

HRLN 02 - Evidence from: Selena Young

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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

Atal a gwrthdroi colli natur erbyn 2030 | Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

1. Your views on the effectiveness of current policies / funds / statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The proposed expansion of Craig Yr Hesg quarry has raised significant environmental concerns, including the impact on local biodiversity, and I feel that opportunities have been missed to protect many of the species that live on the land that is to be quarried. Despite an impact assessment being concluded during planning, the Environment Act 2021 has since come into force that would have refuted the expansion plans.

After speaking with the Environmental officer for the expansion, I do not believe that procedures were being followed during the erection of the boundary fence, where a dry stone wall was demolished without her knowledge. She had stated that it was necessary for an Ecologist to be present when undertaking these actions. I do not believe this was the case, therefore how were proper procedures being followed in this instance, and the current policies are not effective.

2. Your views on the progress towards implementing the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Currently I do not believe there is any progress on implementation at the expansion site. The way in which actions have been conducted at the quarry to protect biodiversity have been subpar at best from what I have witnessed. This has included the inadequate installation of bat boxes, they're too low to the ground; the removal of dry stone walls where various reptiles and insects live, without the knowledge of the person involved with promoting biodiversity at the site.

3. Your views on current arrangements for monitoring biodiversity.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

As stated above, I do not believe the arrangements are adequate or follow any policy or legislation.

4. Your views on new approaches needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The expansion is altering the natural landscape, and affecting local ecosystems and recreational areas. It will do so until 2047. For the quarry expansion to proceed under current UK policies, it must demonstrate and prove a net gain in biodiversity. The effectiveness of BNG depends on rigorous assessment and enforcement by local planning authorities and the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP).

5. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

The local authority must balance economic benefits with environmental protection. In the case of Craig Yr Hesg, the LDP should integrate national policies like the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021 to ensure sustainable development. The Environment Act 2021's provisions for oversight by the OEP are designed to ensure that statutory duties are met. For the quarry expansion, this means scrutinizing the project's compliance with biodiversity, air quality, and waste reduction targets.