



Evidence paper for Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs for General Scrutiny at CCEI Committee

26/06/24

Information provided to aid the Committee in advance of the Minister's attendance for General Scrutiny on 26 June.

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1. Tree Planting

Background

1. We recognise a step change in woodland creation is needed to help mitigate climate change. We want farmers to remain central to tree planting plans by integrating woodland as part of their farms businesses while continuing to produce high quality food.
2. Forestry Research statistics on tree planting published in September 2023 show our tree planting for 2022/23 was 1,190 hectares, twice that of the year before (620 hectares). Statistics are being compiled for this year, but we expect them to show around 600 hectares of woodland creation for 2023/24. A rapid increase is required to meet the Climate Change Committee's recommendation of 43,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030.

Current Position

3. There is no reason for anyone who wants to plant woodlands to delay, and we will continue to encourage farmers and land managers to apply for funding through our Woodland Planning and Creation Schemes.
4. We have committed funding to support farmers and landowners to create woodland through our new woodland creation schemes. These include a new Small Grants scheme which provides a simpler route for farmers to plant small areas of trees. Following a review and in response to feedback from the sector, the rates for planting trees, and for fencing and gates were increased in line with 2023 costs, which is a substantial uplift on the previous rates. Maintenance payments were also increased and front loaded in recognition of the higher costs in the early years after planting. We will continue to look for ways to make our application processes easier.
5. Our woodlands and forest products store 1.49 million tonnes of CO₂. Together they account for 84% of carbon sinks from land use. Planting trees can also have a range of other benefits, enhancing biodiversity, providing shelter for livestock in hot weather, helping prevent flooding or providing a source of timber for local markets and offering a diversified income stream for farm businesses.

Next Steps

6. Responses to the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) consultation are currently being analysed and we are aware there was a particular focus on the tree planting proposals. We are continuing to look at options within the SFS to integrate tree planting on farms. We will also work with a wide range of landowners to create woodlands.
7. We are creating a National Forest for Wales which will both include areas of new woodland and help to restore and maintain some of Wales's irreplaceable ancient woodlands. In time it will form a connected network of high-quality woodlands running throughout Wales.

2. Marine

Marine Conservation Zones

1. The enhancement of our Marine Protected Area (MPA) network remains a commitment as part of the MPA Network Completion Programme. Marine Conservation Zones are a significant element of this, by addressing the shortfalls in protected features which have been identified. At present, Welsh Government are working with our Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies to develop proposed sites and as part of this process and it is critical these sites are rigorously assessed for their potential socio-economic impacts, as expected in the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009). Welsh Government have sought to appoint a contractor to undertake this as part of a Regulatory Impact Assessment, however, at present a contractor has not been appointed.

Welsh Seabird Conservation Strategy

2. The Welsh Seabird Conservation Strategy is currently being developed with support from key stakeholders and our Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies and is expected to be published in the second half of 2024. The Strategy will cover 28 key species of seabirds in Wales and will be underpinned by individual seabird ecological assessments and sensitivity assessments, to assist with identifying recommendations. The sensitivity assessments will be based on perceived vulnerability to identified pressures. Stakeholders will be invited to identify actions to deliver the recommendations.

Marine Protected Areas Management

3. Welsh Government continue support actions to improve management of the Welsh MPA network, through the MPA Management Grant Scheme. To date, close to £1million has been awarded in grant funding to support actions across Wales since 2018. Previous actions have ranged from improving our understanding of climatic pressures to the network, the introduction of the bilingual Wales Coast Explorer app and more recently the establishment of a surveillance programme on Grassholm island to identify any introduction of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

4. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) remains an ever present pressure to seabird colonies across Wales and beyond. Last year, figures published show some seabird species in Wales have suffered significant declines in population, including gannet colonies (50% reduction), with further declines noted across gull and tern species. Welsh Government remain on alert and in close coordination with key stakeholders as migratory seabirds begin to return to their respective colonies across Wales. Presently, it is not clear whether species have been further impacted over winter months or if HPAI has returned.

Restoration Scheme for Saltmarsh and Seagrass

5. The restoration scheme for saltmarsh and seagrass habitats remains a key priority within the Programme for Government. I recognise the key benefits these habitats provide ranging from natural coastal protections, to increased biodiversity and

their ability to absorb and store carbon. At present, the Welsh Seagrass Network has been tasked with identifying a range of short/long term actions to present to Welsh Government as part of the scheme development.

MARINE PLANNING

Current Position

6. We have recently consulted on potential Strategic Resource Areas, or SRAs, for tidal stream energy. SRAs aim to identify and safeguard the availability of areas with potential to support future sustainable use by the sector. We are carefully considering responses received and we will publish a Summary of Responses in due course.

