Environment Bill progressing through Stage 1 Scrutiny in National Assembly

The Minister for Natural Resources provided evidence to the Environment and Sustainability (E&S) Committee on 16 September. The E&S Committee is now considering the evidence provided from the Minister and stakeholders and will report to the Assembly on the general principles of the Bill by 9 October. The Minister will then have the opportunity to respond to the report during the Stage 1 general principles plenary debate which is expected to take place on 20 October.

You can follow the progress of the Bill through the National Assembly for Wales via the link, including what has happened so far. A diagram on the links between the Environment (Wales) Bill, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 has been published. It provides information on the timings and interaction of the products and reports required under these 3 pieces of legislation. This diagram is available here.

The Environment (Wales) Bill puts in place the legislation needed to enable Wales' resources to be managed in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way, while establishing a robust framework to help to accelerating our performance in addressing climate change. To find out more about Natural Resource Management please follow the link to access our animation.

You can also keep up to date with developments on Twitter by following #EnvBillWales.

Natural Resources Policy Statement

The policy statement published on 14 September supports the Environment Bill, which places a duty on Welsh Ministers to prepare, publish and implement a statutory National Natural Resources Policy (NNRP). This sets our priorities in relation to the management of natural resources.

This policy statement is a precursor to the statutory NNRP, illustrating potential priorities and opportunities for our natural resources. It will be used to engage our partners to develop and inform the first statutory policy which will be published in Spring 2017.
Nature Fund

A total of £5m has been invested via the Nature Fund, to twenty projects to help demonstrate how Natural Resource Management can be applied in practical terms. The fund has supported innovative and collaborative actions on the ground that have improved biodiversity whilst also delivering economic and community benefit across Wales.

Many of the projects are being used now as case studies of sustainable management of natural resources in practice to support the Environment Bill. The projects also provide valuable evidence and lessons for NRW to draw on in taking forward their approach to achieve sustainable management of natural resources. Several of the projects have also been successful in engaging their community’s children and young people with the aim of sustaining the benefits of the projects in the long term.

Engagement

To promote and share the learning from the Nature Fund Projects, we facilitated the Natural Resource Management in practice – Learning from the Nature Fund event on 23 September to allow organisations and individuals to come together to discuss continued collaboration, lessons learned and to contribute to the implementation of the sustainable management of natural resources. All 20 projects took up the offer of exhibition space to promote the achievements their projects have recorded to date and to share lessons learned.

Real Benefits

The projects are delivering real benefits to our communities and natural resources. By the summer 2015, 470 businesses had been engaged by the 20 projects, over 230 of which were farmers, with 49 contracts awarded ranging from fencing to training in land management techniques. Over 18,500m of hedgerows and nearly 25,000sqm of fencing have been created, with 70 hectares of land improved through heather management, wildflower meadow creation and molinia grass cuts. Over 70 hectares of woodland has been identified for creation and management with 19,000 trees in the process of being planted. The success to date has been underpinned by individuals, business and organisations volunteering 2850 hours to ensure successful delivery. These are mid point figures that we expect to increase.

An infographic showing a summary of the progress that has been made to date, as well as a series of factsheets describing the projects aims, who is involved and the benefits the project will bring to the environment, society and the economy.

Wales Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017

On 7 October we held a workshop in Cardiff on the Wales Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). The workshop discussed the findings from the analysis undertaken so far by the CCRA, and sought stakeholder’s expert opinion and feedback.

The CCRA is a statutory requirement under the Climate Change Act and will set out the latest threats and opportunities for the UK and Wales from climate change. Under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act there is now an obligation to take into account the latest findings from the CCRA in the Future Trends Report and local Wellbeing Assessments and so this workshop will help to ensure we have a robust evidence base in Wales.
If you were unable to attend the event, but would still like to contribute towards the review of the draft CCRA chapters, which will be released in October, please contact us: CC&NRM@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 Animation

An animation has been produced by the Welsh Government showing how The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 will shape the life of Megan, a fictional Welsh character. The story follows her from birth to adulthood and explains the reasons why the Act was introduced, how it’s expected to work as well as its likely impact on Megan and the rest of Wales.

The animation is one of a number of recent films used to explain key policy and legislative programmes such as the Environment Bill and Marine Planning.

For more information about the Act please visit the Welsh Government’s webpages.

