

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee, June 2022

Green Recovery Group Update

1. This paper provides an update on the work of the Green Recovery Group and progress made on addressing the priorities and recommendations in:
 - Green Recovery: [Priorities for Action Report](#). Including an update on the National Nature Service.
 - [Green Recovery: Supporting the environmental sector in Wales](#)

The paper sets out the lessons learnt and the proposed next steps for the work of the Group.

Background

2. In May 2020, Lesley Griffiths, the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs asked Sir David Henshaw to convene a Green Recovery Task and Finish Group to identify priorities for action for a green recovery from the covid pandemic with social justice as a guiding principle, as well as develop a shared plan to stabilise the environment third sector.
3. The work reported to the Minister's stakeholder roundtable, which included senior representatives from the food, farming and fisheries sectors alongside environment third sector organisations, local authorities and NRW. Recognising that the membership at the roundtable included all the sector representatives, there was a conscious decision to bring together different perspectives to help shape the opportunity. A broad range of senior leaders from the public, private and third sector agreed to be involved (see Appendix 1). The group was set up to convene collective action, and test ways of working in an agile manner. It was recognised that it was not a representative group, but one that used their connections to build stronger networks and links to get things done.
4. The group worked together through the summer and early autumn of 2020, setting out a call for 'good ideas' which resulted in 168 proposals being submitted. This culminated in the publication of the two reports in early November 2020. These reports led to the identification and allocation of over £6m of financial support by Welsh Government to support priority areas as well as a specific grant programme to stabilise the environment sector. To build on the momentum, members of the group agreed to create a Delivery Partnership with staff resources committed to support the next phase of work.
5. One of the high profile "good idea" proposals was the creation of a National Nature Service (NNS). Staff from the Delivery Partnership supported the development of this idea, facilitating a number of engagement events and communications involving nearly 200 people. A concept note has been endorsed by Welsh Government and £166,598 released to support the development of a detailed business case. The ambition for the NNS is truly aligned with the Groups definition of a Green and Just Recovery, mobilising people across Wales 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.
6. The group has also created links to the work of Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (WMAAG) on Blue Recovery. The Group has been endorsed by the Minister for Climate Change to continue development of the approach across three key enablers: Ocean Literacy, Sustainable Investment and Building Capacity.

Review of progress made against the Reports

7. In the Spring of 2022, NRW procured the Funding Centre to review progress made against the Priorities for Action Report and the Green Recovery: Supporting the environmental sector in Wales Report. As well as a desk based rapid review of the evidence, the Funding Centre has interviewed a wide range of stakeholders to identify successes and any new barriers or challenges faced by organisations in getting stuff done.
8. The new Report includes (See Annex 1 for the Full Funding Centre Report – Working Draft):
 - A review of new trends and initiatives, identifying any significant changes (since Autumn 2020) to the delivery landscape.
 - Review of progress made on projects within the Priorities for Action Report and challenges they have encountered in moving things forward.
 - Review of the current “state” of the environment sector in Wales and any new issues that have emerged since the publication of the Green Recovery: Supporting the environmental sector in Wales report.
 - Conclusions and recommendations.
9. The Funding Centre conclude, there remains a shared ambition for a green and just recovery, and strong support for the principle of developing activity around a series of Priorities for Action. Nevertheless, stakeholders are concerned that the opportunity to act may be slipping away as the cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine rise to prominence, and as such want to see a greater sense of urgency brought to the Green Recovery Group. The Funding Centre research confirms that the eNGOs still require support to safeguard their resilience. Investing in the sector and creating a new dynamic with funders and policy makers, were highlighted as being factors that could unlock the potential of the sector to take an active lead in delivering against the ambitions set for a green and just recovery.

Green Recovery: [Priorities for Action Report](#)

10. The Green Recovery: Priorities for Action Report summarised a range of prioritised practical actions that could be taken forward in the short and medium term as part of Wales’ recovery from the pandemic. Following an open ‘call for ideas’, 168 varied proposals were received from community groups, social enterprises, charities, public bodies, private companies, environmental groups and individuals across Wales. The organisations included some with a clear environment focus, as well as many others with a focus on jobs and skills creation, climate change mitigation and adaptation. ‘Ideas’ showed a range of actions that were highly diverse in scale, location, ambition and readiness.
11. The proposals were analysed and selected into “priority one” and “priority two” projects across three broad strands of activity that would be required to address the climate and nature emergencies and social justice.