Next Steps

7. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, officials will work with stakeholders to develop proposals for SRAs for other sectors, including floating offshore wind.
8. Officials are working with UK Government and the Crown Estate, through its Whole of Seabed Programme, to support the development of offshore wind in appropriate locations.
9. Officials are working with stakeholders and NRW to develop marine planning guidance on opportunities for ecosystem enhancement and restoration.
10. We intend to commission independent review of marine planning. This review will consider how we can further develop our marine planning framework to provide greater spatial direction, balancing support for renewable energy with protecting the marine environment.
11. We are working with public authorities and others to understand and promote good practice in plan implementation.

Marine Licensing

12. The marine licensing process is a key tool for the sustainable management of Welsh seas, particularly the management of the marine protected area network in Wales.
13. In 2013, the Welsh Ministers delegated certain marine licensing functions to Natural Resources Wales, namely the administration and determination of marine licence applications whilst the Welsh Ministers retains functions relating to appeals and enforcement.
14. An independent review of marine licensing has been undertaken to consider where improvements could be made to the process. The review found no fundamental issue with the licensing process but concluded with a suite of recommendations aimed at delivery improvements.

15. Officials are working in partnership with NRW to develop and deliver a series of priority actions. These actions will result in overall improvements to the marine licensing process for all users.
16. NRW are hosting a 'meet the regulator' marine licencing event in June to help break down barriers and connect interested parties with the marine licensing team and Welsh Government policy officials.
17. Welsh Government are reviewing marine licencing exemptions to ensure the list of activities which are exempt from a marine licence is up to date.

Offshore wind

18. The Welsh Ministers have new powers under the Energy Act (2023) to introduce regulations for the environmental assessment of offshore wind. We are working with UK Government to understand how they intend to use powers granted the Secretary of State in relation to Welsh waters and how the Welsh Ministers may wish to use their powers alongside this.

Marine resilience and climate change

19. **Wales Coasts and Seas Partnership (CaSP Cymru).** We will continue to work with and support the Partnership to deliver on three focussed outcomes to support wider delivery for a resilient marine environment: improving ocean literacy; blue investment; and building capacity in the sectors. 2024 - 25 planned work includes:
 - Launching the Marine Resilience and Improvement of Natural Ecosystems (MARINE) Fund Cymru - a voluntary fund to support enhancement of the marine environment in Wales.
 - Publishing the Ocean Literacy Strategy for Wales, launching a Welsh network and online platform and delivering actions such as a pilot Festival of the Sea.
 - Increasing involvement of local communities in marine issues to identify solutions and projects, through actions including improved governance, increased diversity of representation for coastal and marine action, and skills and training development.
20. **Climate Change and Blue Carbon Policy.** Understanding the impacts of climate change on our marine and coastal habitats and the opportunities to increase their resilience is key to adapting to changes to our coasts and seas. Funding has been allocated to support the UK Blue Carbon Evidence Partnership and the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership, and a blue carbon forum for Wales will be established later this year to share information and knowledge, and to accelerate the already growing body of expertise and experience we have in Wales, to support future policy intervention and decision making.

3.Waste

Progress in Delivering the Circular Economy Strategy, Beyond Recycling

1. Our circular economy strategy, Beyond Recycling, outlines our we commitment to transition to a circular economy in delivering our aim to become a zero waste and net zero nation by 2050. The strategy was published in 2021, at an unprecedented time due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite that context, as this evidence paper shows, considerable progress has been made. This includes recycling rates having continued to increase despite the challenges faced during the pandemic, the development of the underpinning infrastructure having continued with the roll-out of re-use and repair facilities building on the continued progress on recycling, and the development and implementation of the new Workplace Recycling Regulations. Work has also continued on the areas being delivered in partnership across the four UK nations, including on the delivery of an Extended Responsibility Scheme for packaging and Deposit Return Scheme. In addition, in recognition of the progress during this period and leadership in the transition to the circular economy, Wales has been chosen this year to host the International Circular Economy Hotspot.

Circular Economy targets

2. In relation to the target of 70% recycling for waste from households, commercial and industrial businesses by 2025, the latest data held in each area is as follows:
 - Local Authority collected municipal waste 2022-23 – 65.7%¹
 - Waste-from-households 2022 – 56.7%²
 - Industrial waste 2018 – 69%³
 - Commercial waste 2018 – 64%⁴
 - Construction and demolition waste 2019 – 93%⁵
3. In terms of Local Authority collected municipal waste, 2022/23 figures show four Local Authorities already at or achieving the 2024/25 target of 70%, 13 Local Authorities having exceeded the 64% minimum target, with only five having failed to reach the target.
4. A range of actions are being taken to further increase recycling rates and work towards the target. This includes continuing the successful model of support to Local Authorities to help them to improve their performance, consisting of the

