

Brecknock Wildlife Trust



Natural Resources Wales - Annual Scrutiny 2015

I write as a Trustee of Brecknock Wildlife Trust (BWT) one of the 6 Wildlife Trusts in Wales forming a network with WildlifeTrust Wales that will be giving a full response to the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Annual Scrutiny and which has the support of BWT.

Whilst we have exceptionally good and constructive operational relationships with the NRW (and former CCW) officers locally, my issues are concerns about the procedures that NRW has concerning funding and other relationships with us as an external and Third Sector body.

These are:

- 1 The late payment of grants that can cause cash flow issues and mean that we have to fund the work from other sources before payment is forthcoming.
- 2 The processes used in the recent application funding round during late August and September 2014. These concerns relate to the very short time scale and the apparent lack of clarity about what funding could be applied for. This involved a lot of hard work by the staff member concerned and several consultations with the NRW officer, who while being very helpful, had to go back several times to seek internal clarification about the detailed guidance in the business plan concerning the relevant conservation issues to be funded. This resulted in the bids being submitted at the last possible moment.
- 3 BWT is very pleased at having a successful outcome in the above process. However it is of concern that only 7% of overheads could be costed in as this does not reflect the true costs of the organisation in supporting this work. Additionally there are concerns that this was only made clear after initial acceptance of the bids which involved more work in recosting the bid.
- 4 Whilst there has been communication that the bids were successful currently there is no offer letter of work that is due to start this financial year. This puts the organisation in a position that we either have to fund our suitably qualified members

of staff in the expectation that they will be able to work on the projects or release them and thus losing their expertise. As Trustees we have to adhere to good business practice for charitable organisations and not start work where there is no formal offer in writing. This situation compromises us and our governance principles.

I draw your attention to the guidance produced by the Welsh Government for the Third Sector Scheme dated January 2014 (link below) which describes good practice between the Welsh Government and the Third Sector. For example, in the Annex Code of Funding for the Third Sector there are good practice guidelines concerning; timely funding decisions page 26, full cost recovery page 28, and possible payments in advance of need page 30.

Paragraph 2.3 page 7 and paragraph 2.8 page 8 of the main document makes the case for Third Sector involvement in the delivery services and the value to *the long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Wales, its people and communities*. Appendix 3 page 48 includes the list of organisations that should comply with the code of which NRW is one. It is of concern that NRW is not demonstrating compliance with this guidance.

Veronica Wilson
Vice Chair
On behalf of Brecknock Wildlife Trust
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Welsh Government Third Sector Scheme January 2014

<http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/comm/140130-third-sector-scheme-en.pdf>