Priority Action	Priority One Projects	Priority Two Projects
Nature Based Solutions Actions that focus on a range of ecosystems on land and sea.	7	8
Transforming our socio-economic systems Creating a circular economy that supports nature, creates opportunities for jobs and skills development.	33	35
Enablers of the Green Recovery Skills, apprenticeships and procurement	9	5
Totals	49	48

12. In addition to creating the Priorities for Action list, the report also highlighted the potential for the group to use its convening power to facilitate and encourage high-level actions that would “stimulate discussion and drive action”.
13. As part of the Groups commitment to supporting the Priorities for Action, the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership was established. With individuals from organisations represented on the Green Recovery Group, they committed time and resources to hold 1-to-1 sessions to explore state of readiness of proposals and support requirements; hosted events to facilitate opportunities for co-production; and developed the ambition and business cases for proposals. It is important to recognise the Teams work and effort to stimulate, facilitate and support progress and ‘move the dial’, getting proposals ready to move to the next stage of delivery.
14. The Funding Centre have not sought to create a detailed analysis of every submission. Given the diverse scale and nature of each proposal, as well as the varied nature of the proposing organisations, this would not have been practical within timescales. However, it was stated that it would be useful to create some way of monitoring progress on individual projects in future to allow effective co-ordination and communication of activity.
15. The report indicates that a significant number of projects have progressed to some degree. Some major strategic schemes, such as the National Nature Service, have been actively developed while a larger number of other schemes have sought to trial or pilot their Priority for Action idea, accessing smaller scale funding, or resourcing activity from within existing budgets. Given the absence of a clear funding stream for the Priorities for Action Proposals, to see this level of progress is to be applauded and reflects the level of commitment and ingenuity of individuals and organisations to act on this agenda.
16. Other Priorities for Action proposals have not progressed. Whilst all organisations have continued to develop their thinking around those proposals and believe that the case for change remains strong, they referenced some significant barriers that have prevented substantive progress. A lack of finance and capacity were predictably high on that list of barriers however, responses also highlighted a lack of leadership and clarity as being equally problematic.
17. Some highlights of progress made against the Priorities for Action report include:
18. ***Supporting the allocation of £5.3m of support from Welsh Government.***

Due to end of year financial pressures, it was prudently chosen to use established mechanisms to facilitate spend, with allocation made through: the Wales Local Government Association (WLGA) to Local Authorities; the National Parks; and a selection of smaller projects. It was recognised that this was not ideal, but tactical to ensure we supported green recovery work on the ground in a timely manner. The WLGA and Local Authorities believe that the use of the Green Recovery funding to deliver priority themes was extremely successful.
19. ***The proposal for a National Nature Service (NNS).***
 - a) As a Priority One project the Delivery Partnership helped initiate development for a National Nature Service (NNS) in early 2021.
 - b) The proposal has been developed collaboratively and has drawn upon the extensive bank of evidence and ideas that stakeholders have generated and continue to generate. A wide range of individuals, organisations and networks across all sectors have engaged with the process, including: 3rd sector organisations involved in delivering a range of environmental, social, economic and cultural programmes; several local authorities and Local Nature Partnerships; various departments in Welsh Government; Natural Resources Wales; National Parks and AONBs; education and training providers including colleges and Lantra; youth organisations; business organisations; farming and forestry organisations.