¹ <https://www.gov.wales/local-authority-municipal-waste-management-april-2022-march-2023>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-waste-data/uk-statistics-on-waste>

³ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/693534/survey-of-commerical-and-industrial-waste-generated-in-wales-2018.pdf>

⁴ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/693534/survey-of-commerical-and-industrial-waste-generated-in-wales-2018.pdf>

⁵ [2019 Wales construction and demolition waste arising survey \(naturalresources.wales\)](https://naturalresources.wales/media/693534/survey-of-commerical-and-industrial-waste-generated-in-wales-2018.pdf)

Sustainable Waste Management Grant, targeted capital funding, advice on performance improvement, and the delivery of the Be Mighty public awareness campaign. Most recently we have implemented the new Workplace Recycling Regulations 6 requiring workplaces to keep their key recyclable materials separate and for those to be collected separately, to improve the quantity and quality of recycling from non-domestic premises. In addition, we have rolled out the provision of advice and support to businesses by Business Wales.

5. For the 26% overall reduction in waste target, current data estimates show total waste at 7,552,000 tonnes compared to the 2006-7 baseline of 10,553,261 tonnes, a 28.4% reduction. There is also positive progress in respect of the objective of zero waste to landfill and the 2024-25 target of landfilling less than 5% of waste produced in Wales. The latest published landfill rates being:
 - Local Authority collected municipal waste – 1.6% in 2022-23⁷
 - Industrial and commercial waste – 11% in 2018⁸
 - Construction and demolition waste – 6% in 2019⁹

6. For our municipal waste it means that since devolution, the landfill rate has decreased from 95% in 1998 to 1.6%. With the Workplace Recycling Regulations now in place, it will further ensure that recyclable material is better captured for re-processing, thereby preventing that material from being landfilled. In addition, as part of the workplace recycling reforms, it includes a ban on all wood waste going to landfill which will further contribute to delivery against this target.

7. In relation to our target to reduce avoidable food waste there are several interventions being delivered to tackle food waste in Wales, including:
 - Separate household food waste collection having been successfully rolled out by all local authorities in Wales;
 - Workplaces now being required to separate food waste for collection as part of the Workplace Recycling reforms;
 - Funding FareShare Cymru to expand the redistribution of surplus food to community organisations;
 - Sustainability Food Clusters focus on resource efficiency and waste prevention in food and drink businesses;
 - Welsh Government’s Climate Action Wales campaign including tips about reducing food waste and making sustainable food choices;
 - The Welsh Government funded Be Mighty¹⁰ campaign focused on food waste prevention and a Welsh Government contribution to WRAP’s Love Food Hate Waste campaign; and,
 - Welsh Government support for the Courtauld 2030 voluntary agreement which brings together major retailers to help consumers reduce food waste.

⁶ [Workplace recycling | GOV.WALES](#)

⁷ <https://www.gov.wales/local-authority-municipal-waste-management-april-2022-march-2023>

⁸ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/693534/survey-of-commercial-and-industrial-waste-generated-in-wales-2018.pdf>

⁹ [2019 Wales construction and demolition waste arising survey \(naturalresources.wales\)](#)

¹⁰ [Save money and create Welsh power | Wales Recycles](#)

8. In addition, we are currently working with WRAP to develop the methodology to analyse and estimate food waste levels and compare them to the 2007 baseline.

Overview of Actions to Deliver Beyond Recycling

9. To support the delivery of our policies, funding has been put in place through the Circular Economy Fund for Business to help businesses adapt their processes to utilise recycled material and improve their resource efficiency and specialist support is provided by WRAP. In 2023-24, 19 businesses across Wales received funding from the CEF for business.
10. The Circular Economy Innovation Communities (CEIC)¹¹ programme and Applied Research for Circular Solutions¹² programme run by Cardiff Met University and Swansea University also offer funding for SMEs in Wales to innovate and adopt circular business solutions.
11. The transition to a circular economy also brings opportunities for digital innovation, as demonstrated by the delivery of the world's first full-town Digital Deposit Return Scheme trial in Brecon. The Scan|Recycle|Reward trial tested new technology which allows householders to scan drinks containers, with the trial delivering high levels of engagement with 18,794 rewards being claimed.
12. The development and implementation of the Workplace Recycling Regulations is another significant step forward which will further reduce the amount of waste sent to incineration and landfill, whilst crucially increasing the capture of high quality, source separated materials which can then be fed back into the Welsh economy. The Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for packaging and Deposit Return Scheme for Drinks containers being developed will further drive progress whilst also delivering wider benefits such as tackling litter.
13. Our partnership working with Local Authorities, which has been so pivotal to Wales becoming a recycling nation, also continues with the continuation of the range of support alongside joint working on the reforms being developed. This includes the update of the Blueprint¹³ best practice to support Local Authorities in delivering beyond 70% recycling.
14. A key element within the circular economy strategy is the commitment to repair and reuse, recognising that it is essential to go Beyond Recycling if we are to become a zero waste and net zero nation. By working with Repair Café Wales to expand the network of repair cafes to 137 communities across Wales, over 17,000 items having now been diverted from waste through their repairs. Investment into Bentyg Cymru has also supported the expansion of their network of 'Libraries of Things' to 20 sites across Wales, which has seen them lease their items 12,000 times.

¹¹ [Circular Economy | UK \(ceicwales.org.uk\)](https://ceicwales.org.uk)

¹² [Applied Research for Circular Solutions | Business Wales \(gov.wales\)](https://business.wales.gov.uk)

¹³ [Overview | Collection Blueprint \(collectionsblueprint.wales\)](https://collectionsblueprint.wales)

15. We have also invested over £4million in repair and re-use projects across Wales through the Circular Economy Fund. In collaboration with local authorities and third sector partners this has supported the creation of over 50 hubs. It also means that 18 of our 22 local authorities now have at least one re-use facility located at a Recycling Centre and we are working with the remaining four to ensure full coverage.
16. As the infrastructure expands, we are also raising awareness via public campaigns to support behaviour change, for example through the Climate Action Wales¹⁴ digital hub which provides advice and signposts citizens in Wales to information about sustainable daily choices.
17. Legislation is also being developed to introduce a mandatory digital waste tracking service to track the movement and destination of wastes. This will provide a comprehensive way to track what is happening to waste produced in the UK, which in turn will help regulation and compliance with the duty of care for waste and help tackle waste crime.
18. On 30 October 2023, the first phase of bans came into force under The Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023.
19. Regulations introducing civil sanctions for the bans took effect on 1 December 2023 and we are currently working on the next phases of bans, with the aim being to introduce Phase 2 by spring 2026. This will include bans on Single-use Plastic carrier bags, with exemptions including carrier bags for raw fish, meat or poultry and unpackaged food and the ban of Polystyrene lids for cups and takeaway food containers.
20. Following a recent four-nation consultation which closed on 25 November 2023, we are also prioritising bans for wet wipes containing plastic. A Government Response to the consultation and an accompanying Written Statement was published on 22 April 2024. This outlined the next steps and confirmed there would be an 18-month transition period across the UK to allow businesses to transition to plastic free wipes and minimise waste.

¹⁴ [Climate Action Wales \(gov.wales\)](https://climateaction.wales.gov.wales)

4.Environmental Governance

Interim Environmental Protection Assessor Wales

Background

1. In March 2021, Dr Nerys Llewelyn Jones was appointed as the Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales (IEPAW). Her role is to review concerns raised by the public about the functioning of environmental law and, where she considers the law is not functioning as it should, she may draft reports for Welsh Ministers setting out her recommendations.

Current position

2. The Interim Assessor's appointment has been extended by another year until 28 February 2025 and work is underway to recruit a successor.
3. Two Deputy IEPAW have been appointed, with the roles commenced 1 May 2024, this was a recommendation by the CCEI committee in their 2022 report.
4. The Interim Assessor is due to attend the CCEI committee meeting on the 11 July 2024.

Next steps

5. Consideration is being given for the IEPAW to establish a formal process to monitor the impact of its recommendations on Welsh Government decisions and environmental outcomes, another recommendation of the CCEI committee report in September 2023.
6. The third annual report is currently being finalised covering the period March 2023 – February 2024. The Forestry report and Hedgerow report are also in its final stages of preparation.

Environmental Governance, Principles and Biodiversity Targets Bill

7. A White Paper Consultation launched on 30th January setting out proposals to introduce a Bill into the Senedd to embed environmental principles into Welsh law, establish a new governance body to ensure robust oversight of environmental law by Welsh public authorities, as well as introduce a strategic nature recovery framework, which will include biodiversity targets.
8. The proposals reflect the ongoing need for sustained and long-term action to deliver the transformative change needed to address the Climate and Nature emergencies. In doing so, the White Paper reflects our commitment towards “a greener Wales to tackle climate change and the nature emergency” as set out in our Programme for Government. It will provide a key step in ensuring there is no drop in environmental quality or standards following our departure from the EU.

9. This approach is not simply an exercise in replacing structures and legislation which were in place whilst the UK was a member of the European Union. Our approach is tailored to the Welsh context to ensure we can secure the wide range of reforms we have prioritised to best support the environment.

Current Position

10. The Whitepaper consultation closed on 30th April. Analysis of the consultation responses is underway. A consultation report and a policy response to the consultation which will be published before summer recess.
11. Engagement with stakeholders continues, building on the extensive engagement during the consultation process.

