



Responding to the Ecological Crisis

Nature is in crisis. We are experiencing the sixth mass extinction in our planet's history. We have lost over 60 per cent of all biodiversity on the planet since 1970. Today, one in seven species in the UK are at threat of extinction and once-common wildlife is now becoming rare. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) stated that one million species may be pushed to extinction in the next few years. The latest UK research set out in the State of Nature 2019 report paints a very bleak picture. Many species in Wales are in decline, with 666 threatened with extinction and 73 already lost. Due to this, Wales is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) state that none of our ecosystems show signs of resilience.

It is now widely recognised that halting the loss of nature will require 'transformational change', necessitating unprecedented effort and coordination from all partners.

We welcome that Welsh Government has declared an ecological crisis and, with this, new initiatives to look at delivery across government to invest in nature and to recognise the benefits of nature-based solutions. Wales is uniquely placed to lead the way in nature's recovery through our world-leading environmental legislation. However, there is still a lot that needs to be achieved. We would appreciate it if the Minister could comment on the questions below:

1. The draft budget sets out new investment into nature's recovery and is very welcomed. But more investment will be needed longer-term and from all government departments. How will this be achieved? Also, there hasn't been investment into terrestrial and marine species projects - how do we create a focus on species?
2. We hope that Welsh Government recognition of the nature crisis enables the restoration of nature in the next five to 10 years. After this the continued restoration and maintenance of habitats and species will still need investment. Therefore, will the primary focus of future land management payments be nature's recovery and safeguarding?

3. How is Wales enacting the the EU Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD) 2009 and could a call for the reduction of use of pesticides by public bodies and domestic use be examined?
4. Ensuring sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) of our marine ecosystem still feels over-looked. Will gaps in the Marine Protected Area (MPA) network be filled? Can whole site designations be considered along with increased monitoring of site condition and assessment of Good Ecological Status of Welsh waters?
5. There is a real recognition of the benefits of green infrastructure, but public bodies need to ensure that all planting is native, pollinator friendly, peat and pesticide free and attracts wildlife to feed and live in these areas. How will this be communicated?
6. Wales has ambitious tree planting targets. Although in principle increased woodland habitat and tree cover in urban areas could be beneficial to nature, if the 'right tree in the right place' principle isn't adhered to then tree planting could be damaging to nature. What measures will Welsh Government make to ensure this doesn't happen?
7. Renewable energy is rightly a key part of tackling climate change. However, if located in sensitive nature areas or at an inappropriate scale then renewable energy production could impact on nature. How can truly 'green' energy be achieved in Wales?
8. The National Forest is a great opportunity for nature and for Wales. The approach of examining connectivity, especially between Ancient Woodland sites, is very welcomed. But how do we ensure that the National Forest delivers the right tree in the right place, enables natural regeneration and doesn't result in damaging commercial forestry? Also, Wales has internationally important Atlantic Oak Woodland and, coupled with the Celtic Forest project, this National Forest could form part of a much need contiguous band of our rainforest along our coast. Finally, would Welsh Government consider kelp forests as part of the National Forest?