- c) Co-ordinating work has been carried out by Food Farming and Countryside Commission and Future Generations Commissioners Office with input from Peter Davies (Chair of the Welsh Council Voluntary Action; Chair of the Wales Marine Action & Advisory Group (WMAAG)).
- d) The NNS will provide pathways for people to enter and work in green jobs, to ensure the skills and training pipelines are in place to meet the likely supply of jobs related to the climate and nature emergencies. In doing this, the aim is also to contribute to kickstarting the shift from an 'environmental sector' to an economy that's green at its core; and deliver broader benefits to individuals and community well-being. The NNS will act as a platform to help address the skills shortage in relation to green skills, linking people of all ages with opportunities for nature-based training, apprenticeships, employment, enterprise and volunteering.
- e) To demonstrate the NNS in practice, the Team have been working in partnership with the Valleys Regional Park (VRP) as an early adopter, setting out a range of activities where ambitions for a NNS across the region could be realised, outlining potential scenarios.
- f) A [Ministerial decision of support for a National Nature Service](#) pilot was made on 11th May, with £166,598 of revenue support towards the pilot of the National Nature Service in Wales. This will provide the capacity to further develop the proposal with a requirement to produce a full business plan for a Valleys Regional Park demonstration area within the first 6 months. The project team will seek to extend this to include a North Wales demonstration area.
- g) The Project Team aim to be in a position where the demonstration areas are ready to initiate in full at the start of next financial year, with a plan to move to an all Wales NNS within a timetable to be agreed.
- h) Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) will continue to lead action on the NNS with support from other providers, including RSPB. There are a series of planning meetings scheduled in June with stakeholders. An initial web site has been established <https://www.gwasanaethnaturcenedlaethol.cymru/>

20. Development of the Anglesey Green Spine project.

- a) The Glasffordd Môn is a vision to develop a continuous high quality green corridor for active travel (walking and cycling), wildlife and landscape across Ynys Môn from Newborough in the south to Amlwch in the north. The project is led by Menter Môn and supported by a Steering Group formed of key stakeholders.
- b) The experience of this project highlighted the complex nature of the funding landscape and exposed challenges imposed by funding process in getting good ideas off the ground. In March 2021, the project welcomed a £145k grant through Welsh Government for the initial phase, however this was bound by end of year process with no time for capital spend and required further discussions to agree a way forward that met the financial framework for grant expenditure but also permitted the best value outcome to be made from the grant. This highlighted the need for flexibility.
- c) The delivery of the vision for Glasffordd Môn is now underway with some capital works being undertaken, however, this is an ambitious project with over 40 potential projects identified, varying in type, location, scale, programme and cost. These have been shortlisted to an initial set of seven projects to take to concept stage and as the project progresses, funding will be an important consideration to achieve the vision.

21. Facilitation of connections and collaboration across Priorities for Action Projects.

- a) The Delivery Partnership facilitated collaborative events that brought together those with common interest across Priority Projects. These included the subjects of food and food systems, decarbonisation of homes and innovative finance. Participants across these sessions were keen to continue the conversations and there was definite will, energy and enthusiasm to work together around the themes and develop collaborative action. There was a specific call to use the Green Recovery process to amplify and shape this.

- b. An Innovative Finance Task and Finish Group was set up by Welsh Government who now convene the multi-stakeholder group looking at innovative finance for nature conservation in Wales.
22. The Funding Centre Report states that stakeholders still feel there is value to the Priorities for Action exercise and the leadership and challenge provided by the Green Recovery Group. The power to endorse ideas and convene collaborative activity was highly valued, injecting clear strategic leadership and impetus to the agenda.

Green Recovery: [Supporting the Environmental Sector in Wales](#) Report

23. The Green Recovery: Supporting the Environmental Sector in Wales Report examined the stability and resilience of the environmental sector in Wales and aimed to inform the wider discussion about how best to support the sector to create opportunities for a truly 'green recovery'. The report was completed by independent research consultants, The Funding Centre. The report looked at the stability and resilience of the sector pre-COVID and then explored key challenges, opportunities and support priorities for eNGOs as they worked through and started to look beyond the pandemic.
24. Based on findings from this report, at the beginning of 2021, Welsh Government secured £900K of funding for distribution through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to support sector sustainability. Nineteen Grants were made to a broad range of eNGOs and sector support bodies to deliver a very diverse mix of interventions. Activity included improving consultation with supporters and the public, fundraising training and support, project development, developing influencing skills, business planning and network development. Despite the very short window of time in which the funding had to be spent, it was extremely well received and the evaluation from projects was positive.
25. As part of this funded activity, Wales Environment Link delivered a programme of training to members with particularly strong focus on Diversity and Inclusion training. WEL also commissioned a report into innovative funding for the environmental sector to better understand emerging trends in generating funds as well as to signpost opportunities that may be underexploited.
26. At the start of the pandemic WG and NRW moved quickly to establish fora with the environment sector to share insights and emerging issues. This met through 2020 and 2021 and has now evolved into the Enabling the Environment Sector (EES) Group, Chaired by Professor Steve Ormerod which was established in March 2022. With representatives from eNGOs and funding bodies the new group has a clear focus on building the resilience, capacity and impact of the sector.
27. The review by the Funding Centre in 2022 recognises that the conclusions and recommendations from the 2020 report remain equally valid in 2022. The eNGO sector still requires support to build the resilience, capacity and impact of the sector. The creation of the Enabling the Environment Sector Group is seen as positive step

Headline Recommendations from the Funding Centre Report 2022

28. The Recommendations below are taken from the 2022 report by the Funding Centre and relate to the work on Priorities for Action for a green and just recovery and the resilience of the environment sector. More specific commentary and suggestions are included within the body of the report and its detailed recommendations.
- 29. *Keep developing and investing in the Green and Just Recovery model***
- a) The highly ambitious and collaborative model that the Green Recovery Group is developing has enormous merit. The process is imperfect, but the intention has widespread support and real potential. eNGOs are demanding a new way of working with funders and other stakeholders that is

more collaborative and has co-production at its heart. This approach must be continually developed and refined, and successes and challenges shared openly and honestly with all those involved.

- b) The ability of the Green Recovery Group to connect different sectors and to bring disparate stakeholders together is clearly working in part. This ability to convene is becoming increasingly urgent as we need to work to address the immediate demands of social justice whilst accelerating action on climate and nature. It therefore needs to be resourced properly and its status clarified. Ensuring that the Group is fully representative of key stakeholder groups should also be a priority.

30. Stay connected with funders

- a) The Green Recovery Group can assess what additional funding and resource may be made available to actively support those Priorities for Action proposals that have the greatest potential for delivery at scale and the achievement of major impact. It can then influence and work with funders consistently to help direct resource to where it is needed.
- b) The Enabling the Environment Sector Group has the ability to influence funders to collaborate where necessary and to meet the needs of the eNGO sector with targeted funding. This approach worked effectively for short-term, crisis funding but can be developed as an approach.

31. Develop funding models and mechanisms

- a) Work is already underway to explore how different approaches to funding environmental projects can work. This is a very positive move, and that work needs to be developed further as the funding environment tightens and the costs of living crisis filters through to the revenues of eNGOs and the private sector bodies working to affect the green and just recovery. The Green Recovery Group can play a key role in keeping the conversations alive and injecting a sense of urgency.
- b) Core funding remains the highest concern for eNGOs, who are essential partners in driving the recovery. This issue has been explored by many funders over the last 18 months and public sector funders, in particular, are trying to address the challenge within the understandable constraints of public funding. Excellent progress has been made in increasing the length of grant funding contracts from Welsh Government and equal attention now needs to be given to clarifying understanding of core funding as there are many different interpretations of what it means.

32. Develop and test big ideas

- a) The Green Recovery Group should work with funders to develop a package of support to help progress an identified list of pilot projects that draw on the ideas listed in the Priorities for Action report.
- b) The Green Recovery Group should explore the potential to guide support to a modest number of priority pilot projects that could provide a vehicle for testing some of the ambitious and innovative proposals that came forward through the Priorities for Action proposal process. This would generate momentum and help stakeholders to coalesce around some 'big ideas'

33. Communicate and share

- a) Greater focus needs to be given to communicating and sharing the work of the Green Recovery Group. More regular, visible and up to date information needs to be shared widely and all stakeholders should be encouraged to share their successes and challenges. So much good work is being done through the Green Recovery Group without being communicated to the wider community

34. Keep working on resilience

- a) The eNGO sector is still vulnerable and there remain significant discrepancies in terms of capacity between organisations. Their knowledge, their expertise and their reach into communities will be essential if the green and just recovery is going to succeed. They must therefore be supported and encouraged in strengthening their capacity and making their organisations fit for the task in hand.

Next Steps for the Green Recovery Group

35. The Group has continuously reviewed its purpose and position to remain relevant in addressing the needs of a green and just recovery. The Group established itself as a “Group committed to breaking down traditional silos and ways of working, to build on the momentum created through the Covid-19 response, and to work collaboratively and creatively to develop new delivery approaches and models to get things done”.
36. Early in 2022 the Group made a collective agreement to continue, with a commitment to build on the energy, momentum and collective power gained from the previous 18 months. There was a shared desire to continue to utilise that collective power to connect different sectors, drive transformative solutions, unblock barriers and bring on innovative new ideas that could be fast tracked. The Group continue to be convened by NRW and directed by the membership.
37. The Group continues to develop its work programme and will analyse the recommendations and actions from the Funding Centre Report to develop a prioritised action response.
38. The group has recognised the gap in communication and has committed to addressing this.
39. The Green Recovery Group will continue to provide steer and support to the Enabling Environment Sector (EES) Group, chaired by Steve Ormerod. With representatives from eNGOs and funding bodies, the Group (see Appendix 2 for membership) has a clear focus on building the resilience, capacity and impact of the sector after the pandemic and to ensure that environment organisations can not only work together but are able to join in partnership with others in the public, private and third sectors. They will focus on:
 - evolving a strategic overview of grant funding in Wales in relation to environmental/nature outcomes
 - a prioritised action response to relevant recommendations within the new Funding Centre Report (2022)
 - and taking forward work of the Green Recovery Group on sustainable finance models to assist the sector in gaining, organising, and managing investment.

APPENDIX 1: Membership at the inception of the Green Recovery Task and Finish Group (May 2020)

Membership of the Green Recovery Task and Finish Group took existing commitments and membership of individuals in other established fora into account, invitations were extended to those representatives of other sectors across Wales in an effort to draw in additional voices and contributions.

The membership at the inception of the Green Recovery Task and Finish Group included:

- Justin Albert, Director of Wales National Trust
- Peter Davies, Chair of the Welsh Council Voluntary Action; Chair of the Wales Marine Action & Advisory Group (WMAAG)
- Sophie Howe, The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
- Chris Johnes, Chief Executive of Building Communities Trust Wales
- Lesley Jones, Chief Executive of Keep Wales Tidy
- Prof Calvin Jones, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University
- David Lea-Wilson, Director of Halen Môn, LPM Community Woodland Group
- Cllr Andrew Morgan, Leader Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), supported by Tim Peppin, WLGA
- Peter Perry, Chief Executive of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
- Sue Pritchard, Chief Executive of the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission
- Vivienne Sugar, Chair of the Bevan Foundation
- Cathy Weatherup, Chief Medical Officer, Welsh Government

Members of the group capitalised on their own extensive networks to inform the work:

- Peter Davies has worked with the Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (WMAAG)
- Chris Johnes linked up with members of the Community Sector Network, which includes local community organisations across Wales, and sought ideas of local grassroots initiatives which could help progress the green recovery.
- Lesley Jones has worked with the Wales Environment Link (WEL) Green Recovery Group and the wider network of third sector environment groups.
- The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales held a roundtable event to bring the groups and networks focussed on Covid-19 recovery together
- The WLGA has been working with local authorities to develop a programme of activity to support the economic recovery whilst also generating social and environmental benefits.
- NRW Board member Howard Davies has provided specific input and steer to consultants reporting on stabilising the environment third sector.

APPENDIX 2: Membership of the Enabling the Environment Sector (EES) Group (June 2022)

Name	Title and Organisation
Steve Ormerod (Chair)	Board Member (NRW)
Bronia Bendall (Secretariat)	Senior Specialist: Green Recovery (NRW)
Matthew Brown	Director of Operations (WCVA)
Gareth Cunningham	Marine Conservation Society
Joanne Doyle	Strategic Approaches and Programmes Team Leader (NRW)
Julie Hughes	Wales Development Officer (National Lottery Heritage Fund)
Michele Hunt	Head of Funding Development (RSPB)
Lesley Jones	CEO (Keep Wales Tidy)
Eileen Kinsman	Interim Co CEO (Centre for Alternative Technology)
Julia Korn	Senior Manager, Business (PONT)
Gail Merriman	Head of Green Recovery (Welsh Government)
John Rose	Wales Director (National Lottery Community Fund)
Rachel Sharp	CEO (Wildlife Trusts Wales)
Alice Teague	Deputy Director, Marine (Welsh Government)
Karen Whitfield	Joint Director (WEL)
Sarah Williams	Head of Corporate Strategy and Performance Management (NRW)