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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion  
Gwledig  
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA-(P) /LG/07839/16  
Mark Reckless AM  
Chair of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee  
National Assembly  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

4 January 2017

Dear Mark

Thank you for your letter of 23 November, requesting updated information on issues arising from the work of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee.

I have attached detailed responses to the issues you have raised as annexes to this letter.

Regards  
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig  
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



**WOODLANDS FOR WALES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS AS AT 1  
DECEMBER 2016**

Action No	Priority	Update
1	Develop and maintain a risk register of pests and diseases and their threat to tree health in Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Ministers are responsible for tree health matters in Wales. This responsibility is delivered through a three-way arrangement between NRW, the Welsh Government and the Forestry Commission and its agency, Forest Research.</li> <li>• The Wales Tree and Plant Health Steering Group draws together Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), representatives from the forestry sector and environment groups to manage delivery of the Wales Tree Health Strategy.</li> <li>• The newly formed Wales Tree and Plant Health Surveillance Group comprises of representatives of Welsh Government, NRW, Forest Research and the Animal and Plant Health Agency. It monitors emerging plant health risks and undertakes contingency planning for response to plant health outbreaks.</li> <li>• High profile tree and plant pests for Wales are monitored and reviewed by the Surveillance Group and an updated list is maintained for review by the Steering Group.</li> <li>• Farming Connect are working with Forest Research to offer three “Tree Health” days for stakeholders to be briefed on tree and plant health issues.</li> <li>• NRW carry out regular surveillance for quarantined organism and key pests and diseases. This includes <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> and Chalara dieback of ash. NRW produces a monthly Welsh specific report on <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> and maintains a Welsh specific map showing the spread of Chalara.</li> <li>• NRW has promoted awareness of key pests through 2 joint seminars with Forest Research (attended by approximately 100 people).</li> <li>• NRW has provided awareness training to external groups such as the wildlife trusts.</li> <li>• NRW supports Welsh Government on a number of GB groups such as DEFRA’s Risk Register Group (Forestry) and the GB and NI Steering Group.</li> </ul>
2	Implement the <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> recovery programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Disease Management Strategy, made under the umbrella of the Wales Tree Health Strategy has established two zones in Wales: the core disease zone (principally in South Wales) where there are high levels of infection in contiguous larch stands; and the disease limitation zone (the remainder of Wales) where there is light infection.</li> </ul>

		<p>Felling is targeted on new infections in the disease limitation zone to combat the rate of spread of the infection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Government is assisting NRW to replant areas of felled larch on the Welsh Government woodland estate (the area NRW has replanted in the last five years is: 2011/12 986 hectares; 2012/13 1,012 hectares; 2013/14 1,350 hectares; 2014/15 1,107 hectares; and 2015/16 1,237 hectares).</li> <li>• The Welsh Government is supporting restocking of infected larch in private woodlands via the Rural Development Programme (RDP) and the Glastir Woodland Restoration Scheme.</li> <li>• Whilst <i>P ramorum</i> is a disaster for larch in Wales, restocking felled areas is enabling greater ecological resilience to be built in to Wales' woodland ensuring that the natural resource can deliver a range of ecosystem services from climate change adaptation to timber production to access and recreation for the benefit of current and future generations.</li> <li>• In their role as the terrestrial tree health delivery body for Wales NRW carry out regular surveillance for quarantined organism and key pests and diseases, including <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>. NRW produces a monthly Welsh specific report on <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i>.</li> <li>• NRW guidance being developed for local staff to help them prioritise sites for restocking, with the dual aim of reducing restocking costs and maintaining input into future productive sites.</li> <li>• A biosecurity media awareness campaign "Keep it Clean" undertaken by NRW Plant Health team.</li> </ul>
<p>3</p>	<p>Use the statutory and policy framework in Wales to deliver woodland creation to optimise the benefits provided by forestry, woodland and trees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 provides the framework by which the wider contribution of forests, woodlands and trees can be recognised.</li> <li>• There has been uneven progress towards the goal of creating more woodland in Wales. In the year to 31 March 2016, over 140 hectares of new woodland has been created. There are over 400 hectares of new woodland currently being assessed for funding via the Glastir Woodland Creation Scheme (GWC) under the RDP.</li> <li>• NRW Glastir Woodlands team verify GWC scheme applications against the UK Forestry Standard, GWC rules and value for money criteria. They have so far verified 97 GWC plans. They provide guidance on their website.</li> <li>• Woodland creation is best facilitated through collaboration. The Welsh Government has launched the Co-operative Forest Planning Scheme and allocated £180,000 to encourage and facilitate co-operation for woodland creation and management.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW is working with the Welsh Government on a natural benefit accounting framework which will help to optimise the benefits provided by forestry, woodland and trees.</li> <li>• The “Carbon Positive” Project is evaluating NRW’s net carbon status, accounting for both greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration across the whole of NRW’s owned or managed estate. It is identifying mitigation opportunities to reduce NRW’s carbon impact as an organisation and delivering projects to demonstrate these measures. Woodland and peatland habitats make up approximately 84% of the Welsh Government woodland estate, and make significant contributions to the estate’s carbon status. NRW is working with Forest Research and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology to better model their carbon stock and sequestration, which will help NRW to plan how best to manage them to protect existing carbon stocks and enhance sequestration eg by expanding woodland.</li> <li>• In the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) (September 2016), “<i>Increasing woodland cover, and bringing more of our existing woodlands into appropriate management</i>” was identified by NRW as one of the seven key opportunities to deal with the challenges and risks identified, and contribute to the well-being goals. However, five of the seven opportunities in SoNaRR are relevant to wider land management decisions, and woodlands / trees play a part in delivery of these.</li> </ul>
<p>4</p>	<p>Manage woodland planting and current and future harvesting programmes to ensure long-term continuity of timber production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following consultation with the sector, NRW has drafted a Timber Marketing Plan for the period 2017-22 which explains their approach to the harvesting and marketing of timber from the Welsh Government woodland estate. NRW has to produce this Plan to help to maintain their certification to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and to ensure that they deliver against the relevant policy objectives set out in <i>Woodlands for Wales</i>. It is awaiting Board approval prior to publication in early 2017.</li> <li>• An Interim Marketing Plan is in place in the meantime and can be accessed through their website.</li> <li>• NRW submitted a discussion paper on “<i>Future timber availability - implications for the forest sector and woodland resource in Wales</i>” for consideration by the Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel at their meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016. This discussion paper addressed a range of issues including: timber availability in the context of the sustainable management of natural resources and the delivery of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 goals; forecasts of future wood fibre availability and demand in Wales; current management of the Welsh</li> </ul>