The Climate Group Twitter Q&A

On 17th September, the Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant took part in a twitter Q&A arranged by the Climate Group ahead of Climate Week (21-28th September) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (25th-27th September) which both took place in New York.

The Welsh Government is a member of The Climate Group's States & Regions Alliance, which brings together sub-national government leaders from around the world in a high-profile network that shares expertise, demonstrates impact and influences the international climate dialogue.

During the Q&A the Minister called for ‘the strongest possible agreement’ at the global climate talks being held in Paris in December. He also underlined the Welsh Government’s commitment to sustainable development, having already put the UN Sustainable Development Goals into legislation in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Read a synopsis of the Q&A here.

England introduce 5p carrier bag charge

Wales led the way with the 5p carrier bag charge over four years ago and now England have followed suit. The Post Implementation Review of the Single Use Carrier Bag (SUCB) Charge in Wales: Emerging Findings Report, published earlier this month, reported that the use of SUCBs has declined by an estimated 71% in Wales since the charge was introduced in 2011. The review also found that 74% of consumers surveyed were supportive of the charge and 87% of retailers who charged for their bags reported that the SUCB had made either a positive or neutral impact on their business. The SUCB charge has also meant that the 5p donations to good causes are estimated at between £17 million and £22 million since the charge was introduced. Read on for more information.
Microchipping of Dogs

The Welsh Government is working to bring in compulsory microchipping for all dogs in Wales from April 2016, in line with England and Scotland. This is part of a wider range of ongoing developments to encourage responsible ownership to improve the welfare of dogs in Wales.

The National Survey for Wales 2014-15, published on 11th June 2015, identified that there are approximately 534,000 dogs in Wales and of those acquired in the last five years, 78% of them are microchipped. The Dogs Trust data collected in 2014 suggested that around 66.6% of all dogs are already microchipped.

It will still be a legal requirement for a dog to wear a collar and tag (with the owner’s name and contact details) whilst in a public place when compulsory microchipping is introduced. For further information about microchipping, please contact your vet or a suitably trained pet care specialist.

Wales TB dashboard

TB eradication in Wales is an ambitious, achievable long term objective, and it is essential to chart progress towards our goal of a TB-Free Wales. For a number of years the Welsh Government has published monthly headline statistics. However, the TB picture in Wales is far more complex than that, and we have been working on a new way of reporting a wider range of figures which reflect regional differences and to provide the information in a more accessible way.

The Welsh Government has now published a new TB Dashboard to present data in an understandable and visual way, charting our journey to TB eradication on a quarterly basis. The dashboard is available here.

Marine Planning: We want your views

The sea around Wales provides us with food, jobs, energy and somewhere to enjoy. But how do we manage all of these demands on our natural resources? The Welsh Government is developing a Welsh National Marine Plan to ensure that activities at the coast and in Welsh waters happen in a sustainable way.

If you have an interest in the Marine area, on shore or off shore, and want to have a say in how the Marine Plan is shaped, why not come along to one of the drop-in sessions being hosted around the country during November. We want to hear your views about what we are doing on marine planning in Wales. Find out more here.

Be part of the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales – Applications open 23rd October

The Welsh Government will shortly be inviting applications from those who wish to take a seat on the new Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales as either the independent Chair or one of the four
independent members. This historic Panel will have a wide ranging remit to make a real difference in the sector. Beyond setting agricultural wages and other terms and conditions of agricultural employment, the Panel will provide advice to Welsh ministers on agricultural matters, encourage new entrants into the industry and promote new training opportunities to maintain a sustainable, skilled agricultural workforce in Wales.

Two applicants will be appointed who have experience in agriculture, two will be appointed who have experience in education and one will be appointed as the independent Chair who can demonstrate the necessary skills and experience needed to lead the new Panel. They will join representatives of employers and employees for a four year term, meeting at least three times a year, and will be at the forefront of the industry.

Full person specifications, job descriptions and other details will be released on the Welsh Government web pages on 23 October 2015 and applications must be received by 13 November 2015.

The new look newsletter

The NRM newsletter is undergoing a makeover and in the next edition we will unveil our new look! In order to be more consistent with other Welsh Government publications, we are moving to a web based software system called Gov Delivery. This will mean that the newsletter will look completely different; it will be more streamlined, easier to access and structured in a different way. You can also sign up to receive it in either Welsh or English. For more information about the newsletter contact: NaturalResourceComms@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK