

Paper from Sir David Henshaw, Chair of Natural Resources Wales, and Chair of the Green Recovery Group, following the Committee's annual scrutiny of Natural Resources Wales at its meeting of 20 January 2022: update on the work of the Green Recovery Group

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee Green Recovery Group Update February 2022

This paper provides an update on the work of the Green Recovery Group.

1.0 Background

The Green Recovery Task and Finish Group was convened in May 2020 to identify priorities for action for a green recovery with social justice as a guiding principle. They were also tasked to develop a shared plan to stabilise the environment third sector. The Group brought together a broad range of strategic multi-agency partners to develop and support the implementation of collective priorities, framed around the recovery from the pandemic.

A [Priorities for Action Report](#) identified a range practical actions based on a 'call for ideas' with a total of £5.3m allocated, primarily through the WLGA to local authorities and a selection of smaller projects. Money allocated, included assisting with ash die back (felling and replanting schemes), biodiversity projects and wildflower planting. Significant effort was made to work in partnership with community groups and Local Nature Partnerships (LNP). Some innovative approaches were taken, with input from a range of LA ecologists, biodiversity, parks officers etc., and oversight from Environment directors. The WLGA and LAs believe that the use of the Green Recovery funding to deliver priority themes has been extremely successful.

The ['Green Recovery: Supporting the environmental sector in Wales'](#) report was published, which focuses on the recommendations of research to inform the development of a plan to stabilise the environment third sector. Based on findings from this report, the Group helped to secure 900K of funding through the NHLF to support Sector Sustainability in a variety of areas, including support for organisational development such as EDI training.

The proposal for a National Nature Service (NNS) has also arisen from the outputs of the group. The NNS will be a Wales-wide system that mobilises people in support of nature recovery, acting as a platform that links people of all ages with opportunities for nature-based training, apprenticeships, employment, enterprise and volunteering.

1.0 Review of Environment Sector Report and the Priorities Report

The Funding Centre have been procured to review progress made against both the ['Green Recovery: Supporting the environmental sector in Wales'](#) report and the [Priorities for Action Report](#).

The reviews will highlight new trends and initiatives that have emerged over the past year, and will review progress against the recommendations made in the ['Green Recovery: Supporting the environmental sector in Wales'](#) report and identify progress and barriers to progress made against the [Priorities for Action Report](#). A rapid review of the evidence and a series of interviews with key representatives will be used to collate new short, medium, and long-term objectives.

The report reviews will be complete by March 2022.

2.0 The Green Recovery Group

The Group have agreed to continue, with a commitment to build on the energy, momentum and collective power gained from the past year. The Chair has met with the Deputy Minister for Climate Change and he is in support of the group continuing. The Group will continue to be convened by NRW and directed by the membership.

The group continues to develop its work programme and will analyse the recommendations and actions from the reviews (point 1.0 above) to develop a prioritised action response, defining the input and/or commissioning requirements to inform the need for resources. This analysis will complete in May 2022 and will provide us with the insight to update the Committee within the next six months as set out in the 'Priorities for the Sixth Senedd' paper (Jan 2022).

3.0 Creation of a 'Green Recovery: Environment Sector Group'

A joint NRW and Welsh Government group ('Green Recovery – Welsh Environment Sector') has been established with representatives from the sector and funders, to ensure the ability of the sector to meaningfully engage and collaborate through effective governance, shared risk, and co-production. This Group will be Chaired by Professor Steve Ormerod and will report into the Green Recovery Group.

4.0 National Nature Service (NNS)

Representatives met with the Deputy Minister (DM) in November to seek support for the progression of the NNS in Wales. The DM encouraged the team to focus on developing and describing potential demonstrator projects, to assure him of the benefits of supporting a NNS. Subsequently, together with the Valleys Regional Park (VRP) a detailed 'VRP as an early adopter of NNS' paper has been produced, setting out a range of activities where ambitions for a NNS across the region could be realised, outlining potential scenarios based on four levels of available funding. Other organisations on the 'early adopter' pathway are Dwr Cymru, Snowdonia National Park, RSPB Cymru, North Wales Regional Skills Partnership, Natural Resources Wales, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and Pembrokeshire Council, The Future Generations Leadership Academy.

The NNS team have now written to the DM to ask for a statement of Welsh Government's support for, and interest in, building a NNS in Wales. This will boost prospects to secure funding from foundations for the continuing co-design, development and testing of the NNS proposition in Wales. The NNS team will now build on the substantial practical investment already made, with the next steps including the convening of a strategic leadership group, involving those people and organisations who have a practical commitment to the work and to prepare bids for funding.

5.0 Blue Recovery work from WMAAG

The Blue Recovery proposals have been developed and taken forward through the Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (WMAAG) - the stakeholder group for the marine environment. There are obvious clear links between the blue and green recovery, and as such we must maximise transparency as we progress.

Following a paper that was submitted to the Minister in July and a subsequent meeting held in September, officials were instructed to work with stakeholders on developing the approach further. A workshop was held in early December and a follow up session is planned for February 16th.

The Minister is considering a proposal that there should be a Ministerial appointment to lead this work going forward with stakeholders.