



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Cynaliadwyedd  
The Sustainability Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 12 Mai 2010  
Wednesday, 12 May 2010**

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,  
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.  
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Lorraine Barrett	Llafur Labour
Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Ann Jones	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Irene James) Labour (substitute for Irene James)
Rhodri Morgan	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Joyce Watson) Labour (substitute for Joyce Watson)
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd dros dro y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Temporary Committee Chair)
Brynle Williams	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Leanne Wood	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Stephen Bladwell	RSPB RSPB
Ceri Davies	Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd Cymru Environment Agency Wales
Keith Davies	Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru Countryside Council for Wales
Craig Mitchell	Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Welsh Local Government Association
Morgan Parry	Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru Countryside Council for Wales
Joanne Sherwood	Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd Cymru Environment Agency Wales
Annie Smith	RSPB RSPB
Clive Thomas	Comisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru Forestry Commission Wales

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol**  
**National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Dr Virginia Hawkins	Clerc Clerc
Meriel Singleton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.04 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.04 a.m.*

**Ethol Cadeirydd Dros Dro**  
**Election of Temporary Chair**

[1] **Dr Hawkins:** Good morning and welcome to this meeting of the Sustainability Committee. Our chair, Mike German, is unable to be with us this morning, so under Standing

Order No. 10.19, I call for nominations to appoint a temporary chair for this meeting.

[2] **Brynle Williams:** I nominate Rhodri Glyn Thomas.

[3] **Dr Hawkins:** Are there any other nominations? I see that there are none. I therefore declare that Rhodri Glyn Thomas has been elected temporary chair for this meeting.

*Penodwyd Rhodri Glyn Thomas yn gadeirydd dros dro.  
Rhodri Glyn Thomas was appointed temporary chair.*

9.04 a.m.

### **Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[4] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Apologies for Ymddiheuriadau am ddechrau ychydig starting a few minutes late, but we had to funudau'n hwyr, ond yr oedd rhaid inni make some last-minute changes. wneud rhai newidiadau munud olaf.

[5] Mae offer cyfieithu ar gael sydd Translation equipment is available, which hefyd yn chwyddleisio'r sain, os yw pobl yn also amplifies the sound if people find it hard ei chael yn anodd i glywed yr hyn sy'n to hear what is going on. digwydd.

[6] **Rhodri Morgan:** Beth ddywedaist **Rhodri Morgan:** What did you say? ti?

[7] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very fawr iawn, cyn-Brif Weinidog. much, former First Minister.

[8] Mae angen gwneud y cyhoeddiadau The usual announcements have to be made. If arferol. Os bydd y larwm tân yn canu, follow the instructions of the ushers. Please switch off any electronic dilynwch gyfarwyddiadau'r tywyswyr. Mae equipment, such as mobile phones or pagers. Mae angen diffodd unrhyw offer electronig, fel They must be switched off completely, as ffonau symudol neu alwyr. Mae angen eu diffodd yn gyfan gwbl, gan eu bod yn they interfere with the audio equipment. You effeithio ar yr offer sain. Nid oes angen do not need to touch the microphones, as they cyffwrdd â'r meicroffonau, gan y byddant yn operate automatically. gweithredu'n awtomatig.

[9] Heddiw, yr ydym yn derbyn Today, we are taking evidence on the tystiolaeth ar strategaeth amgylcheddol i environment strategy for Wales from the Gymru gan Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd, Environment Agency, the Countryside Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru, Comisiwn Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Coedwigaeth Cymru, Cymdeithas Wales, the Welsh Local Government Llywodraeth Leol Cymru, a'r RSPB. Association, and the RSPB.

[10] Yr wyf wedi derbyn ymddiheuriadau I have received apologies from Mike gan Mike German, y Cadeirydd. Yn German, the Chair, who unfortunately cannot anffodus, nid yw'n gallu bod yma. Yr wyf be here. I have also received apologies from hefyd wedi derbyn ymddiheuriadau gan Karen Sinclair, Irene James, and Joyce Karen Sinclair, Irene James a Joyce Watson. Mae Ann Jones and Rhodri Morgan yn Watson. Ann Jones and Rhodri Morgan yn dirprwyo heddiw. be substituting for them today.

9.06 a.m.

**Craffu ar y Strategaeth Amgylcheddol: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth—Asiantaeth yr  
Amgylchedd Cymru a Chyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru**  
**Scrutiny of the Environment Strategy: Evidence Session—Environment Agency  
Wales and Countryside Council for Wales**

[11] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Cyhoeddwyd strategaeth amgylcheddol Cymru ym Mai 2006. Hon yw strategaeth tymor hir Llywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer yr amgylchedd, ac ynddi mae'n gosod y cyfeiriad strategol am yr 20 mlynedd nesaf. Pwrpas y strategaeth yw sicrhau bod fframwaith i sicrhau bod ein hamgylchedd yn lân, yn iach, yn fiolegol amrywiol ac yn cael ei barchu gan bobl Cymru. Mae'r strategaeth yn cael ei gwirio yn gyson, ac y mae map polisi sy'n gosod allan y prif amcanion—mae 39 o'r rheini.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** The environment strategy for Wales was published in May 2006. This is the Welsh Government's long-term strategy for the environment, in which it outlines the strategic direction for the next 20 years. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that there is a framework to ensure that our environment is clean, healthy, biologically diverse and respected by the people of Wales. This strategy is revised often, and there is a policy map that sets out the main objectives, of which there are 39.

[12] Mae'r strategaeth yn cyflwyno nifer o themâu amgylcheddol: newid yn yr amgylchedd; defnydd cynaliadwy o adnoddau; ein hamgylchedd lleol; peryglon i'r amgylchedd; ac amrywiaeth o ran tirlun. Byddwn yn derbyn tystiolaeth gan nifer o fudiadau'r bore yma ynglŷn â'r ffordd y maent yn cydweithio â'r strategaeth honno ac yn trefnu eu gweithgaredd yn unol â hi.

The strategy introduces a number of environmental themes: environmental change; the sustainable use of resources; our local environment; threats to the environment; and diversity in the landscape. We will receive evidence from a number of organisations this morning on the way in which they collaborate with the strategy and arrange their activities accordingly.

[13] Yr wyf yn gwahodd ein tystion cyntaf i ymuno â ni. O Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd Cymru y mae Ceri Davies a Joanne Sherwood, ac o Gyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru y mae Morgan Parry a Keith Davies. A ddewch chi at y bwrdd os gwelwch yn dda?

I invite our first witnesses to join us. From the Environment Agency, we have Ceri Davies and Joanne Sherwood, and from the Countryside Council for Wales, we have Morgan Parry and Keith Davies. Would you come to the table, please?

[14] Mae'r ddau sefydliad yn chwarae rhan allweddol o ran cyflwyno'r strategaeth amgylcheddol. Yn ei chyflwyniad ysgrifenedig, nododd Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd ei bod yn arwain ar dri o'r 41 gweithrediad yn yr ail gynllun gweithredol a'i bod yn cydweithio i arwain ar ddau arall. Ar naw o'r gweithrediadau, mae'n cefnogi mudiadau sy'n arwain yn y meysydd hynny. Mae Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru wedi nodi ei fod yn arwain ar 14 gweithrediad yn yr ail gynllun gweithredol a'i fod yn gweithio ar y cyd mewn chwech arall, a'i fod yn gweithredu ar saith o weithrediadau eraill.

Both organisations play a key part in delivering the environment strategy. In its written evidence, the Environment Agency noted that it leads on three of the 41 actions in the second action plan and that it is collaborating to lead on two others. In nine of the actions, it supports the lead organisations in those areas. The Countryside Council for Wales has noted that it leads on 14 actions in the second action plan and that it works jointly on another six, and that it is implementing seven further actions.