Next Steps

12. Publication of the consultation analysis and policy response before the summer recess.
13. Work on the supporting Bill documentation including the Regulatory Impact Assessment.

5. Biodiversity

International

1. Wales along with the rest of the world is facing a nature emergency with the loss of biodiversity accelerating globally at unprecedented rates. In Wales one in six species is at risk of extinction. Welsh Government welcomed the ambitious Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) agreed at COP15, implementation is key though if these targets are to achieve their purpose.
2. 30x30 is part of the GBF, work is ongoing to implement the recommendations and action to deliver our 30x30 commitments resulting from the biodiversity deep dive. This includes work to develop our monitoring framework and exploring opportunities to ensure our protected sites are bigger, better and more connected.
3. In January we published a White Paper which sets out proposals to introduce a Bill into the Senedd that will embed environmental principles into Welsh law. This includes establishing a new governance body as well as biodiversity targets to complement those which we already have in place in Wales.
4. Alongside the Bill we will also be revising the Nature Recovery Action Plan, which will outline Wales' approach to delivering the new GBF targets, clarifies governance arrangements and establishes progress reporting requirements to ensure transparent and effective action plan delivery.

Investment

5. Our Nature Networks Programme (NNP) is central to this, which aims to improve the condition and connectivity of our terrestrial, freshwater and marine protected sites network. Whilst we will be investing over £17m in the NNP in 24/25 we are also increasing the delivery capacity of the National Peatland Action Programme so that we can restore more peatland across Wales. We are also continuing to support initiatives such as the LIFE projects, Natur am Byth, Local Places for Nature and Local Nature Partnerships.
6. The budget allocation for biodiversity in 2024-25 will allow the Welsh Government to continue to support the delivery of key actions against agreed international targets. I am pleased that despite financial pressures, we have been able to maintain the same overall level of funding as in 23/24. This will enable us to secure and build on that investment, ensuring continuity and delivery of projects aimed at protecting biodiversity, whilst also building additional capacity to develop future projects.

Sustainable Delivery Model for Biodiversity

7. Scaling up action to tackle biodiversity loss will require increased capacity and capability by our delivery partners alongside additional sources of funding.

8. We must ensure that any additional investment is high integrity and benefits local communities, supporting the delivery of our well-being goals.

Wider work

9. In addition to the above is the wider work Welsh Government does to address the pressures that continue to drive biodiversity loss such as improving water quality, reducing agricultural pollution and tackling the spread of invasive non-native species.
10. The Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) will be key in delivering our ambitions in relation to the 30x30 target and the nature emergency as well as delivering a key Sustainable Land Management objective under the Agriculture Act of increasing ecosystem resilience.
11. We have strongly mainstreamed biodiversity into Planning Policy Wales (PPW) which was recently updated to clarify our approach to achieving a net benefit for biodiversity by emphasising the importance of ecosystem resilience and the need to both avoid damage to biodiversity and ecosystems and secure enhancement following the stepwise approach. The update to chapter 6 of PPW also includes stronger protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
12. In addition, Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 introduces Policy 9 – Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure which highlights the importance of embedding biodiversity and ecosystem resilience into the planning process. We are currently using taskforce funding to employ a Senior Planning Project Manager to pilot the application of this policy on the Gwent Levels.

6. Countryside Access/Access to Green Spaces

Current Position

1. The Access Reform Programme (ARP) is seeking to improve access for outdoor recreation, using the public rights of way network and open access land in order to support the Welsh Government's policies in areas such as public health and tourism – it was originally announced in 2019.
2. The reforms are intended to give greater access to the outdoors for a wider range of activities, improve the processes that are currently associated with administering and managing public rights of way and access land whilst ensuring responsible recreation.
3. Implementation of the ARP has been impacted by the need to prioritise other areas, including for legislation. The main short-term focus is currently on secondary legislation and non-legislative measures delivering progress on the ground. These include input into the development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme, the delivery of the Access Improvement Grant (AIG), planning of recreational opportunities for the National Forest and the development and implementation of updated regulations for Local Access Forums. During 2022-25, the AIG will provide £5.6 million to Local and National Park Authorities that have public rights of way responsibilities.
4. During 2022-23, Welsh Government funded Natural Resources Wales to; refresh and update the Countryside Code, create a toolkit of resources that other organisations can use and create a film on the Dog Walking Code - this explains what dog owners need to do to have a safe and happy walk that doesn't harm wildlife, livestock or others.
5. During 2022-24, Welsh Government funded Natural Resources Wales to undertake a Behavioural Insights led review to understand and support the promotion of responsible recreation with dogs in the countryside and in particular reducing incidences of livestock worrying. The findings were then applied to the design, implementation and evaluation of a range of interventions targeting specific behaviours which can lead to incidents of livestock worrying. Three trial sites across North Wales were identified to test the interventions, with the final report expected by the end of June 24.

