



Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

9th May 2025

Dear Llŷr,

Thank you for your letter of 25 March in relation to staffing and resources in Welsh Government for biodiversity and nature recovery. I have addressed the Committee's questions below.

1. What discussions have you had with Cabinet members about the allocation of staffing resources in this policy area?

In response to the scale of the climate and nature emergency, the Programme for Government set out ambitious plans for delivery across environment and climate policy. This has required work and resources to be prioritised and shifted over the five-year duration of the Programme for Government to respond to the priorities of Cabinet and the First Minister's enhanced priority areas. This is to enable progress and meet the substantial business as usual activity, which is not optional and must be resourced, in this highly regulatory policy area. Resources focus on the priorities outlined by Cabinet and the First Minister

2. Can you provide details of the staffing levels assigned to support the development of biodiversity targets since the start of this Senedd term? How has this changed over time?

A business case for investment in specialist roles to advise on biodiversity targets was agreed by the then Minister for Finance in 2023. The focus of the specialist staff recruited to these roles has initially been on biodiversity targets policy to inform the Bill and has now shifted to the development of the targets themselves.

3. What specific resource constraints have impacted the progress of the development of biodiversity targets, and what steps have been taken to mitigate these constraints?

The size of the policy team has been a resource constraint. Additional resource has been allocated, including the recruitment to specialist posts as noted above, but it still



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requires the work to be phased to be manageable as it has not been possible to undertake detailed development of targets while designing the policy and legislation.

The initial focus has been on the policy input into the development of the Environmental Governance and Biodiversity Targets Bill. Both policy staff, and specialist staff with expertise in ecology and related fields focused on the development of the policy and the White Paper, engagement with stakeholders and refinement of the policy in light of the consultation feedback. The focus then shifted to the development of the Bill and associated documentation with continued active stakeholder engagement. This phase has included specific consideration of how targets should be provided for in the Bill and developing detailed proposals for what should be on the face of the Bill and what should be provided for in Regulations.

4. Given that a dedicated team has now been established, what additional capacity has been allocated to ensure timely development of the targets?

Recognising the resourcing pressures, we have established a Biodiversity Targets Advisory Panel to support the timely development of biodiversity targets.

Membership of the Panel consists of experts from different disciplines in fields related to biodiversity. This includes advisors with expertise in water, economy, education, and social research, as well as in terrestrial, freshwater, and marine biodiversity.

Membership is made up of 17 academics, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) who is the public body that provides advice on UK-wide and international nature conservation, and Natural Resources Wales. Panel members have expertise in topics such as monitoring, modelling, practical management, and policy. We will be able to draw on this expertise as we develop targets.

The Panel will ensure a balance of independent relevant expertise and will provide expert evidence-based advice, recommendations, and peer review throughout the target creation process, both on the method of target creation and the content of the statutory biodiversity targets in Wales, as well as the development of indicators.

5. What processes are in place to assess whether staffing allocations within relevant departments are sufficient to meet the Welsh Government's biodiversity commitments?

Resourcing considerations are a regular management practice across the Welsh Government. In this area, resourcing discussions take place at a Group level and Directorate level to assess prioritisation at any given time. Discussions are also held with Cabinet Ministers about how finite resources should be balanced in terms of the Government's priorities.

Biodiversity commitments are cross-cutting. To enable mainstreaming across Welsh Government, we have developed and funded the delivery of the Naturewise course. This helps different policy areas to understand the importance of biodiversity and the



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action they can take within their own areas to support the delivery of biodiversity commitments.

Resources have also been made available for specific priorities. For example, additional resource within the planning department to lead on the development of the Gwent Levels masterplan.

6. What mechanisms exist to ensure that workforce planning within your department aligns with Government priorities and prevents resource shortages from hindering key policy developments in the future?

There has been significant investment of time and effort to improve workforce data and planning both corporately and in individual departments to ensure our resources are aligned to deliver the Welsh Government's responsibilities. It is important to acknowledge though that there is finite capacity available and significant competing pressures across Welsh Government and within individual portfolios. Prioritisation and sequencing of work will continue to be necessary and takes place regularly at all levels.

I trust that the response provided sufficiently address the Committee's questions and underscores our commitment to biodiversity and nature recovery. Should you require any additional information or further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me. I thank you and the Committee for your continued engagement on this important matter.

*Yours,
Andrew Goodall*

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