

FWP 16

Ymateb gan : Ymgynghorydd Coedwigaeth a Materion Amgylcheddol
Evidence from : Forestry and Environmental Consultant

1. **Regarding “responding to climate change – coping with climate change and helping reduce our carbon footprint;”**
 - 1.1 The Assembly is clearly falling far short of its target to double the area of woodland in Wales by 2050. Very little new woodland is being planted (for understandable reasons) but meanwhile where trees are naturally regenerating as grazing levels are reduced, land owners are encouraged to remove them in order to keep the land in “Good agricultural and environmental condition”. There may be opportunities for small and even large scale woodland creation by natural processes on less used agricultural land, at nil cost to the Welsh taxpayer, by simply changing the regulations which specify maintenance of agricultural condition by private owners. The policies and incentives currently in place don’t sufficiently incentive new woodland planting and they actually prevent natural processes from increasing the area of woodland for us.

2. **Regarding “making a positive contribution to biodiversity, landscapes and heritage, and reducing other environmental pressures.”**
 - 2.1 NRW do revise Forest Design Plans periodically and incorporate some environmental improvements such as introducing more open ground and broadleaves around watercourses and putting in ponds but they are modest changes to lots of blocks and not a fundamental shift in any of them. The large conifer blocks are still largely being restocked as they were in the first rotation, although some good progress has been made in the lower Cwm Einion. I would like to suggest that the Assembly consider allocating at least one large conifer block for radical restructuring for a much greater environmental benefit – resulting in a predominately broadleaf habitat, which could be at least partially achieved with natural regeneration and which could form a vital part of a landscape level habitat restoration initiative in the Northern Cambrian Mountains. I would be delighted to discuss this proposal further as I am also a trustee of one of the organisations developing this project. This would also reduce restocking costs. I would encourage consideration of Scot’s pine in the mix as it is technically native to Wales (made its way here naturally after the last ice age).

2.2 Where larch has been removed I suggest the Assembly think carefully before replanting those sites with another exotic monoculture which is likely to suffer a similar fate from pests or disease at some point especially with the added stresses of climate change to contend with. Mixed forests of a wide variety of species are more robust in the face of all kinds of threats

3. Regarding reporting progress against the action plan

The information provided by the minister is a list of activities being undertaken, it doesn't constitute an evaluation of whether each target has been met or not which makes it hard to comment on. I would like to see an assessment of whether progress and achievements are considered inadequate, adequate or exemplary in each category.