		<p>Government woodland estate (restocking levels, harvesting and marketing volumes, silvicultural management systems); current management of woodland in other ownership; and factors affecting woodland area (woodland creation, permanent woodland removal and competing land uses), from a policy, regulatory and management perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response to an inquiry by the National Assembly for Wales into the public forest estate in Wales in 2014, NRW, Welsh Government and sector representatives produced a '10 Areas for Action' plan in order to improve support for and communications with the private forestry sector.</li> <li>• The 10 Areas for Action was first published in December 2014 and updated in Dec 2015, the 2016 update will be published on the NRW website in December. NRW and the Confederation of Forest Industries (ConFor) are currently undertaking a review of the "10 Areas for Action" document to ensure that successes are recognised and actions remain relevant and are up to date.</li> <li>• NRW has written two Forest Resilience Good Practice Guides on structural diversity and tree species diversity for use by all forest and woodland managers in Wales. These have been approved internally and are awaiting publication. A set of "business rules" are being developed for staff to implement the Guides within their management of the Welsh Government woodland estate. Good progress is being made on a third Guide on how to improve the genetic diversity of Welsh woodlands.</li> <li>• Compensatory planting is a key objective of NRW's Energy Delivery Programme (EDP) to protect the Welsh Government woodland estate in relation to woodland removal and energy developments. There is a ring-fenced fund that is currently £500,000 and will increase annually, to compensate for woodland loss that occurs on the Estate due to energy developments.</li> <li>• NRW will be recruiting a new post with a remit to develop compensatory planting policy, manage this fund and deliver compensatory planting for this programme.</li> <li>• A joint consultation package between the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ("Defra"), the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs of the Northern Ireland Executive is to be launched in respect of the transposition of Directive 2014/52/EU in relation to forestry, water resources, land drainage and marine (including harbour works) projects. It is anticipated that the consultation will launch on 13 December.</li> <li>• In brief, the European Directive sets out the procedures to follow before certain projects can be given consent to proceed. This ensures the public have an opportunity to provide their views and information about the likely</li> </ul>
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		<p>significant effects on the environment are considered before a proposed project can be implemented. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regime is a means of assessing the likely significant effects of certain projects on the environment with a view to offsetting adverse effects whilst enhancing positive ones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In relation to forestry projects, implementation of the common changes provides an opportunity to review the screening thresholds for afforestation to encourage woodland creation. The current 5 hectare threshold for non-sensitive areas is low, particularly as most woodland creation comes through controlled or regulated channels, such as Glastir Woodland Creation. Included in the consultation package is reference to a possible increase to the threshold for non-sensitive areas from 5 hectares to 20 hectares or 50 hectares to encourage woodland creation whilst ensuring that larger scale planting with greater environmental sensitivity is still appropriately screened.</li> </ul>
<p>5</p>	<p>Deliver increased and safeguard existing tree cover in towns and cities and support sustainable urban tree management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW's study 'Tree Cover in Towns and Cities' presented the world's first country-wide survey of urban tree canopy cover. In 2016 with Welsh Government funding, NRW updated the report using recent aerial photography to complete analysis of images from 2006, 2009 and 2013 for 220 urban areas.</li> <li>• The assessment mapped every tree and wood in all 220 urban areas in Wales. NRW are using this survey when working with others to feed important Green Infrastructure messages into plans, policies and strategies and to inform the development of well-being plans.</li> <li>• Wales' mean urban tree canopy was estimated at 16.3% in 2013, which is mid-range when compared to other towns and cities around the world.</li> <li>• Three iTree Eco Studies have been completed in Wales. iTree Eco is a tool for quantifying the functions of urban trees in relation to air quality improvement, carbon dioxide reduction and flood control. By assessing the values of each function the methodology provides robust basis for management of urban tree populations and the benefits they provide.</li> <li>• Evidence about tree cover in towns and cities and the benefits that trees can provide is a resource for Public Service Boards in taking forward their local well-being plans.</li> <li>• The iTree methodology provides a means of appraising appropriate nature-based solutions to air quality and flood issues. Welsh Government guidance to local authorities includes reference to iTree Eco as an example for inclusion in environmental revenue bids for 2017/18.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good urban tree management practice on the ground is critical to their sustainability and provision of multiple benefits. NRW have supported and contributed to leading technical good practice guidance for urban trees. Produced by the Trees and Design Action Group, the 2 recent publications “Trees in the Townscape” and “Trees in Hard Landscapes” are becoming a benchmark having just won the Landscape Institute Award 2016 for Policy and Research. They are currently in discussion regarding a further publication in this series “Trees in Development and Planning”.</li> <li>• NRW has provided support and advice to Cardiff City Council and Dwr Cymru on tree suitability for the innovative Greener Grangetown project which is retro fitting green infrastructure into Victorian streets to reduce rainfall entering local sewers.</li> </ul>
6	<p>Explore the issues associated with enabling and building the capacity of community groups and enterprises to be involved in woodland management in order to help them use woodlands to realise well-being goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Government directly funds Llais y Goedwig, a national network of community woodland groups. As a result two capacity building officers were appointed by Llais y Goedwig in 2016 to broker new agreements between community woodland groups and woodland owners. The officers provide advice and guidance to public and private woodland owners and to community groups in order to establish agreements for activities which can include woodland management, conservation, enhanced access and activities to improve physical and mental health.</li> <li>• Llais y Goedwig have facilitated workshops with NRW on the benefits of enabling community woodland groups to activity manage suitable sites on the Welsh Government woodland estate, particularly sites which are not economically viable to manage intensively for timber but which provide a setting for community involvement and associated wellbeing and social cohesion benefits.</li> <li>• The statistics for community woodland groups affiliated to Llais y Goedwig for 2016 show that there are 76 active woodland community groups managing 1,706 hectares of woodland.</li> <li>• NRW is currently reviewing the process and systems used to issue permissions for activities on the Welsh Government woodland estate.</li> <li>• NRW is undertaking a positions statement review of all recreation and access activities on NRW managed land.</li> <li>• NRW’s new Timber Marketing Plan will provide more scope for communities to use timber.</li> </ul>
7	<p>Promote the uses and utilisation of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In March 2016 Welsh Government (with Wood Knowledge Wales) organised a conference called ‘Wood Build Wales’ and this was well attended by representatives from across</li> </ul>



