as Larch Disease and Ash Dieback?**

I'm afraid we are where we are with Larch Disease and I am reluctant to bring up lack of action in the past and how that may have contributed, or not, to the current situation. Except I fear we are in danger of repeating the failures to halt or slow the disease seen in 2012/2013 when FCW/NRW did nothing to slow the spread of the disease which quickly got ahead of them. As a result the Core Disease Zone (CDZ) was established covering most of South Wales with the aim of felling larch in this area over time with immediate response to infection being concentrated on the Disease Limitation Zone (DLZ) covering the remainder of Wales. This year we have seen rapid expansion of disease in part of the DLZ and the fear is NRW simply want to further expand the CDZ rather than put the resources into dealing with the infected trees, slowing the inevitable spread and keeping an element of Larch within the Welsh landscape for longer.

Ash dieback has a different status to Larch Disease as it is not subject to the same level of statutory control. There is also the hope that a significant minority proportion of Ash will be able to survive the disease and although much diminished in number Ash will not disappear from the Welsh countryside.

There appears to be little or nothing NRW or WG could have done to prevent the spread of the disease which now appears endemic throughout Wales. However the concern must be the future and how dying ash trees will interface with, in particular, our transport infrastructure of road and rail putting the public at risk. WG have plans to bring stakeholders together to address these issues and I would support their actions.

In addition to public safety there is the need to address what to do with the area of ash planted in the last 10years and to provide owners with advice on what their options may be.

**Can you comment on NRW's evidence that the Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel should be "revitalised and more dynamic in its approach"? The Committee has heard evidence that the group should be opened up to a broader range of stakeholders including environmental and recreation interests.**

I am a member of WSAP and I am somewhat surprised at NRW's comments as it is a WG panel rather than an instrument of NRW? My main criticism of WSAP is that it does not hold WG or their agent NRW sufficiently to account for the failure to deliver WfW and in particular the need to balance activities that reduce the productive area of Welsh forests with compensatory planting to address the loss and indeed expand the area of woodland.

Environmental interests are well represented on WSAP although attendance by some is not good. I would not object to recreational interests being represented but I'm not sure how interested they would be in most of WSAP's deliberations?