7. Air Quality

Delivery to date

1. A key Programme for Government commitment was to introduce a Clean Air Act for Wales, consistent with World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance and to extend the provision of air quality monitoring.
2. This has been delivered through the introduction of the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024 (the Act), which gained Royal Assent on 14 February 2024.
3. Work is underway to implement the Act's new responsibilities alongside broader commitments under the National Air Quality Strategy for Wales (Clean Air Plan for Wales). The Strategy sets out actions we will take to improve air quality and reduce the impacts of air pollution on human health, biodiversity, the natural environment, and our economy.
4. The Strategy is regularly monitored, with progress updates published annually (the next one is due to be published in June).

Actions

National Air Quality Targets

5. The Act contains two duties on Welsh Ministers to set targets for pollutants:
 - a target for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) by February 2027; and
 - a target by February 2030 for one of the following: ammonia; particulate matter (PM₁₀); ground level ozone; nitrogen dioxide; carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide.
6. We are building an evidence base to support the development of these new targets taking account of World Health Organisation air quality guidelines.

Promoting Awareness of Air Pollution

7. We are developing a delivery plan setting out how we will promote awareness of the risks to human health and the natural environment associated with air pollution, alongside ways of reducing and limiting air pollution. We plan to consult in autumn 2024 and publish the plan in spring 2025 in line with commitments made during scrutiny of the Act.

Vehicle Idling

8. We are developing regulations to set a penalty range for the offence of stationary vehicle idling. These regulations will be accompanied by guidance for local authorities and a broader awareness raising campaign for vehicle drivers. Consultation is proposed for autumn 2024, with publication of the guidance in spring alongside the coming into force of the regulations.

Smoke Control and Local Air Quality Management

9. We are producing guidance for local authorities regarding legislative changes to the existing smoke control and local air quality management regimes. These will be made by the Act when the relevant sections are brought into force. We plan to consult on these in autumn 2024 and publish the guidance in spring 2025 in line with commitments made during Senedd scrutiny of the Act.

Local Air Quality Management grant

10. The Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) grant scheme launched in March 2023 following two successful pilot rounds. The grant supports local authorities in undertaking a wide range of projects to improve local air quality and to engage communities in such delivery.
11. The funding round for the 2024/25 grant period opened in early May 2024, with applications due to be submitted by 04 June 2024. A total fund of £1,000,000 has been allocated, comprising of £750,000 revenue and £250,000 capital funding. Local authorities are expected to submit bids for projects that meet one or more of the following criteria: Prevention, Mitigation, Innovation.
12. During the 2024 grant year a review will be undertaken to ensure the grant successfully delivers against these criteria

Clean Air Advisory Panel for Wales

13. The Clean Air Advisory Panel provides independent and expert advice on air quality matters in Wales. This supports the development of evidence-based policy and legislation to deliver improved air quality for the benefit of human health and the natural environment.
14. The Panel is a multi-disciplinary group populated by experts in the fields of air quality, public health and the environment. It collectively provides advice and scientific evidence to support the development of the Clean Air Strategy, working collaboratively with officials, Welsh Ministers, other technical expert groups, public bodies and other key stakeholders. It is currently supporting the development of air quality targets for the reduction of air pollutant emissions. The Panel also advises the Welsh Government on future evidence needs and how these can be delivered.

Additional Priorities regarding improving Air Quality

Tackling roadside NO₂ exceedances in Wales

15. In November 2018 we published our Welsh Government supplemental plan to the UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations (2017), which set out a range of actions required to reduce concentrations of NO₂ around roads where levels are above legal limits. The Plan covers NO₂ exceedances in two specific roadside locations which are the responsibilities of Cardiff Council and Caerphilly County Borough Council respectively.

16. Officials continue to work closely with Cardiff Council to ensure it is taking all necessary steps to deliver requirements set out in a Ministerial legal direction, which required it to draft a plan to tackle NO₂ exceedances at A4161 Castle Street.
17. Caerphilly County Borough Council received funding of over £6 million to deliver the demolition of houses and relocation of a footpath at A472 Hafodyrynys. This course of action was identified by the evidence models which demonstrated improved dispersion of pollutants by removing the 'street canyon' effect. Caerphilly's plan to improve air quality in this area was completed in October 2023. The actions taken have resulted in compliance with legal limits for NO₂.