9.10 a.m.

[15] Estynnaf groeso mawr i chi i gyd y bore yma, ac yn arbennig i Morgan Parry. Credaf mai dyma ymddangosiad cyntaf Morgan gerbron y pwyllgor hwn yn ei rôl newydd fel cadeirydd Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru. Yr ydym i gyd yn gwybod am gyfraniad Morgan i'r ymgyrch dros nifer o flynyddoedd bellach i sicrhau ein bod ni'n ceisio amddiffyn a hybu'r amgylchedd yng Nghymru. Croeso arbennig i chi, Morgan. Cyn gwahodd aelodau eraill o'r pwyllgor i ofyn cwestiynau, gofynnaf i chi wneud cyflwyniad byr o ryw ddwy neu dair munud, gan gymryd bod ein Aelodau i gyd wedi darllen eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig. A yw Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd Cymru am wneud cyflwyniad byr, neu a ydych chi eisiau symud yn syth i gwestiynau?

I extend a warm welcome to you all this morning and to Morgan Parry in particular. I think that this is Morgan's first appearance before the committee in his new role as chair of the Countryside Council for Wales. We all know of Morgan's contribution to the campaign for a number of years now to ensure that we try to protect and promote the environment in Wales. A warm welcome to you, Morgan. Before inviting other committee members to ask questions, I will ask you to make a brief presentation of two to three minutes, taking as given that our Members have all read your written report. Does the Environment Agency Wales want to make a short presentation, or do you want to move straight to questions?

[16] **Ms Davies:** I will make a short opening statement, if that is okay. Thank you for inviting us along today. As you have said, we are responsible for leading on a number of actions and supporting others. We feel that we are making good progress on those in which we lead or support, and there is ongoing action evidenced in our written submission today. The action plan is a snapshot of the full environment strategy, which is to be delivered through to 2026. So, as you would expect, not all of the activities that we do are covered within the action plan currently. We have tried to give an example in our evidence of where we provide other support towards the delivery of the outcomes by 2026. We believe that we are making good progress, and we are also trying to embed sustainable development within our organisation as a central organising principle, and we are happy to take questions on both of those areas.

[17] **Mr Parry:** Diolch am eich cyflwyniad caredig, Rhodri. Mae Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru yn croesawu'r strategaeth hon. Y mae'n tynnu ynghyd gwahanol feysydd o waith y Llywodraeth ynghyd â rhai a etifeddwyd gyda sefydlu'r Cynulliad. Felly, mae'n bwysig, fel y mae'r ffaith bod targedau tymor hir ynddi. Y cyddestun byd-eang yw bod pwysau o hyd ar fioamrywiaeth a bod allyriannau carbon yn dal i gynyddu. Yr oedd adroddiad ddechrau'r wythnos hon yn dangos bod bioamrywiaeth ar lefel byd-eang yn dal i ddiffleddu. Mae adroddiad y Cenhedloedd Unedig yn tynnu sylw at y ffaith bod y cysylltiad rhwng yr economi a bioamrywiaeth yn dod yn gliriach, ac wrth gollu bioamrywiaeth, yr ydym yn colli cyfle i'r economi ac yn cynyddu'r costau yn fyd-eang. Felly, o gofio ein bod newydd fynd drwy etholiad lle yr oedd yr economi yn flaenoriaeth, a'n bod yn mynd i

**Mr Parry:** Thank you for your kind introduction, Rhodri. The Countryside Council for Wales welcomes this strategy. It brings together various strands of the Government's work, including some that were inherited with the creation of the Assembly. It is therefore important, as is the fact that it includes long-term targets. The global context is that biodiversity is still under pressure and carbon emissions are still on the rise. A report at the beginning of this week showed that biodiversity on a global level continues to disappear. A United Nations report draws attention to the fact that the link between the economy and biodiversity is becoming clearer, and as biodiversity is lost, we lose opportunities for the economy and increase costs globally. Therefore, bearing in mind that we have just been through an election in which the economy was a priority, and that we are

gyfnod lle bydd datrys y problemau economaidd ym mlaen ein meddyliau i gyd, bydd rhaid inni gofio tystiolaeth yr adroddiad hwn, sef bod yr amgylchedd yn sail i economi gref. Mae Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd Cymru a Chyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru yn cyflawni nifer o dargedau ar ran y Llywodraeth, ond ni allwn anwybyddu'r cysylltiadau ehangach â'r economi yng Nghymru. Yr wyf yn siŵr y byddwn yn dangos yn ein tystiolaeth heddiw ein bod ni, yn ein gwaith fel cyrff, yn hybu economi ac yn gwella iechyd a safon byw pobl. Dyna'r cyd-destun ehangach i ddechrau.

entering a period when solving the economic problems will be on everyone's mind, we must keep in mind the evidence in this report, namely that the environment is a basis for a strong economy. The Environment Agency Wales and the CCW are achieving many of the Government's targets, but we cannot ignore the wider links with the economy in Wales. I am sure that we will demonstrate in our evidence today that, in our work as organisations, we are boosting the economy and improving people's health and their standard of living. That is the wider context to begin with.

[18] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr. Gan eich bod wedi ein gwahodd i holi ynglŷn â'r hyn yr ydych wedi'i gyflawni, fe ddechreuaf. Mae pedair blynedd wedi mynd heibio bellach ers cyhoeddi'r strategaeth. Beth ydych chi'n teimlo eich bod wedi'i gyflawni fel mudiadau o fewn y strategaeth honno?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very much. As you have invited us to ask about what you have achieved, I will start. Four years have passed since the strategy was published. What do you as organisations feel that you have achieved within that strategy?

[19] **Ms Davies:** In terms of this particular action plan, there were some key requirements on us regarding the implementation of the water framework directive. We produced, early this year, on behalf of the Assembly, the river basin plans for the Dee, western Wales, and the Severn, which capture an integrated consideration of the progress that we need to make to achieve good ecological status for those river catchments by 2027. This is the first snapshot of those plans, which were published on time in accordance with the action plan requirements. There was considerable engagement with other environmental bodies, bodies representing a range of organisations, and public sector bodies to produce those plans, and a range of organisations will take up the call for action to ensure delivery against those targets.

[20] Another area in which we were successful was the launch of the water resources strategy in Wales. Since that was launched last June, we have also produced a more detailed action plan to support that, which sets out key actions for water companies, other public sector bodies and environmental organisations, to ensure sustainable water resource use for public supply and for the environment. Those are two of the main achievements of this action plan.

[21] **Mr Davies:** Fel yr amlinellodd ein cadeirydd yn ei gyflwyniad, mae Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru wedi bod yn arwain ar nifer o weithrediadau'r strategaeth amgylchedd, ac yn cyfrannu at nifer o weithrediadau eraill. O safbwynt prif lwyddiannau'r cyngor, yr ydym wedi cyflawni gwaith trylwyr iawn mewn partneriaeth â chyrff eraill gan sicrhau bod safleoedd rhyngwladol a chenedlaethol yn symud tuag at gyflwr ffafriol o ran rheolaeth, sydd wedi bod yn gryn dipyn o dasg. Mae'r cyngor wedi cyflawni gwaith arloesol ym maes tirwedd ac yr ydym o bosibl ar flaen y

**Mr Davies:** As our chair outlined in his introduction, the Countryside Council for Wales has been leading the way on several environment strategy actions and contributing to numerous other actions. On the council's main achievements, we have delivered detailed work in partnership with other bodies to ensure that international and national sites are moving towards favourable management status, which has been quite some task. As a council, we have undertaken innovative work in the field of landscaping and we are possibly in the vanguard of the other countries of Britain in the work that we

gad ymhlith gwledydd Prydain yn y gwaith yr ydym wedi ymgymryd ag ef, megis paratoi map cymeriad tirwedd Cymru, y gwaith ar y cyd â llywodraeth leol ar y mapiau tir ar lefel leol, a'r gwaith o fapio ein morweddau yng Nghymru.

