

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: SF/CS/0454/15

Alun Ffred Jones AM
Chair
Environment and Sustainability Committee

19 April 2015

Dear Alun Ffred,

Further to the e-mail from the Committee Clerk of 31 March, I am pleased to provide a response to the action points raised during my recent appearance before the Committee.

To provide the Committee with a profile of the projected savings resulting from the creation of Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

The Welsh Government Business Case to establish NRW identified the delivery of total savings of £158m over 10 years. These benefits included cash realisable benefits (£127m), non-cash realisable benefits, as well as a range of qualitative benefits.

During 2013 it became necessary to revise the profile of the original cash releasing savings target due to changes to the arrangements for access to parent organisation legacy systems which brought forward spend into the programme budget at the first two years of NRW's operation. The revised profile is closely comparable to those estimated in the original business case and I am pleased to say that NRW is still on target to achieve this level of savings over the ten year period.

The table below details the original business case and the revised cash realisable benefits.

Summary of Business Case Benefits (all figures in £m)						
Cash benefits						
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	10 yr total
Gross Savings Business Case	6.295	9.299	12.389	14.118	14.232	127.494
Revised Gross Savings	-2.721	7.679	12.976	13.879	14.734	127.150
Net Updated figures	-19.305	-8.521	6.376	12.279	12.134	61.125

To update the Committee on whether the £3.9 million allocated to the Nature Fund in 2014-15 will be spent

The funding allocation for the Nature Fund was fully committed in 2014-15.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence: Carl.Sargeant@wales.gsi.gov.uk
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To provide a note on the role that stakeholders have played in developing the Wales data hub

External stakeholder engagement is a rolling process. The launch of 'Wales: Our Environment' at the Royal Welsh Show was a demonstration of the nature and infrastructure of the hub and invited feedback from all visitors to the site. The feedback received has been reviewed, acknowledged and incorporated into the future development of the Hub as appropriate.

Specific engagement with established data holders and users such as NRW, National Biodiversity Network, Welsh Local Record Centres, UK Earth Observation Data Advisory Group, British Geological Society, Welsh Biodiversity Partnership and Dwr Cymru has guided and influenced the development of Information Hub to date. Stakeholders are keen to work with the Welsh Government to utilise the infrastructure to publish their own environmental data for public use. This provides opportunities to work collaboratively with stakeholders to make previously unpublished data accessible, avoiding duplication of effort and resources by utilising the Welsh Government's infrastructure.

In addition, our Marine Planning Portal is a specific web application that utilises the infrastructure that powers 'Wales: Our Environment' and represents the marine mapping component of the data hub. The portal makes available data from a wide range of sources that shows the status of and human use of Welsh seas. A wide range of organisations have contributed data to the portal including NRW, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Crown Estate and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science.

The establishment of Governance structures for the Information Hub will include stakeholder representation from a range of stakeholder groups.

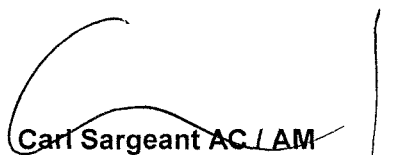
Supplementary budget

During the meeting the Committee also queried the new location of the "Meeting the needs of rural communities and rural proofing WAG actions" budget line.

An essential part of the budget process is to realign budgets where necessary to improve on management, reporting and transparency. As part of this process and during the Supplementary Budget process in January, it was decided that two budgets totalling £2.305m from within the "Meeting the needs of rural communities and rural proofing WAG actions" Budget Action be re-aligned to the "Develop and deliver overarching policy and programmes on Agriculture, Food and Marine" Budget Action. The budgets which were realigned were for New Farm Entrants at £1.705m and Local Authority Enforcement Funding at £0.600m. These changes, alongside a number of other re-alignments, has meant that you now have a much better streamlined and informative budget structure.

I trust that I have addressed the Committee's queries in full.

Yours sincerely,



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