

ROCP 22, Campaign for National Parks

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Adolygiad o flaenoriaethau'r Pwyllgor ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd | Review of the Committee's priorities for the Sixth Senedd

Ymateb gan Ymgyrch dros Barciau Cenedlaethol | Evidence from Campaign for National Parks

Your views

1. What are your views on the Committee's three strategic priorities: Climate Change; Sustainable Communities; and Protecting and enhancing the natural environment?

The committee's strategic priorities remain vitally important when considering how Welsh Government is going to deliver on its commitment to net zero by 2050. The priorities still reflect the cross-cutting nature of the topics outlined in the committee's priority document.

2. To what extent are the Committee's three strategic priorities still relevant, reflecting on social, economic and environmental developments since they were set at the start of the Sixth Senedd?

As we reach the middle of the term of government, this agenda has only become increasingly pressing when considering the cost of living crisis and the impact of rising energy prices.

As budgets become ever more constrained, it is important to recognise the important role positive action on climate, nature and sustainable development can have for the Welsh economy.

Investment still needs to be made today to ensure a just and sustainable tomorrow, so it is vitally important that the committee continues to press for the appropriate levels of investment in these priority areas.

3. What are your view on the Committee's detailed priorities/outline programme of work for Years 3 to 5 of the Sixth Senedd (set out in its report, Priorities for the Sixth Senedd?)

A key topic which is not mentioned in the programme of work for years 3-5 is the outlined proposals for a new National Park in North-East Wales.

The development of a new National Park cuts across all three themes of the committee, and whilst the public consultation for the proposed area is likely to arrive in autumn 2024, we believe that the committee also has an important role to play in scrutinising how the new National Park could and should deliver on the key priorities set out across all themes.

We would encourage the committee to include an inquiry into the new National Park in their future work programme.

We are pleased to see a focus on financial support for the agriculture sector included in your work programme as we move toward the conclusion of the Basic Payments System in 2025. We believe that the Sustainable Farming Scheme is a top priority, and it needs to be as robust and progressive as possible if we are to avert further biodiversity and habitat loss within our National Parks.

We would like to see the committee take a keen interest in the development of the scheme, including the necessity of the SFS to engage, recognise and incentivise Designated Landscapes to deliver the 3rd recommendation in the Biodiversity Deep Dive.

The focus on environmental governance and statutory biodiversity targets is also welcome in this next period, particularly with the most recent calls for a Nature Positive Bill to enshrine a commitment to a Nature Positive Wales in law which is underpinned by legally binding nature recovery targets.

The Welsh Government's commitment to a white paper is a step in the right direction, but the committee should also be looking to scrutinise this white paper in detail with a view to establishing a Nature Positive Bill.

4. To what extent are the Committee's detailed priorities/outline programme of work still relevant, reflecting on social, economic and environmental developments since they were set at the start of the Sixth Senedd?

In years 3-5 a continued focus needs to be maintained on decarbonising housing and renewable energy as these topics remain extremely relevant to future prosperity and net zero targets.

Planning capacity remains a key concern in National Parks as does the availability

of sustainable transport options for rural communities and visitors to the countryside and the support for sustainable communities through measures such as visitor levies and reducing the number of second homes.

We remain concerned about the capacity of Natural Resources Wales to deliver on the multitude of issues and priorities facing the country and additional scrutiny is required in this area.

We believe that these topics, as identified in the first two years of work, should continue into the 3-5 year work programme.

5. Are there any other matters related to the Committee's priorities/work programme/ways of working that you would like to comment on?

Not at this time.

6. Other information

No response.