	<p>Welsh timber, including as an essential material for sustainable construction central to the delivery of new housing.</p>	<p>the timber and forestry sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Government and NRW are arranging visits in 2017 to sites and projects that highlight the use of timber in construction.</li> <li>• The NRW Timber Marketing Plan has a commitment to adopting a “carbon hierarchy” of use as a way of comparing the contribution of different wood products to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our marketing. This means that for roadside sales, they will continue to sell and grade out products to suit different markets and encourage the greatest degree of added value in the supply chain eg maximise the availability of timber for use in construction.</li> <li>• NRW has completed an innovations programme (supported by Welsh Government) with two Welsh companies to develop new products that enhance the longevity of wooden fence posts.</li> <li>• NRW are progressing an innovations programme (supported by Welsh Government) with a Welsh company to develop a biochar product which assists regeneration of native species to soils previously inhabited by rhododendron. Early results show positive results where traditional approaches have failed.</li> </ul>
<p>8</p>	<p>Develop models for woodland related enterprises and provide opportunities for employment, education and training across the forestry sector by developing sector relevant skills and providing work experience as pathways to employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Timber Business Investment Scheme has been developed to support investment to bring woodland into management. Round one of the Scheme, which was open for expressions of interest in May 2016, made available £2 million and it attracted 49 applications, 21 of which have progressed to the detailed assessment stage.</li> <li>• Round 2 will open in February 2017 with a further budget of £2 million.</li> <li>• We expect the demand for woodland products generated by this Scheme to lead to new woodland areas coming into management to provide the benefits set out in the Welsh Government’s strategy for woodlands and trees.</li> <li>• ‘Cyfle’ has been established as NRW’s national scheme for the recruitment, co-ordination, support and management of work experience placements (including those on the Welsh Government “Lift” programme), volunteers, under- and post-graduate placements and apprenticeships. It builds on legacy body schemes to offer a single, user-focussed, easy to access entry point for people interested in spending time working and learning alongside NRW staff in a range of settings – with progression opportunities where possible.</li> <li>• As part of the Cyfle Placement Scheme, NRW currently has 4 Trees and Timber apprentices in their first year of study towards a Level 3 qualification.</li> </ul>
<p>9</p>	<p>Examine the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Government is developing options to improve</li> </ul>