[22] Y drydedd elfen lle'r wyf yn teimlo ein bod wedi sicrhau cynnydd yw ceisio integreiddio buddiannau'r amgylchedd i mewn i strategaethau eraill sy'n dylanwadu ar yr amgylchedd, megis cynllun gofodol Cymru, y cynllun datblygu gwledig, a Glastir. Fel y pwysleisiodd ein cadeirydd, mae cysylltiadau anorfod rhwng ein isadeiledd gwyrdd a lles economaidd-gymdeithasol pobl Cymru. Dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf, yr ydym ni ac eraill wedi ceisio dangos y cysylltiadau rhwng sicrhau amgylchedd iach ac economi a chymdeithas iach. Mae'r fframwaith sydd gennym yng Nghymru yn creu potensial inni ddangos arweiniad i'r rhanbarthau a chenedlaethau eraill.

[23] **Mr Parry:** Hoffwn ychwanegu un enghraifft at yr hyn yr oedd Keith yn ei ddweud. Yr wyf yn newydd i'r swydd, ac felly yr wyf wedi bod yn mynd o gwmpas swyddfeydd y cyngor cefn gwlad yn ddiweddar i weld rhywfaint o'r gwaith a wneir ar lawr gwlad. Ddoe, yr oeddwn yng Nglynebwy, a gwelais am y tro cyntaf y mapiau y mae'r cyngor cefn gwlad wedi'u cyhoeddi o fannau gwyrdd sy'n agos i leoedd megis Glynebwy a threfi'r Cymoedd. Dosberthir y rhain i dai ar draws yr ardaloedd hynny gan y cyngorau gan ddefnyddio arian y cyngor cefn gwlad. Yr ydym wedi noddi a rhoi arweiniad a chynghor i gynghorau yn y Cymoedd ac ar draws Cymru.

9.20 a.m.

[24] Mae'r rhan helaeth o gynghorau lleol wedi cymryd rhan yn y gwaith hwn. Maent yn dangos pa mor agos y mae pawb yng Nghymru i darn o dir gwyrdd lle gallant fwynhau cefn gwlad a gwella'u hiechyd. Ar lefel genedlaethol, mae'r gwarchodfeydd natur rhyngwladol hyn yn bwysig, ond yr ydym hefyd yn ymwybodol iawn bod ar bobl, yn lleol, angen cyfle i weld pethau sydd ychydig yn agosach at eu cartrefi. Felly, mae'r mapiau hyn yn gam ymlaen. Fe'm

have undertaken, such as preparing a character map of the landscape of Wales, our joint work with local government on land maps at a local level, and mapping our seascapes in Wales.

The third element in which I feel that we have delivered progress is in trying to integrate the interests of the environment into the other strategies that influence the environment, such as the Wales spatial plan, the rural development plan, and Glastir. As our chair has emphasised, there are inevitable links between our green infrastructure and the socioeconomic welfare of people in Wales. Over recent years, we and others have tried to show the links between ensuring a healthy environment and a healthy economy and society. The framework that we have in place in Wales gives us the potential to show leadership in respect of the other regions and nations.

**Mr Parry:** I want to add one example to what Keith was saying. I am new to the job, and so I have recently been going around the countryside council's offices to see some of the work that is being done on the ground. Yesterday, I was at Ebbw Vale and I saw, for the first time, the maps that the countryside council has published of green spaces in the vicinity of places such as Ebbw Vale and Valleys towns. These are distributed to houses throughout those areas by the councils, with funding from the countryside council. We have sponsored and given a steer and advice to councils in the Valleys and throughout Wales.

The vast majority of local councils have been involved in this work. They show how close everyone in Wales is to a piece of green land where they can enjoy the countryside and improve their health. On a national level, these international nature reserves are important, but we are also aware that, on a local level, people need to see what there is closer to where they live. Therefore, these maps are a step forward. I was surprised by how clear they were and how much help they



syfrdanwyd pa mor glir oeddent a faint o help a fyddant i ysgogi pobl i gymryd ychydig funudau—awr bob wythnos, efallai—i fwynhau yr hyn sydd ar eu stepen drws. Felly, dyna enghraifft bendant o'r gwaith a wnaethom tuag at gyflawni'r strategaeth hon. will be in encouraging people to take just a few minutes—perhaps an hour every week—to enjoy what is right on their doorstep. Therefore, that is one definite example of the work that we have done towards achieving this strategy.

[25] **Ann Jones:** On that point, your evidence tells us about the green space assessment planning tool, and you state that the majority of local authorities have received a grant. What is the majority? How many have not received a grant, and where are they?

[26] **Mr Davies:** All local authorities have been offered a grant. Of the local authorities in Wales, five have chosen, for various reasons, not to take up the offer. I can provide you with the details of the five after today.

[27] **Ann Jones:** That would be useful, because you mentioned work that is taking place in the Valleys, but I wonder what work is taking place in north Wales, particularly with the advent of local development plans. One authority that I have held to account on several occasions over many other issues is probably lacking in that regard also. How do you know what the tool is providing, and whether that is what the community wants? Which side drives? Is it the community's needs that drive or is it the need for you to fulfil the strategy?

[28] **Mr Davies:** The intention behind the toolkit is to provide a resource for communities, recognising the benefits of green space, not only for physical but also mental wellbeing, as research last week demonstrated. We provided a framework and a methodology, and it is very much up to local authorities, in partnership with their communities, to roll out and implement the methodology. More importantly, once the work has been done, that is the basis for getting the benefit from the work because, as Morgan outlined, once the resources are identified, the links can then be made between all sorts of other activities within a locality.

[29] **Rhodri Morgan:** Between the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency, who would be responsible for delivery—and not so much delivering maps to individual residents of the Valleys, but for delivering improvements to the environment, now that the rivers are returning to their natural state, in this post-heavy industrial phase? Our fish are returning, but the banks are degraded. Japanese knotweed is everywhere, and local people cannot really enjoy the banks because there are no footpaths or fishing piers. It is ideal for Japanese knotweed because there is so much broken ground. Is it the countryside council or the Environment Agency that is responsible for having a plan with the local authority to get rid of most of the knotweed, erect fishing piers and install footpaths or cycle tracks, so that everyone can enjoy the return of the 19 or 20 rivers of industrial south Wales to their natural beautiful state?

[30] **Ms Davies:** We both have a role in that regard. As an operator, the Environment Agency has a role to look at what we are developing, whether it is a flood defence scheme or a habitat improvement for meeting the requirements of the water framework directive, for example, and at the wider societal need to try to build in those sorts of benefits. We have duties to promote water-based recreation, for example, so we try to build those in. For example, if we are building a flood scheme, we try to build in fishing platforms, and to include within the improvements to the river a habitat creation scheme by the side of the river to encourage greater biodiversity. We try to build in cycle paths, fishing platforms and fish passes to allow fish to migrate upstream. So, we certainly have a role in that, and we work very closely with CCW on such actions.

[31] **Rhodri Morgan:** Who is responsible for the removal of Japanese knotweed?

