

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /  
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee  
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd  
PR 48

Ymateb gan Cronfa Bywyd Gwylt y Byd (WWF) Cymru /  
Evidence from World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Cymru



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*We are WWF Cymru, and we are fighting to restore and protect Welsh nature, tackling climate change and reduce Wales global impact on nature. We're determined to ensure that people and nature can thrive together, for generations to come.*

#### Committee priorities for the 6<sup>th</sup> Senedd

- The future of food, farming and land use in Wales
- Wales' global impacts on climate and nature overseas - global responsibility
- Low carbon delivery plan and 2<sup>nd</sup> carbon budget
- Environmental governance and principles bill
- Welsh Seascapes
- The nature emergency and nature targets
- Innovative funding

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#### The Future of Food, Farming and Land Use in Wales

In the Minister Julie James' letter to the committee outlining Welsh Government's priorities in relation to climate change, environment and infrastructure, we noted that the letter did not specifically refer to the key role that the food and farming sector needs to play. Importantly, it did not acknowledge that our food system is at risk from a changing climate. It also directly contributes towards climate change, with agriculture contributing around 16% of Wales' total

greenhouse gas emissions<sup>1</sup>. Based on UK data, food manufacture, transport and retail emissions account for another 5.5%. Furthermore, unsustainable land use is one of the key drivers of biodiversity loss, with more than 80% of Wales' land utilised for agriculture. Crucially, our land is our biggest natural defence against climate change and it could be our biggest ally in restoring nature. We therefore believe that this committee has to consider within its priorities the crucial role of food and farming (from farm to fork – production to consumption), and land use.

The Legislative Programme confirmed that the Government plans to bring the Agriculture Bill to the Senedd in this Senedd year. This critical piece of legislation will shape our landscapes, ecosystems and rural communities for many years to come. WWF Cymru sees ecological resilience, food production and the long-term viability of farming in Wales as interdependent; a healthy environment underpins food production itself. For example, robust, healthy living soils are vital for the medium and long-term viability of Welsh agriculture and our food supply, as well as being crucial for carbon sequestration and biodiversity.

The Agriculture Bill must therefore respond to the triple challenge of delivering high quality sustainable food whilst restoring nature and getting to carbon net zero. The recent IPCC report adds significant context to this ambition and the Government will have to consider the new data and advice contained in the report closely alongside its work on the Bill. **With this in mind, WWF Cymru strongly recommends that the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee request joint scrutiny of the Agriculture Bill and proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme, with the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee.**

The Ministers letter talks about the need to step up investment in resilient ecological networks and transformative change to reverse the loss of biodiversity. We agree, and believe that the Sustainable Farming Scheme will be crucial vehicle for this in incentivising local and strategic landscape scale nature creation/restoration interventions which respond to the nature and climate emergency.

### **Wales' Global Impacts on climate and nature overseas - Global Responsibility**

One of the key factors driving the global climate and nature emergency is deforestation and habitat loss. The International Panel on Climate Change is clear that without our forests, we will fail to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Wales needs to play its part by changing what it buys, consumes and invests in, since these choices can drive unethical practices and environmental degradation overseas.

Ensuring supply chains are fair, ethical and sustainable is important for a number of reasons, including Wales' obligation to establish itself as a Globally Responsible Nation in the Well-being of Future Generations Act for Wales. Wales has a responsibility to consider how its practices impact global habitats, but Wales also has an opportunity to demonstrate global leadership towards driving sustainability across commodity supply chains around the world.

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, 2021: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S. L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M. I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J. B. R. Matthews, T. K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu and B. Zhou (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. In Press.

More than 50% of global forest loss and land conversion is attributable to the production of agricultural commodities and forestry products demanded by consumers. Precious habitats like the Amazon are being burnt to clear land - rainforests are being destroyed to produce just a handful of commodities. Wales imports significant quantities of agricultural and forest commodities, some of which are driving deforestation and habitat destruction overseas. Whether that is commodities for the production of soymeal for livestock feed in Wales, palm oil used in everyday supermarket items, beef imported into Wales, cocoa used in many Welsh treats and desserts, or even rubber used to produce latex or car tyres.

WWF Cymru, along with RSPB Cymru and Size of Wales have formed a Deforestation Free Nation Partnership. We have commissioned research to provide data, for the first time in Wales, of the quantities of agricultural commodities: cocoa, palm oil, beef, leather, natural rubber and soy, and estimates of the quantities of forest commodities: timber, pulp and paper, that are imported into Wales. The report, to be launched in October this year, provides an analysis of Wales' demand for these agricultural and forest commodities that are driving deforestation and habitat conversion in the countries in which they are produced, contributing to biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas emissions and social issues.

The research confirms that an area equivalent to 40% of the size of Wales (823,000 hectares) was required overseas to grow Welsh imports of cocoa, palm oil, beef, leather, natural rubber, soy, timber, pulp and paper in an average year between 2011-2018. Crucially, 30% of the land used to grow Welsh imports of commodities is in countries categorised high or very high risk for social and deforestation issues. This means commodity supply chains supplying Wales in these countries risk deforestation, conversion of natural ecosystems and/or social issues, such as child or forced labour. The GHG emissions associated with the conversion of natural ecosystems and changes in land cover for the production of Welsh imports of soy, cocoa, palm and natural rubber total 1.5 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> each year. This is equivalent to 4% of Wales' total estimated domestic and imported goods carbon footprint, or 22% of the GHG emissions from transport in Wales. However, this overseas impact is not accounted for in Welsh carbon budgets. There is a need for Scope 3 emissions to be accounted for i.e. emissions across the 'cradle-to-grave' supply chain of the product – from the extraction, production and transportation of raw materials, to the finished product's transportation to the customer, its use and its disposal.

The research is clear – if we are serious about tackling climate change and nature loss in Wales, we have to also address our overseas impacts. We would welcome committee scrutiny in relation to Wales and global responsibility.

### **Low carbon delivery plan and 2nd carbon budget**

We agree with the Minister on the need for the 2020s to be 'the decade of action' if we are to meet net zero by 2050. We also agree of the importance of the second Low Carbon Delivery Plan and carbon budget in working towards this 2050 objective. Given the new commitment to a 2050 net zero target, we want to see a tightening of targets and transparent, timebound pathways towards identifying them, particularly clear detailed pathways for agriculture and land use, as well as blue carbon (carbon captured by the ocean and coastal ecosystems through e.g. seagrass). We also want to see scope 3 emissions accounted for in carbon budgets. We are unclear as to whether Welsh Government will set sectoral emission targets in the second low carbon plan, and if they did, what the level of ambition would be and how

they would get there. We believe there could have been more stakeholder engagement and co design of the second Low Carbon Delivery Plan which we believe is due to be launched in COP 26. We would therefore welcome immediate committee scrutiny on the second Low Carbon Delivery Plan and carbon budget.

### **Environmental governance and principles bill**

There needs to be a shift in priority to bringing forward the environmental governance and principles bill as it is crucial in establishing environmental governance arrangements and principles in Wales post Brexit. We were disappointed that this legislation was not included in the Welsh Government's legislative programme for the first year of this Senedd. While we welcome the appointment of the Interim Environmental Protection Assessor, we would stress that this appointment does not bridge the governance gap which arose on the UK's departure from the EU at the start of this year. It therefore does not diminish the urgency of legislating for the robust long-term arrangements needed to do so, as has been done or is near completion in all of the other UK countries. We would like scrutiny of this work to be prioritised, and allocated sufficient government resource now, to ensure that a bill can be laid early in the second year of the Senedd. We would stress our support for the next, urgent phase of development of policy and legislation to establish an independent environmental governance oversight body; enshrine a high level objective and core environmental principles to fill gaps left by EU withdrawal; and create a framework for statutory nature recovery targets.

### **Welsh Seascapes**

Julie stated in her letter to the committee "Our vision for our seas is that they are clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse. Wales has important marine habitats, such as seagrass forests and saltmarshes. Our approach is structured around assessment, protection and management, and restoration. Effective marine planning for, and regulation of, new development is crucial to enabling sustainable marine sector growth, particularly for the development of marine energy projects to contribute to net zero".

There is a need for this committee to scrutinise Welsh Government plans in relation to Wales' marine environment. In the Programme for Government there is a particular commitment to develop a scheme to restore seagrass and saltmarsh. Committee scrutiny should focus on how they intend to develop the scheme and how much money they are resourcing it with. We believe the Welsh Government should be leading and co-ordinating coastal habitat restoration efforts, with incorporation of seagrass restoration & expansion, and ambition to develop seaweed opportunities for example as agricultural feed and food products.

### **The nature emergency and nature targets**

This is a crucial period for biodiversity at a global level, with the Convention on Biological Diversity likely to take place next year in China having been postponed this year. The hope is that this conference will achieve for biodiversity what can hopefully be achieved for the climate at COP26 in Glasgow. If the Welsh Government is serious about addressing the nature crisis in Wales it will need to continue to show leadership, to support ambitious global targets to restore biodiversity and to commit to embedding targets in domestic law. This will provide crucial accountability and focus Welsh Government's attention on achieving the targets and milestones, in the same way we have seen happen on climate. Along with RSPB and WEL

we jointly published a report titled *Putting Wales on a Path to Nature Recovery* in June which we would like the committee to consider. Many of the actions that we need to take to protect threatened wildlife will also serve as nature-based solutions to flooding, soil erosion and water and air pollution and also help capture carbon to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions. We need to adopt a nature positive approach, recognising the value of nature, placing it on the path to recovery and transforming our world to one where people, economies and nature thrive.

In the absence of clear and binding targets, we have not seen joined up action at the scale that is needed. We simply can't wait for years to the Welsh Government to set, and then implement nature targets. Targets are needed now. It is vital for this Committee to take up the agenda left by its processor and give a clear lead on this issue, so that that tackling the climate and nature emergencies should be embedded into all the Welsh Government's key decisions. We therefore urge the Committee to consider this issue as the earliest opportunity.

### **Innovative funding**

Government funding is insufficient to deliver nature restoration at the scale and pace that nature requires. WWF Cymru urges Government to embrace innovative funding mechanisms (such as Bonds) to leverage additional capital into to transition to regenerative farming and wider environmental outcomes. We support the delivery of transformational, systemic nature-based policy solutions that both sequester carbon and restore biodiversity.

*I gael mwy o wybodaeth, cysylltwch â / For more information, please contact:*

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