	adequacy of and scope to improve existing measures and procedures for the protection of valued trees, particularly ancient, veteran and heritage trees.	<p>the protections that can be conferred to ancient, veteran and heritage trees. The options include statutory and non-statutory interventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bid has been developed for inclusion in the Government's Legislative Programme to address shortcomings in the Tree Preservation Order regime. No decision has been made as yet, on inclusion in the Legislative Programme.</li> <li>• A strategic analysis of Plantations on Ancient Woodlands (PAWS) threatened sites is being carried by NRW on the Welsh Government woodland estate out with the aim of developing a Wales-wide prioritisation plan.</li> <li>• NRW continues to maintain the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), assessing new evidence provided by owners and managers and reviewing the AWI as necessary in light of this evidence. This information is available publically on the Lle portal.</li> </ul>
10	Continue to bring identified special sites, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites ("PAWS"), native woodlands and priority habitats into favourable management on WGWE and encourage private landowners to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of the Welsh Government PAWS restoration policy was undertaken by a Task and Finish Group of representatives from the Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel (WSAP) which advises Welsh Government on forestry policy.</li> <li>• The review found that while there was no need to change existing PAWS restoration policy, there was a need to be more flexible in the approach to restoration. This was needed to encourage PAWS restoration particularly in the private sector. While it was recognised that all PAWS require a level of restoration and protection, a flexible approach would help to focus limited resources on sites where restoration was more likely to be successful and benefits maximised.</li> <li>• WSAP endorsed the recommendations and this is now the WG approach to PAWS restoration. It is to be rolled out by NRW on the Welsh Government woodland estate and will inform forthcoming grant support mechanisms.</li> <li>• Peatland habitat restoration - NRW are undertaking a programme of tree removal from afforested deep peatland sites where there is a clear ecosystem benefit and it is appropriate and viable to do so.</li> <li>• NRW monitor surveys are taking place to provide data on the condition of the ancient woodland resource on the Welsh Government woodland estate.</li> <li>• Thematic plans have been embedded by NRW into the Welsh Government woodland estate GIS system in order that it is within management programmes and accessible for future reporting.</li> </ul>
11	Develop, promote and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of the Welsh deer population is important to ensure that a balance is maintained between the positive</li> </ul>

	<p>implement programmes to manage invasive non-native species which damage woodland habitats.</p>	<p>and negative impacts that deer can have on the environment. The current 5 year “Action Plan for Wild Deer Management in Wales” is under review. It will continue to include actions to promote, manage and monitor non-native deer populations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both Muntjac deer and grey squirrel are on the list of species of Union concern which forms part of the EU regulation 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species (IAS). This requires that a species action plan is put in place to set out effective and proportionate management measures. Work to review and update the draft species action plan for Muntjac is ongoing.</li> <li>• For Grey Squirrels, a working group of stakeholders has been set up to examine what appropriate measures should be put in place in Wales to comply with this requirement. This work will form the basis of a Grey Squirrel Management Action Plan for Wales.</li> <li>• NRW is supporting Welsh Government in developing the Management Action Plan for grey squirrels and they continue to work in partnership in all three red squirrel conservation areas to reduce the impact of grey squirrel on red squirrel.</li> <li>• NRW has provided advice to the Welsh Government on the Code of Conduct for species control provisions of the Infrastructure Act.</li> <li>• NRW works in partnership with the Wales Squirrel Forum and they sit on the UK Squirrel Accord.</li> <li>• NRW participate in the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat board, and contributed to the update of the GB strategy in 2015.</li> <li>• NRW’s Board has approved a Position Statement on Conservation Translocations. It will be published in 2017.</li> <li>• NRW has newly appointed staff (Welsh Government funded) to address the issues related to invasive non-native species as recommended by the National Assembly Wales Environment Scrutiny Committee in 2013.</li> </ul>
<p>12</p>	<p>Gather evidence to measure and evaluate the non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees in Wales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An independent review by the Forestry Commission on valuing the social and environmental benefits of forestry has been completed during 2016. Overseen by a steering group including the Welsh Government, the report highlights social and environmental outputs of woodlands as having a much broader role in the economy than is often recognised. While much valuable work has been done to develop the evidence base, further research is needed in certain areas (flood alleviation, water quality, physical and mental health) to better understand the social and economic values woodlands play in these areas.</li> <li>• Welsh Government has collaborated with Forest Research</li> </ul>

