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Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-945
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00251/20

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee

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11 February 2020

Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter of 27 January, regarding the Woodland Trust's (Coed Cadw) Petition P-05-945 on the Climate Emergency and National Forest in Wales.

The Welsh Government's *Woodlands for Wales* Strategy outlines our commitment to increase tree planting in Wales and to ensure woodlands are created and managed in a sustainable way.

Our strategy also encompasses the objectives of the Environment (Wales) Act (2016), which put into legislation international best practice for reversing the decline in biodiversity through the 'sustainable management of natural resources' (SMNR). It is further underpinned by the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) being the reference standard for sustainable forest management across Wales and the UK.

The *Woodlands for Wales* strategy sets a target for increasing woodland by at least 2,000 hectares per year from 2020 to 2030 and beyond. This figure was established in line with the recommendations from the UK's Independent Committee on Climate Change (UKICCC) to help address the climate emergency.

The Welsh Government is investing £4.5 million to begin establishing a National Forest in Wales. The National Forest will contribute to increasing woodland creation in Wales, alongside other measures such as the Glastir Woodland Creation scheme. The National Forest will also unlock other opportunities, such as helping local communities better connect with the natural environment and tourism.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

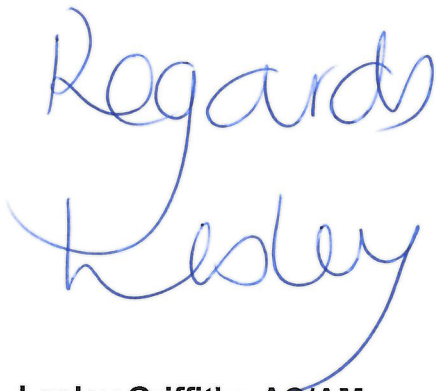
Tree planting is a long-term aspiration and requires a step change in land use, it will take time to make progress. The forestry business by its nature is long term, trees take time to grow and so our policies need to operate both in the shorter term, which are also relevant in 50 years' time. It is important to have realistic and ambitious targets.

The Welsh Government wants to ensure SMNR principles are applied when planting trees to ensure the right tree is planted in the right place. It is also important to maintain a balance in planting to maintain our productive coniferous forests and champion home grown timber in Wales. Importing timber, especially from areas where environmental standards aren't as high as our own, can be problematic and I see it as vital to encourage a dynamic timber industry in Wales.

Tree planting needs to be considered in balance with other important natural resources such as habitat, landscape and water quality in order to maximise the economic and environmental benefits of expanding our woodland cover in Wales.

The approach and delivery framework in the Environment (Wales) Act is about reversing the decline in biodiversity through international best practice to achieve this aim. The Natural Resources Policy sets out 'resilient ecological networks' as a priority for reversing the decline in biodiversity. On the Welsh Government Woodland Estate this is being taken forward through Area Statements and the Nature Recovery Action Plan.

The Welsh Government also wants to encourage community engagement with woodlands. Under the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) scheme, the Welsh Government also provides funding towards Llais y Goedwig ('Voice of the Woodlands'). Llais y Goedwig is a community woodland, grassroots network group - which support community woodland groups across Wales. Llais y Goedwig has a large volunteer base and works in collaboration with other organisations, community groups and individuals to champion community woodlands in Wales.



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