[32] **Mr Parry:** I think that the CCW could advise on invasive species, but Ceri is right: if you are talking about a river system, the Environment Agency would normally take the lead on that. However, I have been struck by the partnership that usually exists, where there is any local initiative, between the local authority, the statutory agencies and, often, voluntary groups. I was talking to someone from the Gwent Wildlife Trust yesterday who had been involved in projects in the Valleys. It will be through such partnership working that we do this. Local authorities are responsible for access and footpaths so, inevitably, they will call on the expertise of the agencies and voluntary organisations to make the projects happen. Sometimes, community groups are created specifically for this purpose. It varies from place to place, but we are very aware of the need to work together and to avoid overlaps. Given the reduced resources as we go forward, we will have to be aware of the most efficient ways of delivering these benefits to local communities.

[33] **Ms Davies:** I will just add that a really good example of where we have tried to work together is work that we did with Communities First in Blaenau Gwent. We provided evidence about the local environment and what they could do and the benefits that a good environment could bring. We produced some information packs for the local authority that set out the current state of the environment, the improvements that had taken place and what could be taken further forward. We brought the local wildlife trust and other conservation volunteers in so that they could play a role in things such as the work on eradicating Japanese knotweed. That is a good example of something that we have been involved in.

[34] **Mr Davies:** At a regional, strategic level, work in the context of the Heads of the Valleys regeneration programme is also taking forward partnership working to identify opportunities and outcomes for the environment and its enhancement, making the links between those improvements and the economic and social wellbeing agenda.

[35] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Okay. I should just point out that we are still on question 1 and we have used up about half an hour of this session, so we now need some sharp questions and sharp answers.

[36] **Brynle Williams:** Rhodri raised the issue of Japanese knotweed, but there is an equally serious problem with ragwort, and not only in north Wales but across the whole of Wales. It is very difficult to get someone to deal with it. This has come under cross compliance, as far as farmers are concerned. Where do you sit as a body that is, I hope, trying to enforce this through councils? Do you have any jurisdiction over this? It is running rampant at the moment. It will soon be flowering and nothing will be done. It is just as important as dealing with Japanese knotweed.

[37] **Mr Parry:** I am not aware that the Countryside Council for Wales has any duties on that. I am sure that we could provide advice on the ecology of the plant itself, but eradication is the responsibility of the landowner.

[38] **Brynle Williams:** Fe symudaf **Brynle Williams:** I will move on, in that ymlaen, felly. case.

[39] Where you are the lead for specific actions, how do you interpret your responsibility? For example, are you responsible for the delivery of outcomes or for the development of related policy, or for both?

[40] **Ms Davies:** I will use the water framework directive as an example. We are the competent authority for that activity, so we were responsible for producing the river basin plans. Some of that will involve working with the Welsh Assembly Government on the key policies that need to be in place to support the delivery of that over the three cycles of the river basin plans. We are also responsible for the delivery of certain things by our

organisation, but there is a whole list of other partners and delivery bodies that will also have responsibility as public bodies to deliver. For example, as Morgan said, we have worked very closely with the Countryside Council for Wales in order not to duplicate work but to work in tandem to deliver certain key aspects.

9.30 a.m.

[41] In many of these overarching policy areas, there will be bodies with distinct roles to play. While we are there to bring it all together and to make sure that there is a coherent plan for how we meet the targets and deliver the outcomes, we will, in most of these cases, deliver in part, but there will be responsibilities set out in these plans for other organisations to deliver.

[42] **Mr Davies:** O safbwynt Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru, mae'r berthynas a amlinellwyd gan Ceri hefyd yn berthnasol i ni. Enghraifft arall o sut mae hyn wedi gweithio yw'r hyn a gafwyd yng nghydestun Deddf y Môr a Mynediad i'r Arfordir 2009, lle'r oedd gennym rôl yn arwain rhywfaint o'r gwaith. Yr oedd gennym hefyd rôl wrth roi cyngor i Lywodraeth a chyirff eraill a oedd yn arwain ar y gwaith. Drwy wneud hynny, yr oeddem yn cyflawni ein gweithrediadau fel corff statudol ac yn gallu rhoi cyngor ar sut i ddatblygu meysydd polisi. Yr oedd hynny'n enghraifft dda o sut y bu i Gymru weithio fel un i sicrhau'r fframwaith gorau posibl ar gyfer rheoli ei moroedd a'i hardaloedd arfordirol.

**Mr Davies:** From the Countryside Council for Wales perspective, the relationship outlined by Ceri is also relevant to us. Another example of how this has worked is the content of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, on which we had a role in leading on some of the work. We also had a role in providing advice to the Government and other bodies that were leading on the work. In doing so, we fulfilled our obligations as a statutory body and were able to provide advice on how to develop policy areas. That was a good example of how Wales worked as one to secure the best possible framework for controlling its marine environment and coastal areas.

[43] **Brynle Williams:** Yn gyntaf, llongyfarchiadau ar eich swydd, Morgan.

**Brynle Williams:** First, congratulations on your appointment, Morgan.

[44] Given the number of strategies that impact upon the environment strategy, have you experienced any difficulty in integrating them?

[45] **Mr Parry:** The strategy, of course, takes forward strands of environmental work programmes that are not covered by other areas; for example, climate change, although it is referenced in the strategy, is dealt with by a separate process. That was explicit and agreed by the Minister and by the reference group that helped to draft this. So, there are a number of areas of work that sit outside the strategy, if you like, because they have their own processes or their own programmes of work. I think that that was the value of the strategy—it pulled together all these different elements where there might have been some issues about priorities and put them all together in one place and set clear targets for delivery. That was very welcome.

[46] Having said that, the most recent development is that the Minister recognised that targets on biodiversity had been missed at the beginning of this year globally—it was not a Wales issue; no-one had reached the targets—and saw the need to create a new framework. That is a priority piece of work for us this year. It looks at how biodiversity and climate change work can be taken forward together. There is recognition, I think, that integration is necessary. It remains to be seen how that will affect the Wales environment strategy; there is still a need to have the strategy rolling forward in the way that it currently does. However, on those two big issues there was recognition, clearly, that you had to work on them together.

That is to be welcomed, because it is not happening elsewhere—it is something that the Government here in Wales has taken forward. It is a priority for us this year to be helping the Government with that.

[47] **Mr Davies:** As a supplementary point to that, there are potentially a plethora of strategies, and the important point is to be clear about the outcomes that we require, be that at a national, regional or local level, and increasingly being able to specialise your priority areas and opportunities to make sure that the same evidence feeds into whatever strategy is being developed.

[48] **Ann Jones:** How much of your resources are dedicated to delivering the outcomes of the environment strategy?

[49] **Ms Davies:** The way that we approached this—we have recently issued our corporate plan—was to look at the environment strategy as the starting point, because that is the document that sets out the priorities for the environment in Wales. We took the environment strategy, the outcomes therein and the sub or supporting strategies that we talked about when answering the last question. We looked at where we have a key role either to support delivery or to deliver those actions. So, in that way, we have made sure that the environment strategy's outcomes are embedded in our business. They run right through from any sort of operational process, guidance or policy development to delivery on the ground. They are lined up against the actions in the environment strategy, so that people in our organisation have a clear line of sight between the job that they do on a day-to-day basis and the environment strategy's outcomes on the ground.

[50] **Mr Davies:** Yn debyg i Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd, o safbwynt ein strategaethau ar gyfer ein cynllun corfforaethol, yr ydym yn blaenoriaethu'r gweithrediadau hynny yr ydym yn gyfrifol am eu harwain, yr ydym yn cyfrannu tuag atynt ac yr ydym yn ceisio eu dylanwadu. Yn ogystal, yr ydym yn derbyn llythyr cyrch gorchwyl gan Lywodraeth y Cynulliad, sy'n atgyfnerthu'r angen inni ganolbwyntio ar weithredu cynllun amgylcheddol Cymru, ac yn cyfeirio at y meysydd gwaith y tu allan i'r strategaeth sy'n dylanwadu ar weithredu'r strategaeth honno.