		<p>and the Office of National Statistics to explore approaches to improving the evidence base for the economic role of woodlands in Wales including in relation to recreation, air quality improvement and timber supply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW is developing an approach to accounting for the contribution natural resources make to wellbeing in the context of the wider social value of NRW management activities on the Welsh Government woodland estate.</li> <li>• NRW has produced two case studies (Coed Newydd and Llynfi) which explain how woodland contributes to the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 goals and how the ecosystem services generated may be assessed using natural capital valuation techniques.</li> <li>• Work has commenced on a review of recreational shooting on the Welsh Government woodland estate.</li> </ul>
13	<p>Promote and enhance access to forestry and woodlands for more people to participate in and benefit from outdoor recreation experiences more often. Target resources in areas where the health, well-being and economic benefits will have the greatest impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Government's Natural Resource Policy will take into account the range of ecosystem services of forests, woodlands and trees.</li> <li>• NRW-managed woodlands contain 790km of world class mountain bike trails, 955km of our waymarked permissive paths and 3,702km of forest roads which are well used for walking, cycling and running. NRW continue to maintain these to provide a high quality visitor experience, and duty of care to the public.</li> <li>• During 2016 NRW undertook an internal Business Area Review of recreation and access. The purpose was to provide a rationalised recreation offer for the NRW estate that is focussed on delivering the Recreation and Access Enabling Plan and develop opportunities to maximise commercial income in line with NRW's purpose to further the sustainable management of natural resources.</li> <li>• Welsh Government core funding support for Llais y Goedwig has targeted action for communities to access woodlands in innovative ways and to be involved where appropriate in management activities and decisions.</li> <li>• The Welsh Labour Party Manifesto made a commitment to continue with the Plant! A Tree for Every Child Project. A new phase of delivery (2016-2020) is being taken forward by NRW in partnership with Coed Cadw (the Woodland Trust in Wales). Current planting stands at just under 300,000 native broadleaved trees (137 hectares).</li> <li>• Following their Recreation and Education Business Area Review (BAR), NRW has changed its approach to education and skills but will continue to offer advice and guidance, training for education professionals and resources to enable others to use NRW-managed woodlands.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRW has developed (with stakeholders) a “Trail Users Code” as part of the Countryside Code series. This is currently in publication. NRW continues to implement the recommendations of their Visitor Centre Review.</li> <li>• NRW will be updating and realigning their Enabling Plan over the next year to ensure and strengthen the contribution the Well-being goals and objectives</li> <li>• NRW contributed to the Wales Year of Adventure through their web and social media outlets.</li> <li>• NRW developed and published a suite of Top 10 adventures at sites that they manage and they hosted a range of significant events.</li> <li>• NRW hosted the Welsh Rally in October 2016.</li> <li>• NRW are improving the user experience of their website including the “Out and About” sections which relate to recreation and access opportunities.</li> </ul>
14	<p>Participate in the Forestry Governance Project to shape the future delivery of GB cross-border forestry functions ensuring that the needs of Wales, and of the other GB administrations, are accommodated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government is considering the future role of the Forestry Commission in Scotland, with the corollary that cross- border functions are under review.</li> <li>• The Welsh Government is a member of the Forestry Governance Project Board together with the Scottish Government and Defra to ensure that the needs of Wales are accommodated in future arrangements for the delivery of cross-border functions.</li> <li>• NRW provides ongoing support to Welsh Government in relation to the Forestry Governance Project they and maintain their membership of cross-border groups such as the Strategic Publications Group, IFOS Steering Group, Forest Management Officers liaison meeting, <i>Hylobius</i> working group, Science and Innovation Strategy for forestry programme groups.</li> <li>• NRW has worked with the Welsh Government to identify future requirements and options for Wales for cross-border functions currently delivered by the Forestry Commissioners, and exit strategy arrangements from Forestry Commission services. This has included consideration of issues relating to legislation, plant health, the UK Forestry Standard, science and research commissioning, forestry statistics, the UK Woodland Carbon Code, international matters, and strategic publications.</li> </ul>

**An update on the progress made against each of the recommendations from the Environment and Sustainability Committee's Inquiry into Marine Policy in Wales from January 2013**

Recommendation	WG Response – December 2016
<p>Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Welsh Government affords a higher priority to marine policy in Wales.</p>	<p>We are committed to giving marine policy in Wales the priority needed to contribute towards clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas. We have established the marine transition programme to take forward our work on marine and fisheries in an integrated way.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2. By April 2013, we recommend that the Welsh Government publishes an action plan that sets out its priorities for delivering its marine environment duties. This strategy should include an action plan for delivering each duty. We would expect this to include details of the: expected outcomes; specific actions required to achieve the outcomes expected; timescale for delivery, including key milestones; cost of delivery (including resource considerations); and details of where funding will be sourced from.</p>	<p>Welsh Government published a marine and fisheries strategic action plan in November 2013. The plan set out objectives and actions with key milestones for the development and delivery of Welsh Governments marine and fisheries policy.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3. We recommend as part of the process of developing an action plan, resources are carefully considered. The Welsh Government should make use of external expertise where appropriate, but it should also look at whether it needs to better resource itself to deliver on the challenging statutory obligations it faces.</p>	<p>Resources have been kept under review in developing and implementing the marine and fisheries strategic action plan.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should review its ICZM strategy as soon as possible, but no later than by April 2014 and ensure that it is considered in the development of marine spatial plans.</p>	<p>The review of the ICZM strategy for Wales and how best to deliver a joined up approach to management of land and sea is being considered as an integral part of the work on marine planning.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should work with partners to identify the existing data sources available to underpin marine planning in Wales. Where opportunities exist, it should work in partnership with industry, university research centres and the Third Sector to coordinate data collection efforts. We expect the pathway to achieving this to be set out in response to Recommendation 2.</p>	<p>Welsh Government has worked collaboratively with a wide range of partners to develop the evidence base for marine planning. The first Wales' marine evidence report was published in 2015. The report was shared widely to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute to and understand the evidence base. A marine planning portal</p>

