

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 – 97
Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from G L Radford

1. This is a personal response but largely based on dealings with NRW through the North Wales Wildlife Trust. My background is as an ecologist working for NC, ITE and, under contract, to IUCN, NCC and CCW. I am a trustee of North Wales Wildlife Trust and Chair of its Conservation Committee (North West).

2. I am concerned at several aspects of how NRW has been developing and seek reassurance that these will be addressed. First, I should say that in my time with the above-mentioned organisations, I have almost always found the life sciences staff to be committed and conscientious in their approach to biodiversity and conservation and that view remains. My concerns relate primarily to management and administration.

3. These began with the early consultations on NRW's strategic and business plans. The main apprehension at that stage was that funding for the responsibilities covered by CCW would become marginalised by demands on the other two agencies joining NRW, particularly by the increasing requirements for flood risk control. The continuing loss of life-sciences staff and an increasing work load for those remaining do nothing to offset that concern. Poor outlook and low morale are understandably evident. NRW's ability to support marine legislation at a time when momentum in its implementation is critical is a particular worry.

4. NRW's relationship with NGOs and how CCW's strategic partnership working is to develop or be replaced is still working through but lengthy delays in the payment of funding remains a constant. Successful outsourcing of work to NGOs, some of them hard-pressed under increasing difficulties of funding, requires fair dealing.

5. Biodiversity and the natural environment have a long-awaited opportunity to be fully recognised for the part they play in the functioning of society, thereby attracting the funding that is due to the safeguarding of resources that underpin sustainability. While promoting the use of these resources is a legitimate plank of NRW's strategy, that part of its operation charged with ensuring their ability to sustain it is inadequate. Being faced with the challenge of playing a major role, if not driving, the reversal of biodiversity loss in the wake of the failed BAP process is clear enough evidence of the expectation.