

**Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs
Meeting with the Third (Voluntary) Sector Network
20 January 2020
12:00 - 13:00
Caernarfon Conference Room
Cathays Park 2**

Notes of the Meeting

Attending

Third Sector

Dave Cook	WCVA
Ruth Marks	WCVA
Elspeth Jones	Size of Wales
Rachel Sharp	Wales Environment Link
Gary Mitchell	Social Farms and Gardens
Rebecca Brough	Ramblers Cymru
Hayley Richards	Oxfam Cymru
Anne Meikel	WWF Cymru
Karen Balmer	Groundwork Wales

Apologies

Claire Lawson	Animal Welfare Wales
Nicola Perkins	Social Farms & Gardens
Sarah Germain	FairShare Cymru

Welsh Government

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM	Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs
Dan Butler	Special Adviser
Lori Frater	Head of Strategic Environment Policy
Ceri Witchard	Deputy Director Land, Nature & Forestry
Chris Jenkins	Head of Marine Science & Evidence
Matt McKeown	Government Business Unit
Patrick Isaac	Government Business unit

Agenda item 1: Environmental Principles and Governance

Environmental Principles

The Sector asked for assurances from the Minister about setting up a governance body. The Minister responded:

- Welsh Government has already committed to continuing to apply the four EU environmental principles to policy development and to address governance gaps in Wales.
- Welsh Government continues to discuss with the UK Government and the other devolved governments an approach to environmental principles which will provide a level of consistency across the UK.

The Environmental Governance Stakeholder Task Group has been established and will be reporting end of January, its recommendations on addressing the governance gaps as they arise in Wales.

Point to note:

- A report from the taskforce will be shared with the Minister by the end of January 2020.

Non regression

The Minister acknowledged the concerns of the Third Sector and agreed there would not be any regression of environmental standards. The approach in Wales is not only to improve upon our existing standards as they are vital for Brand Wales.

UK Bill

The UK Bill has been amended to enable Welsh environmental principles to apply, where Ministers of the Crown make policy in relation to Wales.

- In addition, the Welsh Government has been discussing how all administrations can take a consistent approach to principles and will continue these discussions on definitions of the four EU environmental principles (prevention, precaution, rectification at source and polluter pays).
- The First Minister, in his legislative statement on 17 July, reaffirmed his commitment to legislate on environmental principles and governance.

Agenda Item 2: The Ecological Crisis/Sustainable Land Management

Long term cross government investment

The Third Sector were concerned about long term investment into nature's recovery and species projects. The Minister informed the group:

- This year's budget drafting process included a cross cutting priority for biodiversity for the first time. This has entailed consideration of this priority by all government departments and across Cabinet, and has resulted in a considerable uplift in funding for the year 2020-21.
- In line with the entire budget, this is only a one year budget, but the process put in place will now develop and continue for the future.
- Part of the budget commitment is to pilot a biodiversity taskforce to support the delivery of action for biodiversity across government, to assist delivery in areas that have not yet fully understood the part they play in nature's recovery. This will also help reinforce the embedding of the section 6 duty across government.

Pesticides

The Sector was aware the Glyphosate license was coming up for renewal (in 2022) and asked how Wales will be enacting the EU sustainable use of pesticides:

- The Regulations include requirements for the UK to adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) so as to reduce the risks and impacts of plant protection products as well as encouraging the use of alternative approaches and techniques and Integrated Pesticide Management.
- The Minister assured the meeting her officials were working with the UK Government and the devolved administrations to review the existing NAP with the aim of publically consulting on the next iteration of the UK NAP this year.
- The Welsh Government works with stakeholders and sector advisory groups to promote best practice by amenity and amateur users. This liaison is being enhanced through Welsh Water's PestSmart project.

Nature Resources Policy

- A snapshot report on the implementation of the NRP will shortly be published, which sets out how the policy is enabling delivery across Welsh Government including communicated through the Nature Recovery Action Plan, Planning Policy Wales, a Low Carbon Wales, a Climate Conscious Wales, Sustainable Drainage Regulations and the forthcoming Clean Air Plan.

Marine

The Minister stated she remained fully committed to Wales completing its contribution to an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas:

- The first Welsh National Marine Plan was published on 12 November setting out Welsh Government's policy for the next 20 years for the sustainable development of our seas.
- It provides, for the first time, a clear and strategic policy framework encouraging the integrated consideration at an early stage of measures to safeguard and enhance marine ecosystems alongside economic considerations, guiding the right developments to the right places while optimising opportunities to protect and promote biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
- Work is underway to further strengthen ecological coherence, this includes using the extended Wales Act powers, to identify Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).
- The Minister confirmed that the N2K monies that had been made available in the budget would be available to both marine and land based projects. This could include the development of 'kelp forests'.

Green Infrastructure

The Minister informed the group the Green Infrastructure Working Group plays a vital role in enabling the cross-sectoral action needed for delivery. Wales Environment Link is a member of the group and the outputs are reported to the Minister. In addition:

- The need for green infrastructure to be biodiverse has been raised by the working group, and taken forward through the development of communication materials for the public sector, and for the group to share with their networks.
- For resilient ecological networks, native planting and local provenance used for semi-natural habitat restoration and creation is to be encouraged.
- Transport officials to note the Third Sector's comments regarding a quick win was being missed to create green corridors on the Trunk Road and the

Motorway Estate due to the Local Authority and Welsh Government, as different owners, working against each other.

Renewable energy

The Minister agreed with the Third Sector the climate emergency will demand transformative change, with failure to address the major sources of emissions resulting in ever increasing impacts on biodiversity. Renewable energy is central to reducing impact on ecosystems however:

- While Wales needs much more renewable energy, it must be well sited and designed.
- At the national scale, the National Development Framework consultation gives us opportunity to guide development to the most appropriate areas.

The National Forest

- The National Forest will focus on improving the condition and connectivity of our ancient woodlands and accelerating the rate of tree planting in Wales. We would welcome views on the best way to do this.
- Commercial forestry could form part of the National Forest, but would expect all aspects of the National Forest to be developed in line with best practice for woodland design.

Agenda item 3 - Brexit: key issues for voluntary organisations.

The Third Sector noted that so much was still unknown, particularly around arrangements for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

AoB

The Third Sector introduced their paper on Difficulties with Grants and the need for Delivery Partnerships. It looked specifically at ENRaW funding.

Action:

- Ruth Marks and Dan Butler to discuss and liaise with officials in the Third Sector Unit regarding the Funding Code of Practice and good grant management.