Reducing emissions from domestic burning of solid fuels

18. The National Air Quality Strategy set out actions to reduce emissions from domestic burning of solid fuels, including a commitment to consult on the prohibition of wet wood and bituminous house coal. The Welsh Government consulted on proposals to reduce emissions from the burning of solid fuels in 2021. The summary of responses to the consultation was published in October 2023.
19. We are further developing our research and evidence base regarding the contribution domestic burning makes to emissions' levels. This will inform the development of legislation to restrict the sale of bituminous house coal, wet wood and manufactured solid fuels. We intend to consult on draft regulations in early 2025 with a view to laying regulations in autumn 2025.

Investments

20. In terms of enhancing air quality monitoring in February 2023 the Welsh Government invested just over £1 million for an air quality incident management service across a three-year period. In addition, we are developing proposals for further enhancements to our national air quality monitoring networks and assessment capabilities. The associated scope, scale and timing of the proposals are subject to the specific national air quality targets to be introduced in due course.
21. The Cabinet Secretary for CCRA has agreed to allocate funding for Clean Air Day 2024. This is an annual, UK-wide air quality awareness day run by the charity Global Action Plan, held in June. Global Action Plan is an environmental charity focused on issues where the connection between the health of people and our planet is most tangible. The Welsh Government's Clean Air Plan for Wales: Healthy Air, Healthy Wales (August 2020) includes commitments to raise awareness about air pollution impacts, sources and mitigating actions. Supporting Clean Air Day has to date played a key part in helping deliver this commitment.

8. Sustainable Development/WFG Act

Sustainable Development

1. Wales' experience and leadership on sustainable development and the well-being of future generations agenda is distinctive and is held up as an example of how a small nation can re-wire how it works for a more sustainable future.
2. The Sustainable Development responsibility has existed since the foundations of the Welsh Government (National Assembly for Wales) as it derives from the original s.121 duty in the Government of Wales Act 1998, which became the s.79 duty in the Government of Wales Act 2006. This long-standing duty was strengthened and widened significantly through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

3. The Well-being of Future Generations Act gives a legally-binding common purpose – the seven well-being goals – for national government, local government, local health boards and other specified public bodies. The Act describes and defines seven well-being goals for Wales which specified public authorities are to seek to maximise their contribution to in order to improve the well-being of Wales both now and in the future. Public bodies are required to carry out sustainable development, and act in accordance with the sustainable development principle affecting what they do and how they work in order to advance Wales towards the seven well-being goals. The Well-being of Future Generation Act provides for better decision-making by ensuring that those public bodies take account of the long-term, help to prevent problems occurring or getting worse, take an integrated and collaborative approach, and considers and involves people of all ages.
4. Through the Act we have 50 national well-being of Wales indicators, and 17 national milestones for Wales with progress reported annually through a Well-being of Wales Report. This ensures that the difference being made to the well-being of Wales will be analysed and measured on an ongoing basis.
5. The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, who has responsibility for the implementation of the WFGA and relationship with the Future Generations Commissioner made a statement on 23 May providing an update on current action to deepen the understanding and application of the sustainable development in how the Welsh Government works. Welsh Ministers are subject to the requirements of the WFGA to carry out sustainable development and act in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

Extending the Well-being of Future Generations Act to a further eight public bodies

6. In May, the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice laid regulations to extend the well-being duty in the Act to the eight additional public bodies. These include Qualifications Wales, Social Care Wales, Health Education and Improvement Wales, the Welsh Revenue Authority, Transport for Wales, Centre for

Digital Public Services Ltd, Digital Health and Care Wales, and the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust. Subject to the approval of the Senedd, these public bodies will be subject to the well-being duty from 30 June 2024.

Sustainable Development Goals

7. The Sustainable Development Goals were agreed in the same year that the then National Assembly for Wales passed the WFGA. Agreed by all 193 UN member states in 2015, there are 17 goals, and 169 targets intended to be met by 2030, including ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, climate action and biodiversity. It provides a development framework for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.
8. In July 2023, the UN issued a progress report on the SDGs. It warned that progress on most goals has stalled, and, in some cases, gone into reverse. The UN General Assembly adopted the summit declaration to accelerate global progress on the SDGs in September 2023.
9. The UK Government published its international development white paper which set out the actions of the UKG under the Sustainable Development Goals.

Wales and the Sustainable Development Goals

10. We are the only country that has responded to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda by using legislation to drive the necessary action across Government and public institutions. The Well-being of Future Generations Act was developed against the backdrop of the development of, and negotiation for the SDGs, and our well-being goals are a translation of these goals by the people of Wales. The Well-being of Future Generation Act also established a legal link to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the globally responsible Wales well-being goal seeks to address the impact of actions taken within Wales, outside of Wales.
11. In 2019 the Welsh Government prepared a supplementary report to the UK Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals. This supplementary report showed how Wales was making its contribution to the global goals agenda, drawn heavily on our action under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

United Nations Futures Summit

12. In 2024 there is a global conversation led by the UN Secretary General on future generations. This will involve the first Declaration on Future Generations, a Future Generations Pact and Summit of the Future in New York in September at the same time as the United Nations General Assembly.
13. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and their office are actively involved in showcasing Wales' experience of legislating for future generations and establishing an independent Commissioner. The Commissioner is provided with additional funding for international work as part of the delivery of the globally responsible nation aim within the International Strategy. In March 2024 the Commissioner convened stakeholders from across Wales to feed into the efforts

underway to develop the Future Generations Pact and Declaration on Future Generations. A further session is scheduled for June 2024.