	<p>has been produced which makes available maps and spatial data for Welsh seas. Again, this has been produced in partnership.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6. In preparing marine plans for 2015 the Welsh Government ensures that it is ready to take forward a joint-planning approach in cross-border areas and that it works with the Marine Management Organisation so that it is not deterred from designating a cross-border region with Wales as its next plan area. In order to ensure it is in a position to do this the Welsh Government should seek to have a concordat or Memorandum of Understanding in place with the MMO as soon as possible and no later than December 2014.</p>	<p>Welsh Government is working closely with the MMO to ensure a joined-up approach to planning in cross-border areas. WG and the MMO held a joint stakeholder workshop in March 2016 to discuss evidence, opportunities and issues for cross border areas using the Severn as an example. The MMO participates in Welsh Governments marine planning stakeholder reference group to further support a collaborative and joined up approach to marine planning across England and Wales.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7. By the end of March 2013, the Welsh Government should complete its work on the extension of existing Special Protected Areas. We expect to see details of how this is to be delivered in its response to Recommendation 2 above.</p>	<p>The Welsh Government completed the extensions to three breeding colony Special Protection Areas in October 2014. Further proposals are being considered to extend another site off the coast of Anglesey, and there are also cross border proposals to extend the sites at Skomer and Skokholm and Liverpool Bay into the offshore area.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8. We recommend that the Welsh Government issues a statement outlining how it intends to take forward the recommendations made by CCW in its review of the management of MPAs. It has been considering CCW's review since July 2012 and we expect it to respond within the lifetime of the CCW.</p>	<p>The Welsh Government established the MPA Management Steering Group in March 2014 to consider how best to take forward the recommendations in the CCW report. The purpose of the Group is to steer and champion effective MPA management, raise the profile of MPA management and increase buy-in from management authorities and wider stakeholders across Wales. To date the Steering Group has met seven times.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9. We recommend that the Welsh Government should commence Part V of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. We expect it to set out a date for commencement after it has considered the findings of the [Marine Conservation Zone] task and finish group in April.</p>	<p>The Welsh Government commenced Part V of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 in December 2014.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10. By the 31 December 2013, the Welsh Government</p>	<p>The Welsh Government voluntarily published a report in December 2012 to</p>

<p>should voluntarily lay before the Assembly a report that meets the requirement of section 124 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. This report should include an appraisal of the environmental status, governance and enforcement of existing marine protected areas.</p>	<p>comply with section 124 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. A further voluntary report was published in December 2013.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11.                  (a) The Welsh Government should engage with the offshore Marine Conservation Zone designation process and facilitate the co-ordination of Welsh stakeholder input to these processes.                  (b) When the Secretary of State consults the Welsh Ministers on the proposed creation of a Marine Conservation Zone in Welsh offshore waters, the Welsh Government should inform us in writing of this and set out the steps it intends to take to ensure the UK Government considers Welsh interests.</p>	<p>Since this recommendation was made the draft Wales Bill has been published, which includes provisions to transfer the power to designate Marine Conservation Zones in the offshore area to Welsh Ministers. As a result Defra has announced it is no longer considering any proposals for Marine Conservation Zones in the offshore area, as it will be for Welsh Ministers to decide on the needs of this marine area.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12.                  The Welsh Government ensures that the expertise and experience of the Marine Consents Unit is preserved and built upon and that there is no diminution of service during its transition to Natural Resources Wales.</p>	<p>The Marine Licensing Team at Natural Resources Wales has been carrying out marine licensing since April 2013 and following the successful transition has built their own expertise and experience.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13.                  The Welsh Government works with Natural Resources Wales to ensure that it develops suitable online provision for a public register for marine licensing.</p>	<p>NRW host an online public register for marine licensing, in line with the requirements set out in The Marine Licensing (Register of Licensing Information) (Wales) Regulations 2011.</p>



**The Welsh Governments' latest position with regards to safeguarding animal welfare for:**

- **Wild animals in circuses**

I have instructed officials to work on introducing a registration or licensing scheme for all animals (domestic and wild) used by Mobile Animal Exhibits (MAEs) in Wales, including circuses and issued a Written Statement on 15 December. A public consultation will be undertaken in Wales early next year.

<http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2016-new/mobileanimalexhibits/?lang=en>

- **Control of dogs**

Responsible dog ownership is not something that can be achieved by the animal welfare sector alone. A joined up approach across several portfolios is required to see real improvements in Wales. Legislation exists under the UK Governments' 'Dangerous Dogs Act 1991' to cover dogs out of control and especially dangerously out of control where there are grounds for reasonable apprehension dogs will attack people.

Controls were further strengthened by the 'Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014' to events which cause alarm and distress in any place and for attacks on guide dogs, all of which is subject to the enforcement agencies in both England and Wales taking action, including the police.

An RSPCA-led review into responsible dog ownership proceeded in February 2015 and reported on 3 March 2016. The contents of the report were far-reaching and are being considered by officials within the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer. Links are being made with officials across Welsh Government whose portfolios are covered in this report e.g. Housing, Education and Health.

On 6 April 2016, the Welsh Government alongside Defra and the Scottish Government introduced compulsory microchipping for all dogs over eight weeks of age, unless exempted by a vet. In 2008, under the 'Animal Welfare Act 2006', the Welsh Government produced a Code of Practice for owners and keepers of dogs. The Code is used routinely for education and enforcement purposes by Local Authorities and organisations such as the RSPCA. A review is now being undertaken to ensure that the standards being advised are still appropriate.

- **Control of horses**

The Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014 came into effect on 28 January 2014 following Royal Assent. The legislation provides all local authorities in Wales with the same legal powers to seize, impound, sell, dispose of and destroy where appropriate horses by humane means after certain notifications and time limits are met, when horses are on land without lawful authority or occupier consent.

Fly Grazing is in simple terms the actions of irresponsible owners who intentionally or negligently permit their horses to graze on land where they do not have the consent of the landowner or where that consent has been withdrawn and the horse owner has refused to move them. Fly grazing is often accompanied by implied threats, fear, reprisals and intimidation as well as wilful neglect and animal cruelty.

### **Update**

- During the first 12 months of the Act as least 11 local authorities have used the powers contained within the Act to seize some 460 horses.
- Easy to follow guidance for Local authorities and others including horse owners, has been developed to support the Act.
- The Welsh Government has supported a number of local authorities through the provision of match funding to enable the removal and disposal of horses and ponies found fly grazed or abandoned on land without lawful authority. This support has been given on a case by case basis and following the receipt of a detailed business case supporting the course of action to be taken.
- It is believed that even the availability of, and the potential threat of the use of, the Act is changing the behaviour of those owners who have previously been inclined to fly graze their animals because the likely risk of sanction is now much greater.
- A review of the Act is planned to commence early in 2017.

- **Exotic pets**

The Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group was provided with a briefing on exotic pets in December 2015. Its members are due to meet with an exotic pet specialist from the British Veterinary Association at a forthcoming meeting. The consideration of issues relating to the exotic pet trade in Wales comes under the responsible ownership agenda, which the Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group has set out in the Implementation Plan for 2016/17.

Within the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Implementation Plan, a commitment exists to review the Welsh Government's Codes of Practice as published under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. This includes considering whether additional Codes of Practice are required for other species, for example exotic animals.

Work is underway in England to review the licensing of Animal Establishments, including pet shops. The Welsh Government is maintaining a watching brief as this policy develops.

**Further to your announcement on 31 October 2016 to proceed with the preparation of new legislation to permit scalloping in Cardigan Bay, please can let us know what assessments (economic, social and environmental) were undertaken to inform this decision, in addition to the scientific research studies by Bangor University? Please can you advise the Committee of the anticipated timeframes and next steps to opening the fishery?**

**Detail on what assessments (economic, social and environmental) were undertaken to inform this decision, in addition to the scientific research studies by Bangor University**

In respect of the socio-economic assessment, the figures quoted in the consultation document and to my recent statement were based on the economic value of the fishery based on recent years and landings. One of the key objectives of the proposals is to maintain and enhance the socio-economic value of the fishery. A Task & Finish Group will consider opportunities to enhance the value through interventions such as secondary processing of the catch within Wales and adding value to products.

**Detail on the anticipated timeframes and next steps to opening the fishery**

The Welsh Government is committed to a co-management approach to the development of new management measures for the scallop fishery, which we hope to secure through effective engagement with all relevant interests. This is fundamental to the approach, and a key part of our obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations and Environment Acts. The exact detail is yet to be developed through this partnership approach.

We are in the process of establishing a Task & Finish Group which will be involved with considering the detail and technical aspects of the permit scheme. The group will also consider requests for additional evidence/studies to enhance the fishery. At present we are finalising membership and the Terms of Reference for this group and the first meeting will be convened in the first two weeks of January. This group will report its findings via the Wales Marine & Fisheries Advisory Group and Wales Marine Stakeholder Advisory Group.

## **The timetable and progress of implementation plans for legislation falling within your portfolio.**

### **Implementation and monitoring of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016**

The Act comprises seven key parts and will mean significant economic, social and environmental benefits for Wales. It has been designed to support and complement our work to help secure Wales' long-term well-being, so current and future generations benefit from a prosperous economy, a healthy and resilient environment and vibrant, cohesive communities.

Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduces a clear and iterative national delivery framework:

- The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) produced by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), assesses the state of natural resources through the presentation of up-to-date evidence.

NRW launched the first report under this requirement on 3 October 2016. The report takes a ground breaking approach, looking at how our natural resources and ecosystems contribute in many ways to our well-being and the opportunities they provide to tackle key challenges around health, poverty and our economy, and deliver win-win benefits. It forms a national evidence base for policy and decision-makers on the sustainable management of natural resources, including through the public sector delivery framework provided by the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

- The national Natural Resources Policy (NRP), to be published by Welsh Ministers in March 2017, will identify the priorities and opportunities for managing Wales' natural resources, having regard to the evidence provided by the SoNaRR, and other evidence.

The consultation on the development of the NRP was launched on 14 November and will close on 13 February 2017. The Cabinet Secretary wrote to Cabinet colleagues to bring this to their attention. A stakeholder workshop was held 7 December in relation to this consultation.

The consultation document proposes three priority themes, which Welsh Ministers can use to address sustainable management of natural resources:

- Accelerating green growth by increasing resource efficiency, renewable energy and supporting innovation.
- Delivering nature-based solutions to improve resilience and the benefits derived from natural resources.
- Improving community and individual well being by taking a place and landscape based approach

The NRP will identify where Wales' natural resources can continue to support Welsh Government's objectives for Wales' prosperity and realise the significant opportunities they provide to deliver a secure, healthy and active, ambitious, learning, united and connected nation.

Crucially, the NRP will support the Cabinet Secretary's Roundtable meetings and associated stakeholder workshops on Brexit by playing a key role in ensuring that Wales can benefit from the significant opportunities that the better management of our natural resources can provide in parallel with addressing the clear challenges we face.

- Area statements, to be produced by NRW, will implement the national policy at a local level.

Once the Natural Resources Policy is published in March 2017, NRW must prepare and publish area statements for the areas of Wales that it considers appropriate for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of the NRP.

### **Reducing carbon emissions**

The Act also puts in place a statutory approach to reducing carbon emissions in Wales by at least 80% by 2050. The first phase of the programme to March 2019 will focus on setting up the emission reduction framework. A cross-Government programme has been established and the UK Committee on Climate Change has been appointed to provide statutory advice to Wales. We are currently looking at the options available as to how we account for emissions in Wales. The Act established a robust statutory monitoring framework, with Ministers required to report at the beginning of each budget period, and a final statement for each budgetary period laid before the National Assembly for Wales.

### **Carrier bag provisions**

Two carrier bag provisions were included in the Act – to set a charge for certain types of carrier bags such as bags for life and to place a duty on retailers to donate the proceeds. It is not the intention to enact the first of these until there is sufficient evidence to show these types of bags have a detrimental impact on the environment. My officials are working with representatives from the relevant sectors on the second provision. We intend to consult on proposals early in 2017. The Welsh Government will conduct a review once those elements are fully embedded.

### **Waste collection**

We intend to bring in subordinate legislation to require businesses to present their waste separately for collection and for waste collectors to do so by separate collection. The legislation will ban businesses from disposing of food waste into sewers and ban recyclable waste from incineration. Further subordinate legislation will ban recyclable materials from going to landfill. We plan to consult in 2017 with a view to introducing it in 2018. Reviewing progress on these matters will be an ongoing process and the legislation will be subject to further detailed Regulatory Impact Assessment which will set out monitoring arrangements and timescale.

### **Shellfishery management**

The Act enables Welsh Ministers to comply with statutory environmental obligations, whilst creating economic development opportunities for sustainable shellfishery management in Wales. These new powers help us to ensure no harm comes to a European Marine Site through a shellfishery's operation. The Welsh Ministers can make Several and Regulating Orders. These enable us to establish and cultivate shellfish thus creating employment, and to regulate a natural fishery by issuing permits respectively.

There are relatively few active Several or Regulating Orders in Welsh waters, or applications for new ones. Our Better Fisheries Project is taking forward developing and consulting on the regulations and associated the guidance. The cross-sector Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group is informing how the workstreams are prioritised. The Group will be discussing this further in January 2017, including considering fisheries legislation and regulations. Once these are implemented, day to day compliance with the regulations will be monitored by my officials, with further advice from the Wales Marine Advisory Group.

### **Marine licensing**

Fees and charging powers for marine licensing will be implemented through secondary legislation and recouped by NRW, acting under the delegated powers of the Welsh Ministers' as licensing authority. A public consultation runs until 28 November, after which the final proposals will be refined, if necessary. We expect to introduce and implement the necessary commencement order from April 2017. The marine licensing service and associated fees will be monitored regularly and we intend to carry out a review every three years.

### **Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee**

A Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee will be established in 2017 to replace the Flood Risk Management Wales Committee, which will be abolished at the same time. A twelve week consultation on the proposals was held from August to November and a Government response will be drafted shortly, to be followed by the necessary secondary legislation in the New Year. We expect the new Committee to be operational for the new financial year of 2017/18. The new Committee's performance will be subject to monitoring to ensure it is effective.

In taking forward the Act, the Welsh Government as a whole will also monitor and evaluate policy delivery against departmental objectives, as part of the wider implementation of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act.

### **Planning (Wales) Act 2015**

The co-ordinated and phased approach to delivering the improvements and supporting subordinate legislation from the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 is set out in the Positive Planning Implementation Plan (December 2015). Progress updates on its implementation has been provided in April 2016 and in a written statement I made on 14 July 2016. Links to these documents are provided below:

<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/legislation/planning-wales-act-2015/positive-planning-implementation-plan/?lang=en>

<http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2016-new/58437974/?lang=en>

Excellent progress has been made to implement the Act, with three quarters of its provisions now fully or partially in force. These include:

- Improvements to the development management system, which will assist Local Planning Authorities to demine planning applications in a timely manner.
- Improvements to the enforcement system to remove delays.
- Provisions enabling Local Planning Authorities to bring forward Strategic Development Plans.
- The introduction of a new planning application process to enable the Welsh Ministers to determine Developments of National Significance.

Work has also started on the National Development Framework, with the recent publication of the Statement of Public Participation and call for evidence and projects, which can be accessed using the following links:

<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/national-development-framework-for-wales/statement-of-public-participation/?lang=en&>

<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/national-development-framework-for-wales/call-for-evidence-and-projects/?lang=en&>

Remaining provisions of the Act will be implemented in the near future with improvements to the appeals system and changes to the structure of planning committees being introduced in spring 2017.

