



Our suggested priorities for the Committee for the next 12-18 months in response to the Minister and Deputy Minister's letter:

1. **Auditing decarbonisation.** Relevant to Ministerial priorities including climate change, energy, marine energy, net zero, tree planting, transport, housing and town centre regeneration. We have also suggested this as a priority for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee.
  - 1.1. Why is this important? The Senedd has declared a climate emergency. Achieving decarbonisation is challenging and dependent on the effectiveness of measures to achieve genuine emissions reductions from all sectors. Decarbonisation pathways are complex. The public is sceptical about greenwashing and Government needs to provide clarity about which measures will be most effective at reducing emissions.
    - 1.1.1. What are the monitoring and reporting requirements that will ensure effort is best directed at emissions reduction and avoid greenwashing and perverse outcomes?
  - 1.2. This general issue is well illustrated by the specifics of forestry, where there is a need to ensure that tree planting, forestry and timber production support rather than undermine decarbonisation and nature recovery goals. Previous approaches to afforestation have had damaging social and environmental consequences.
  - 1.3. Increasing tree cover will make a valuable contribution, but only if it is done appropriately. The misapplication of tree planting to offset continued fossil fuel use and the over-use of biomass for energy generation risk undermining the climate mitigation potential of forestry. The credibility of forestry as decarbonisation tool is at risk unless emissions from forestry are understood and controlled.
  - 1.4. Forests cannot be taken for granted as a long-term carbon sinks. Carbon emissions from overseas deforestation are growing as are emissions from clear felling for biofuel. Increasing pest outbreaks and fire and storm damage, threaten the integrity of Welsh forests. <https://blog.efi.int/from-climate-change-to-climate-crisis-a-new-normal-for-natural-disturbances>. Major existing carbon stores in soils and ancient and old growth woodland are being diminished, contributing to net carbon emissions. Very little of the timber produced in Wales is used in construction.

1.4.1. How are Ministers demonstrating effective carbon auditing on the Welsh Government's own forest estate, and using the dominant position of that forest estate to lead strategic change in timber production and use and increase long term carbon stores?

2. **Woodland creation – recommendations of the Ministerial Task Force.**

Relevant Ministerial priorities include net zero, tree planting, and nature and biodiversity.

2.1. Review the recommendations of Ministerial Tree Task Force. A wide range of actions have been initiated by the Deputy Minister, and a new action plan promised for later this year.

2.2. Why is this important? Achieving decarbonisation goals requires that these recommendations are successfully implemented and not undermined by poorly directed effort and greenwash.

2.2.1. What will be the contribution to the delivery of the Welsh Government's Decarbonisation Plan?

2.2.2. What financial contribution is expected of the new proposed Farm Support Scheme?

2.2.3. What are the implications of substantial land use change from this proposed rapid scaling up of tree cover?

2.2.4. How is tree cover best extended and managed in ways that contribute to nature- based solutions and natural flood management?

2.2.5. How will the Wales National Forest foster the development of a foundational woodland economy and balance commercial forestry and climate and biodiversity objectives?

3. **Natural Resource Recovery and a Green Recovery.** Ministerial priorities include climate change, nature and biodiversity, tree planting and environment. We have also suggested this as a priority for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee.

3.1. Our climate and nature crisis is reflected in a natural resource crisis in Wales, as summarised in NRW's 2020 State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR): "Today Wales faces the seemingly unbridgeable obstacle of how to deliver the transformative change needed to meet the challenge of the nature and climate emergencies." ([NRW 2020 SoNaRR Executive Summary, page 16](#)) .

3.2. Why is this important? There is a decline in the capacity and resilience of Welsh landscapes to maintain soil fertility, store carbon, hold back flooding, provide clean water and support nature. Risks of drought, fire, flood and pest attack and species decline are all increasing.

3.2.1. What investment is needed to introduce more sustainable, climate resilient and nature positive farming, forestry and nature conservation practices across

Wales? Examples include practices such as agroforestry, improved slurry treatment, continuous cover forestry, and restoration of native peatlands and native woodlands.

3.2.2. What is the green jobs potential of this investment?

3.2.3. Will the proposed new Sustainable Farming Scheme deliver this and what are the implications of substantial change to land use and landscape? How can landowners, especially family farms, be supported to make the necessary adjustments?

3.2.4. What program do Ministers have to act at scale across Wales and with urgency, to reverse the current downward trends in biodiversity and environmental condition?

3.2.5. How will communities engage with landscape wide change?

3.2.6. Does NRW have the resources, powers, capacity and skills to support such a program?

4. **Liveable cities in the face of climate change.** Ministerial priorities include climate change, nature and biodiversity, tree planting, environment, transport, housing and town centre regeneration. We have also suggested this as a priority for the Local Government and Housing Committee.

4.1. Cities face increasingly serious heat waves, extreme weather events and flooding. Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 recognises that green space and tree cover are of paramount importance for managing impacts, supporting health and wellbeing and community regeneration. [Blog on urban trees as Infrastructure.](#)

4.2. The importance of green space has been further highlighted during the pandemic. This has raised the question of how benefits can be secured for the future and has exposed issues of inequality of access and the challenges of maintenance.

4.3. Why is this important? The Senedd and many local authorities have declared climate emergencies. Government and local authorities have a responsibility to protect communities from the dangerous impacts of climate change. Greenspace and tree cover makes cities more liveable and there is now a need and opportunity to reverse years of disinvestment and inequality. The most important component, mature tree cover, is in decline. Withholding investment will increase risks and costs, and fail to protect community wellbeing.

4.3.1. What progress are Ministers and local authorities making to protect and develop green infrastructure as a core tool for the delivery of their wellbeing and decarbonisation plans?

4.3.2. How are Government and local government working with communities to address green space inequality and make best use of green space to mitigate the effects of severe heat waves and storms?

4.3.3. What policies, targets and resources will Government introduce to achieve these objectives?

4.3.4. What are the implications that arise for the siting and design of housing and transport developments?

Other subjects that we suggest the Committee might like to prioritise over the next 12-18 months.

**5. Future Generations Legacy:** We have also suggested this as a priority for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee and the Local Government and Housing Committee.

5.1. The Senedd's Sustainable Development duty and the Well-being of Future Generations Act provide Wales with a UK and world leading framework.

5.2. What choices and decisions will those being born this year face in 2050, and what will be their view of the decisions made by 6th Senedd and its Ministers?

5.2.1. How are Ministers using opportunities to engage young people in climate and environmental issues, raise eco-literacy and address climate change anxiety? (as highlighted by Delyth Jewell MS: BBC coverage – [Climate change anxiety – young people feel hopeless](#)).

5.2.2. What opportunities are offered by Welsh Government initiatives including Plant! and the Wales National Forest and by activities such as outdoor classrooms, community tree nurseries and tree planting?

**6. Coed Cadw – the Woodland Trust: Our expertise and interest.**

6.1. Coed Cadw - the Woodland Trust is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity, working for a UK rich in native woods and trees, for people and wildlife. In Wales we have 26,000 supporters, employ 24 staff and work with some 155 volunteers.

6.2. In Wales we own and manage 3,000 hectares in 121 woods including ancient woodlands, woodlands under restoration and recently planted woodlands. In managing this estate we purchase each year services to the value of more than £1 million from contractors and suppliers.

6.3. Our wider work includes engaging with the public through site-based, media and campaign activity, supporting other organisations and landowners to carry out woodland creation and restoration work, and participating in partnerships such as the Celtic Oakwoods Project.

6.4. Our suggestions on policy responses and opportunities are summarised in our [2021 Manifesto for the Welsh Parliament Elections](#).