14. The Future Generations Forum, held in Cardiff on 30 April was hosted by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales Derek Walker and in partnership with the Welsh Government, brought together international experts on futures and sustainable development to Wales. The First Minister gave an opening address, and the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs recorded a video address for the High Level Roundtable event in the afternoon with representatives from UN Member States.
15. The event was also used to co-produce the Wales Protocol for Future Generations—a blueprint that will support and guide countries ahead of the UN’s Summit of the Future in New York this autumn. This Protocol has been developed by the Office of the Commissioner for Future Generations of Wales with the support of a high-level coalition of global early adopters. The substance of the protocol was informed by a community of over 150 policy leaders, activists and practitioners from more than 60 countries in a consultation process that explored pioneering experiences from all over the world. The Protocol was developed across three iterations of global consultation undertaken by the School of International Futures, culminating at the Future Generations Forum, taking place in Cardiff (Wales) from 29th April to 1st May 2024, where the final text was agreed.
16. The launch of the Wales Protocol for Future Generations (8th May 2024) came at a pivotal moment as the civil society leaders and UN Member States gather in Nairobi, Kenya for the UN Civil Society Conference ahead of the UN Summit of the Future in New York later this year.

Regions4

17. The Welsh Government are longstanding members of Regions4, a global network of subnational and regional governments in the fields of sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity. Regions4 are the global voice of regional governments (states, regions and provinces) before United Nations negotiations, European Union initiatives and global discussions in the fields of sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity. Regions4 represents 41 regional governments from 21 countries in 4 continents.
18. The Welsh Government continues to engage with Regions4 activities to ensure Wales’ experience is shared, and we can learn from other governments across the world.

9. Sustainable Farming Scheme

1. On 14 May I announced the introduction of a Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) Preparatory Phase of activity in 2025 with the proposed SFS Transition Period starting from 2026.
2. We intend to use this Preparatory Phase wisely. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of the benefits of the Scheme Actions. This will help everyone to enter the scheme as easily as possible and ensure the scheme provides maximum benefits for Welsh farmers.
3. This new timeframe will allow me to have the conversations and discussions we need to have with the members of the Ministerial Roundtable. I intend to work at pace to identify areas of agreement and place the emphasis on matters where more work is required.
4. Carbon sequestration actions in the Scheme is an example of an area which will receive further consideration. I expect the group of partners undertaking this work with us to focus on the evidence associated with actions to support additional carbon sequestration and the scale of opportunity in Wales.
5. We will also use this time to undertake a data confirmation exercise which, with feedback from farmers, will provide an accurate picture of the habitat and tree cover across all farms. Under the Habitat Wales Scheme, we saw an increase in the area of habitat land under management this year. I want to build on this success and so I am exploring giving more farmers the opportunity to access support in 2025.
6. During the preparatory phase, we will work with stakeholders to identify and develop a set of proposals for further Optional and Collaborative Actions, with the aim of introducing these as soon as possible.
7. The analysis of the consultation responses is still ongoing. I will not make any decisions on the scheme until we have carefully considered all the responses. However, it is clear from feedback, to date, that some changes to the proposal are needed. I will be publishing the consultation analysis along with a government response in due course.
8. Introducing the Scheme in 2026, following a Preparatory Phase, is not a lowering of ambition on climate or nature commitments. There are challenges to resolve before farmers feel confident in the scheme. There are no benefits from introducing a scheme too soon if farmers are unwilling to join.
9. To make the transition easier for farmers, we had already proposed a phased introduction by focusing on the Universal Actions when the scheme starts; this preparatory phase is designed as an additional step to enable that smooth transition.
10. Our ambition for the Sustainable Farming Scheme to support a sustainable, productive agricultural industry in Wales has not changed. Our future farm support

needs to deliver multiple outcomes for all of Wales but must have farmers at the heart of it.

11. This has food production and continued high standards of animal health and welfare as the cornerstone, along with improving environmental performance, responding to the climate emergency and enhancing on-farm biodiversity. These cannot be tackled in isolation. I am committed to keep listening to and working with farmers, as well as all stakeholders to develop a Scheme that will help deliver against our ambition for Wales to be a world leader in sustainable farming.