**Mr Davies:** Like the Environment Agency, with regard to our strategies for our corporate plan, we prioritise those activities that it is our responsibility to lead, those that we contribute to and those that we try to influence. In addition, we receive a remit letter from the Welsh Assembly Government, which reinforces the need for us to implement the Wales environment strategy, as well as referring to the areas of work that are outside the strategy that influence how it is implemented.

[51] **Leanne Wood:** The question that you were both asked was how much of your resources as an organisation are put into the environment strategy? From the answers that you have given, you could say that 100 per cent of the resources go into it. Is that right? You do not spend on anything that is not related to the environment strategy.

[52] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** An answer of 'yes' or 'no' is fine.

[53] **Mr Davies:** The answer is 'no', in that the Wales environment strategy and the remit letter from the Assembly Government—

[54] **Leanne Wood:** Presumably, there would not be anything different—

[55] **Mr Davies:** They mesh. It is the same piece of work.

[56] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** So, it is more or less 100 per cent.

[57] **Rhodri Morgan:** Yr oeddwn eisiau gofyn cwestiwn ynglŷn â'r gwialenni mesur. Cafwyd llawer o drafodaeth ynglŷn â'r honiad bod gwendidau yn eich gwialenni mesur, ac yr ydym wedi derbyn llawer o dystiolaeth sy'n dweud hynny. Mae gwialenni mesur yn gallu bod ychydig yn gamarweiniol, ac nid ydym eisiau i ddiwylliant o roi tic mewn blychau gymryd lle strategaeth wirioneddol. Felly, ynghylch rhai gwialenni mesur, a fyddai arafu tuedd negyddol o ran yr amgylchedd yn cael ei ystyried yn gam ymlaen? Ambell waith, byddai'n gam ymlaen pe baech yn gallu dal eich tir yn erbyn tuedd negyddol. Hefyd, gallai pethau fod yn mynd yn dda, ond byddai'r strategaeth yn dweud bod yn rhaid cyflymu'r duedd bositif. Beth yw eich safbwynt cyffredinol chi yn hynny o beth? A yw'r gwialenni mesur sydd wedi'u gosod yn y strategaeth yn gwneud synnwyr i chi yn eich gwaith?

[58] **Mr Parry:** 'Dangosyddion' yw'r gair yr ydym yn ei ddefnyddio; yr wyf yn cymryd ein bod yn sôn am yr un peth.

[59] **Rhodri Morgan:** Mae'n well gennyf i'r gair hen ffasiwn.

[60] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae'n well gair, a dweud y gwir.

[61] **Mr Parry:** Ydy. Mae gwahanol lefelau, ac mae'r cynllun datblygu cynaliadwy, sy'n gosod gwialenni mesur anodd iawn, yn adlewyrchu tueddiadau negyddol amgylcheddol byd-eang, er enghraifft o ran bioamrywiaeth ac allyriadau carbon. Mae'r ddau'n mynd i'r cyfeiriad anghywir.

[62] **Rhodri Morgan:** Dyna'r un yr oeddwn yn meddwl amdano.

9.40 a.m.

[63] **Mr Parry:** Mae'r strategaeth hon wedyn yn tynnu dangosyddion sy'n fwy perthnasol i ni yng Nghymru, rhai y gallwn eu dylanwadu'n uniongyrchol. Gwnaethpwyd llawer o waith arnynt, a chredaf eu bod yn eithaf da fel gwialenni mesur, ar yr amod ein bod yn gallu eu mesur a'n bod yn cael gwybodaeth yn aml—yn flynyddol neu bob

**Rhodri Morgan:** I wanted to ask a question about the yardsticks that you use. There has been a lot of discussion regarding the claim that there are weaknesses in that system, and we have received a lot of written evidence that says that. Yardsticks can be misleading, and we do not want a tick-box culture to replace a real strategy. Therefore, with regard to some yardsticks, would slowing down a negative environmental trend be considered a step forward? Sometimes, holding your ground in the face of a negative trend could be a step forward. In addition, things could be going well, but the strategy would be telling you that you had to accelerate the positive trend. What is your general view on that? Do the yardsticks set in the strategy make sense to you in your work?

**Mr Parry:** The word that we use is 'indicators'; I assume that we are talking about the same thing.

**Rhodri Morgan:** I prefer the old-fashioned word.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** It is a better word, actually.

**Mr Parry:** Yes, it is. There are different levels, and the sustainable development plan, which sets difficult yardsticks, reflects global negative environmental trends, for example in respect of biodiversity and carbon emissions. Both are going in the wrong direction.

**Rhodri Morgan:** That is the one that I was thinking of.

**Mr Parry:** This strategy then takes out indicators that are more relevant to us in Wales, that we can influence directly. A lot of work has been done on them, and they are quite good as yardsticks, as long as we can measure them and receive information regularly—annually or every five years—to see what the tendencies are. That can be a

pum mlynedd—i weld beth yw'r tueddiadau. Mae hynny'n gallu bod yn broblem pan nad oes gennym y wybodaeth honno, naill ai oherwydd nad oes arian i'w fuddsoddi i gasglu data neu oherwydd ei bod yn anodd dod o hyd i'r wybodaeth honno ar lefel Cymru neu ar lefel sirol—pa bynnag lefel sydd ei hangen arnom.

[64] Felly, mae'r dangosyddion yn gwneud synnwyr. Fodd bynnag, y cwestiwn mawr i mi yw: a yw'r holl gyrff cyhoeddus yng Nghymru yn gweithio tuag at yr un gwialenni? I ni mae'n eithaf clir, gan ein bod wedi cael y cyfarwyddyd gan y Llywodraeth ar yr hyn y dylem ei ystyried. Y cwestiwn arall yw: a yw'r cynghorau lleol yng Nghymru yn defnyddio'r un dangosyddion? Mae'n bosibl bod cwestiwn i'w ofyn yn y fan honno. A oes angen inni fod yn fwy integredig yn y sector cyhoeddus ac mewn gyrff eraill o ran defnyddio'r un dangosyddion? O wneud hynny, gallem i gyd ddweud yn fwy pendant ein bod yn symud i'r cyfeiriad iawn. Ar y foment, mae'r dangosyddion yn gallu bod yn wahanol i wahanol gyrff yng Nghymru. Felly, mae'n werth edrych ar hynny.

[65] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae angen inni symud ymlaen, felly gofynnaf i Angela gyfeirio'r cwestiynau nesaf at Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd.

[66] **Angela Burns:** I wanted to talk to you about the collation of data. Can you tell me what you will do to resolve data collection issues in relation to Floodline, particularly given that, as I understand it, only calls in Welsh are collated as calls from Wales, which is patently ridiculous because I know that a substantial number of our population do not speak Welsh? I have just asked my colleagues and I understand that the figure is around 75 per cent, but that may not be correct; you may know better. Did I make that clear? In other words, we are trying to understand what is happening with Floodline and how many people in Wales are having trouble with it. If you call Floodline and speak English, that call is deemed a UK call and not a call from Wales, so we do not have accurate figures for Wales, which is fairly nonsensical.

[67] **Ms Davies:** At the moment, we are looking at the capability of Floodline to differentiate between calls from England and Wales. At the moment, you are right—it is difficult to differentiate between calls, particularly if they are made from mobile phones. It is more straightforward to be able to differentiate landline calls, but we are trying to look at that. When the system was set up, we did not consider that properly in terms of being able to differentiate between the two. However, moving forward, we are looking to develop Floodline as a mechanism to provide advice for not only the flooding that falls within the Environment Agency's responsibility, but also potentially for local authorities and the water company. So, in that development, we are looking to see whether we can build the capability to be able to provide those figures and information.

problem when we do not have that information either because there is no funding to invest in data collection or because it is difficult to obtain that information on a Welsh level or on a county level—whichever level we need.

Therefore, the indicators do make sense. However, the big question for me is: are all public bodies in Wales working towards the same yardsticks? To us it is quite clear, because we have received direction from the Government on what we should be considering. The other question is: are local councils in Wales using the same indicators? It is possible that there is a question to be asked on whether we need integration in the public sector and in other bodies in terms of using the same indicators. If we did that, we could all say that we were definitely moving in the right direction. At the moment, the indicators can be different for different bodies in Wales. So, it is worth looking into that.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We need to move on, so I will ask Angela to refer the next questions to the Environment Agency.

[68] **Ms Sherwood:** There is a pilot scheme going on in England at the moment with local authorities for that single point of contact that Ceri has just spoken about. We will look to learn the lessons from that so that the system is implemented more efficiently in Wales. The idea would be that a single operator would patch you through to the body that is responsible or perhaps they could resolve the query over the phone, there and then. So, that is the area that we are looking at and where we can pick up some of these Welsh-language issues that you rightly identified.

[69] **Angela Burns:** I find this extraordinary, because I would have thought that anyone who was phoning you would be saying either 'Help, I'm being flooded and I'm in Borth', so it is fairly obvious where they are, or 'I have a query because the rain keeps coming down the road and flooding my back garden'. I would have thought that one of the first questions that you would ask is 'Can you tell me where you are?', so that you can help with the topography. I know that it probably seems like a small point to pick up on, but a feeling that I get, having sat on this committee for a year or so, is that an awful lot of the information that is collected by public bodies is useless and gets filed in drawers while we cannot access the stuff that we really need, which is why I am making a big deal about this. We need this information to try to provide a better service for the people of Wales.

[70] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We will take that as a comment and move on to Leanne, who has further questions for the Environment Agency.

[71] **Leanne Wood:** I wanted to ask about the contaminated land strategy because you say in your paper that more work is needed to meet the commitment. What progress is being made with the development of that strategy?

[72] **Ms Davies:** In terms of the action in the environment strategy, we have had discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government around exactly what it wants—either a strategy or a scoping document prior to a strategy. That is the action that has not been undertaken, because there has been a shortage of resources to fund that activity.

[73] The important thing about the subject under discussion is that we believe that requirements will be brought forward under the soils framework directive to develop a strategy of some kind for land that might be contaminated. We are trying to develop something that will fit both of those requirements, rather than developing something quickly now on land contamination and finding that it is not fit for purpose when the soils framework directive comes in. There has been some uncertainty in that area, which has led to some lack of progress, but that is not to say that we have not done anything on land contamination.

[74] We have duties and responsibilities, as do the local authorities, to identify land—in our case, special sites—and then to look to remediate any land that is causing pollution through the Environment Act 1995 Part IIA scheme or the planning scheme, if a development proposal comes forward for a contaminated area. That is important, and it is certainly something that we need to take forward, but we need to look at it in the light of emerging European legislation to ensure that we do not duplicate effort and waste resource in developing a strategy.

[75] **Leanne Wood:** I would like to ask for clarification on that. Do you deal with contaminated land on a case-by-case basis, rather than in a strategic way, at the moment?

[76] **Ms Davies:** At the moment, the main responsibility for identifying contaminated land rests with the local authority, which has the responsibility to inspect and identify land contamination within its area. Then, if there is contaminated land within that area that is especially polluted and termed 'a special site', it will be referred to the Environment Agency to be dealt with. The local authorities have registers, if you like, of contaminated land, but this

action is looking at more than just contaminated land; it is looking at brownfield sites as well, to try to provide a framework for planning and prioritisation so that we get the full picture, so that, in future, we will be able to divert resources in accordance with some prioritised list.

[77] **Leanne Wood:** The plan says that there was to be a scoping of the contaminated land strategy for Wales by December 2009. Did that not happen?

[78] **Ms Davies:** That did not happen. That was the thing that we did not have the resources to do after discussing our priorities with the Assembly Government. We are now talking about taking that forward during this next year.

[79] **Leanne Wood:** If resources have been a problem up until now, we all know that, in the future, they could be an even bigger problem. Will that affect the progress of this action?

[80] **Ms Davies:** We are trying to decide what we absolutely must do to ensure that what little resources are available are targeted at identifying the key bits that are missing from the current regime, so that we can plug those gaps. That is what we are looking to do over the next year. Resources will be tight, but our view is that we have to paint this full picture of brownfield and land contamination sites for the future. Then, when we move out of the current economic situation, we will have a prioritised list ready, and when money becomes available, and developers come forward, we can properly identify the sites that need to be dealt with first.

[81] **Leanne Wood:** Is it the case that the work on drawing together this strategy will continue regardless of the resources situation?

[82] **Ms Davies:** That is what we are trying to do this year with the Assembly Government.

[83] **Lorraine Barrett:** For CCW, I have a question about the loss of biodiversity and what you are doing to halt that, because the RSPB has said that the original momentum that progressed work towards the environment strategy to bring designated sites into a favourable condition appears to have waned. Would you tell us briefly what is being done on that?

9.50 a.m.

[84] **Mr Parry:** I would not say that it had waned. There are issues as to how you measure favourable status, but it is an important part of the work that we are doing to work on each of those sites, particularly the internationally designated ones, to bring them into favourable condition. Keith, can you provide any statistics on that?

[85] **Lorraine Barrett:** As time is running out and it is an important issue, could we have a note on that?

[86] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** It would be very useful to have a note on that from both organisations, because time is pressing and we have to bring this session to a close. The committee would also be grateful for your comments on the environment strategy itself. Do you think that the environment strategy as it currently stands is fit for purpose, or do you believe that it needs to be reviewed? That sounds like a question for a thesis, but please do not submit more than 400 words on whether you think that it is fit for purpose or needs to be reviewed.

[87] Gyda hynny, diolch yn fawr iawn With that, thank you very much. A number of ichi. Gofynnwyd nifer o gwestiynau very open-ended question were asked of you, penagored iawn ichi, a diolch ichi am eich and I thank you for your responses. It is



atebion. Mae'n bosibl y bydd gan rai aelodau o'r pwyllgor gwestiynau maent am ichi eu hateb yn ysgrifenedig, a byddwn yn cysylltu gyda chi ynglŷn â hynny. Byddwch yn derbyn trawsgrifiad o'r sesiwn hon, ac os ydych yn teimlo bod angen cywiro rhywbeth, bydd croeso ichi wneud hynny. Os oes unrhyw beth ychwanegol yr ydych yn teimlo na chawsoch gyfle i'w gyflwyno yn ystod y sesiwn hon, mae bob rhyddid ichi gyflwyno hynny yn ysgrifenedig.

[88] **Rhodri Morgan:** Gadeirydd, mae gennyf un ychwanegiad byr i'ch gosodiad. Yn yr adolygiad y gofynnodd Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd amdano, a oes modd sicrhau bod ateb i'r cwestiwn y gofynnais yn gynharach, sef a oes ffordd o osgoi'r diwylliant ticio blychau?

[89] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** A allwch gynnwys hynny yn eich ymateb? A allwch nodi a yw'r strategaeth yn cyflawni hynny neu a oes angen ei adolygu? Diolch yn fawr iawn.

9.52 a.m.

**Craffu ar y Strategaeth Amgylcheddol: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth—Cymdeithas  
Llywodraeth Leol Cymru a Chomisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru  
Scrutiny of the Environment Strategy: Evidence Session—Welsh Local  
Government Association and Forestry Commission Wales**

[90] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yr wyf yn croesawu Craig Mitchell o Gymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru a Clive Thomas o Gomisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru i'r bwrdd. Yr wyf yn eich gwahodd i gyflwyno sylwadau agoriadol byr am rhyw ddau neu dri munud er mwyn ychwanegu at y dystiolaeth a roeso ar bapur, gan y bydd yr Aelodau wedi darllen y dystiolaeth honno.

[91] **Mr Mitchell:** In terms of our opening remarks, I only wish to make a couple of very brief points. In terms of our submission, we approached all 22 local authorities and the national parks authorities for comment. Some of those local authorities have come back to us subsequent to the deadline for written submissions. With the Chair's blessing, we wish to submit them to the committee in a letter following today's session, if that is okay.

[92] The main body of our submission came from a specific meeting that we held with five strategic directors of environment from local authorities across Wales, representing the geographical spread of Wales and different urban, rural, coastal and valley authorities. The submission is generally based on the issues that they raised, which included a range of things that discussed broad issues within the strategy, but we felt that that was useful to the

possible that some committee members will have further questions to which they would appreciate a reply in writing, and we will contact you regarding that. You will receive a transcript of this session, and if you feel that you want to correct something, you are welcome to do so. If there is anything else that you would like to say that you did not have the opportunity to mention during this session, you are free to present that in writing.

**Rhodri Morgan:** Chair, I have a brief addition to your statement. In the review that the Environment Agency asked for, can we ensure that there is an answer to the question that I asked earlier on whether there is a way to avoid the tick-box culture?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Can you include that in your response? Could you note whether the strategy achieves that or whether it needs to be reviewed? Thank you very much.

committee so we included those issues as well. In general terms, they felt that the strategy was a useful focus for environmental issues, and had enabled progress on a local basis around some of those issues. Those directors have also committed to provide written evidence to answer any follow-up questions that the committee may have that we cannot answer during this session.

[93] In terms of taking forward the environment strategy, we want to stress the work that we are doing around the sustainable development framework to ensure that members and officers have a better understanding of environmental issues, especially the way in which ecosystem goods and services underpin communities and the way in which that information can be used to inform better decision making on a local basis. We are stressing that it is broader than just the issues that are contained within the environment strategy and that these are fundamentally important across all local authority activity. We hope that initiatives such as the natural environment framework will support us in that work.

[94] **Mr Thomas:** I would like to spend a couple of minutes emphasising some of the points from the introduction and conclusion of our paper. I wish to convey the message that the environment strategy has been fundamentally significant to the various roles of the Forestry Commission in Wales. We have a role in advising Ministers and helping Ministers to develop Welsh forestry policy. ‘Woodlands for Wales’ was revised last year and the environment strategy was one of the framing documents for that revision. That has influenced the work that the commission has undertaken through our role in managing the public forest estate and influencing the 60 per cent of woodlands in Wales that are not managed directly by the Government or the Forestry Commission. We are able to do that through incentives, regulation and our facilitative work. We now have a corporate plan and a set of performance measures that give a clear line of sight back to the environment strategy and its outcomes, the delivery of which we are asked to support.

[95] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Dechreuaf gyda chwestiwn weddol cyffredinol i Craig. Beth yw prif lwyddiannau awdurdodau lleol yng Nghymru o ran eu hymateb i'r strategaeth amgylcheddol?  
**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I will begin with a fairly general question for Craig. What are the main achievements of local authorities in Wales in their response to the environment strategy?

[96] **Mr Mitchell:** The issue is the prioritisation of environmental issues within the locality and a broader understanding of what we mean by ‘environmental issues’. Traditionally, in local terms, ‘the environment’ generally meant the very local environment and matters such as litter, dog-fouling and so on. There has been a tremendous growth in elected members’ understanding of wider issues, such as their ecological footprint, climate change, and waste issues. We are starting to see that being reflected in the changes to local services, such as waste services. So, the key issue is the way in which we frame the understanding of ‘the environment’.

[97] There has been a broader understanding of the need to balance environmental, social and economic wellbeing within a locality. The next stage of that is really starting to understand how we operate within those broader environmental constraints and how the decisions that are taken locally impact upon that. Sometimes, this is incremental and on a small scale, but trying to improve that decision making on a local level is probably the most important factor instigated by the environment strategy and the focus that it has given to these issues.

[98] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Clive, beth yw'r prif lwyddiannau o ran Comisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru?  
**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Clive, what are the main achievements of Forestry Commission Wales?

[99] **Mr Thomas:** Similar to the description given by Craig, the organising framework that the environment strategy has provided for forestry policy has meant that some of the different benefits, the market and non-market benefits, can be more easily reconciled, linking back to the outcomes that the environment strategy is calling for. Whether that is in the social areas of forestry policy, environmental areas, or some of the more economic areas, it has created much more of an optimisation approach in delivering a suite of both market and non-market benefits and has enabled a movement that was already enshrined in international forestry policy to translate through to domestic forestry policy to widen out the goods and services that forestry can deliver. However, it has given us a Welsh take on that. As I said earlier, there is now a clear line of sight through to the performance measures that the Forestry Commission is delivering with the assets that it has from Government.

10.00 a.m.

[100] **Ann Jones:** What proportion of the resources is dedicated to the delivery of the environment strategy outcomes? Perhaps it is easier for you to answer that first, Clive. I think that I know what Craig is going to say.

[101] **Mr Thomas:** Perhaps I should outline the two key assets that we have. Obviously, we have cash grant in aid from the Assembly Government, and we have the asset of the public forest estate, which is 125,000 ha of land—6 per cent of Wales. With regard to those ecosystem goods and services, which are writ so large in the environment strategy, almost all of the management interventions and the forest planning that are now embedded in taking forward the management of those forests have a clear line of sight back to the outcomes. So, in a sense, you could say that the whole of that asset is now being marshalled to deliver the outcomes outlined in the strategy. The same is true for the grant in aid.

[102] **Mr Mitchell:** As you suspected, it is very difficult for local government to try to quantify its involvement in environmental issues. In direct terms, it would be fairly limited to, for example, biodiversity officers, ecology officers and various specific processes within the local development plan process. However, through a number of agendas, we are trying to get local authorities to understand how their programmes and expenditure across the board have an impact on the local environment. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 obviously makes that a statutory duty. We are working with members to get them to understand that, sometimes, it is not about spending more resources and more money, but how to spend the money and resources that you have differently to try to deliver better environmental outcomes.

[103] **Ann Jones:** Okay. I want to ask you about paragraph 21 of your evidence. You talk about the CCW's toolkit. The CCW told us that it offered this grant and the toolkit to all 22 authorities, and that 17 took it up while five declined the offer. However, you say that you have no further information and that no issues or problems have been raised. Obviously, if people are not going to take it up, they are not going to raise the issue with you as an umbrella organisation. Does it not worry you that five authorities are not complying with what we are trying to do with regard to green open space?

[104] **Mr Mitchell:** Yes, it would. The only proviso that there might be on that is that, in the meantime, TAN 16, on recreation, open space and planning, was issued, setting out a clear process for understanding open space assessments. What I could not answer at this point is whether the open space assessment processes delivered some of the outcomes that the green space assessments seek to deliver. So, it may be that those authorities that did not take up the offer—which, if there is a grant involved, seems slightly odd—felt that the open space assessment work that they are doing for the local development plans meets that requirement. However, I can certainly follow that up.

[105] **Ann Jones:** Does that not mean that we have a problem in that we have 22 local authorities that decide what open space should be or where it should be or how it should be created, when we have a clear strategy that states that we are trying to have a uniform assessment of what green open space should be or where it should be? Yet you, as the umbrella organisation of the 22 local authorities, are not able to provide information when you come to committees. I am not just talking about this; the WLGA fails to do that on lots of other issues. So, what are you doing to ensure that all the local authorities comply with this strategy?

[106] **Mr Mitchell:** As I said, I do not have the information on that specific point. Basically, we meet the local authority environmental directors regularly, and we attempt to gather information on a range of issues. In that regard, we try to advise them that, under TAN 16, if their local development plan is to be determined as sound, it is very likely that they will have to undertake an open space assessment. We are promoting that approach. At the moment, we also trying to understand the pilot work that has been undertaken in the south-east spatial planning region around the networked environmental region and what potential that brings to deliver the interface between, as you say, the environment strategy and the local work that is ongoing, ensuring that that work is sufficient.

[107] **Ann Jones:** Could we have a note to the committee, Chair, on the fact that five authorities have not taken this grant up, but that the WLGA was not aware of that? Perhaps the WLGA ought to go back and talk to all the authorities about what their green open space policies are.

[108] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We would be grateful, Craig, if you could do that and come back to us with a note on that. Leanne, do you want to ask something on this point?

[109] **Leanne Wood:** Yes. I was concerned by some of the answers that you gave earlier, because you seemed to suggest that this environment strategy is not being mainstreamed through the activities of local authorities. Next year, the 22 local authorities will have to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 3 per cent and they will have to do that again in following years. Following on from what you have just said, are you confident that they are ready to do that?

[110] **Mr Mitchell:** I am sorry if I gave that impression; it was not the one that I sought to give. What we have tried to highlight is that a range of policies and strategies are delivering different aspects of the environment strategy. Local authorities are clearly engaged with the climate change strategy and the work that is coming out of that and also through the climate change commission. Most authorities in Wales are part of the carbon reduction commitments scheme: they have measured their current carbon outputs and are putting energy strategies in place to help to deliver the kinds of savings that you have spoken about. All authorities are aware of what is in the draft climate change strategy and what the requirements upon them are. Some authorities are further along in their thinking about how to approach that. Cardiff has signed up to the 2010 targets and is therefore a lot more advanced in its thinking. What we are trying to do through those strategic environmental directors is to share understanding, knowledge and good practice across the different authorities. On that particular issue, we can be fairly confident that there is a high degree of awareness among elected members and officials of that particular target. On the individual issues and the environment strategy, action is being taken on a local basis; it is the complexity of the environment strategy and how it presents the broad framework that was the issue for the environment directors.

[111] **Leanne Wood:** So, you are confident that your local authority members are aware of the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. You have said that the baseline data are available. Is that the case for all local authorities? Are baseline data in existence throughout Wales and are you confident that each local authority will be able to start cutting greenhouse

gas emissions from next year?

[112] **Mr Mitchell:** Not all authorities are covered by the carbon reduction commitment. It is likely that 18 of the 22 will be covered. There is a de minimis level: that is, if you fall beneath a certain level of energy usage, you are not covered by that commitment. However, the carbon reduction commitment has been discussed at the local government partnership council and papers from that have been fed back to all local authorities. We understand that some work is ongoing on a greenhouse gas inventory to try to understand the greenhouse gas emissions per authority better. That information will be critical, because we want authorities to look beyond their own use of energy to how other communities use energy and how that is planned. We know that authorities have those baseline data, essentially because that is a statutory requirement of the carbon reduction commitments scheme. Not all authorities will necessarily go forward into the scheme, but those that have collected the baseline data and will not be in the scheme will use those data to inform how they meet the carbon reduction targets in the Welsh Assembly Government climate change strategy.

[113] **Rhodri Morgan:** I do not know whether you heard the previous session in which I asked CCW and EA Wales about a practical example of the integration of strategies in the different bodies. I mentioned the question of the restoration of the Valleys' waterways and rivers for the purposes of fishing, and that if the banks were restored properly and you got rid of the Japanese knotweed you could have jogging tracks, cycle tracks and so on. The response was that, in some of these areas, it is the local authorities that lead on this. What difficulties do the local authorities perceive, in a post-smokestack industry phase, in restoring the Valleys to the areas of outstanding natural beauty that they were, for the benefit of the local residents and to generate some tourism?

10.10 a.m.

[114] **Mr Mitchell:** You mentioned Japanese knotweed. It is a specific problem that occurs across a number of areas in Wales. I know that certain authorities have taken a proactive approach to it. The City and County of Swansea Council had a Japanese knotweed officer, primarily to raise understanding within communities about what it was and the damage that it can cause, but also to try to engage with the disparate interests involved in any particular area and to work with communities to try to eradicate the problem. Similarly, I know that Cardiff Council's scrutiny committee has undertaken a review of knotweed in Cardiff and has made recommendations on how to tackle it in Cardiff. The key issue is that local authorities are in the process of developing their local development plans. Within that, as I mentioned earlier, there is the open space assessment process, and within that there has to be an understanding of what is physically there at present, what sort of infrastructure is in place, and of the issues that are at play in different areas, particularly in terms of any developments that are likely to come forward and issues will need to be tackled through the planning system as part of those developments. The networked environment region will, hopefully, underpin that process usefully, because it will provide regional data on the issues, threats and opportunities that are apparent in an area. Often, it is about understanding the issue in the context of a wider problem, perhaps, and tackling it on that basis.

[115] **Rhodri Morgan:** I do not want to be obsessed totally by Japanese knotweed. I was thinking of that more as part of the problem where you have a lot of broken ground in the Valleys, in particular, and as part of a restoration in order to get more fishing, and jogging and cycle tracks along the banks. You cannot do that unless you restore the banks and get rid of the knotweed, but that is a subsidiary issue to the general issue to which I was referring of integrating the strategies of local authorities, the Environment Agency Wales, Countryside Council for Wales, and other bodies, such as Forestry Commission Wales, perhaps.

[116] **Mr Thomas:** To give an example, which is what I think that you are asking for, we

are all aware of the strategic regeneration area in the Heads of the Valleys. We are currently working with five local authorities, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency—the usual partners—to develop what we call a woodland opportunities plan. It is a kind of spatial plan, looking at the existing woodland and what the community and social benefits might be, and at some of the environmental benefits. It also looks at opportunities for new woodland, and has a very strong theme in relation to an issue that is much more prominent now in Welsh forestry policy, which is the role of trees in urban areas. The plan is very imminent. The partners are meeting at the end of this month to finalise it and agree it. It has an action plan associated with it, and people have identified for each local authority the top 10 woodland areas, some of which are owned by the Forestry Commission, some of which are owned by local authorities, and some of which are privately owned, where we think that some public investment can realise some of the benefits that are in both the environment strategy and in the woodland strategy. Some of that will be about linking things up. The fact that the public forestry estate has open access makes it very suitable for jogging routes and cycling routes and linking communities together.

[117] **Ann Jones:** You mentioned the Heads of the Valleys regeneration area, but there is another strategic regeneration area, which is the north Wales coastal regeneration area. What will your involvement be in that in terms of creating a green corridor, for example, for people along the coast to take advantage of, but that also comes inland? What is your involvement with that strategic regeneration area?

[118] **Mr Thomas continues:** It would be fair to say that our current involvement is pretty minimal and modest. In respect of prioritising scarce resources, we have identified that we need to focus on all the strategic regeneration areas—I think that there are now seven or eight of them across Wales. We are looking to make sure that our programmes prioritise some of the things that I have been talking about in relation to those areas. Another pilot project, called TreeGeneration, was run a few years ago, which focused on north and east Wales. It was a project that we undertook with local authorities and the Countryside Council for Wales, through which we were looking at some of the ideas on urban areas and how trees in an urban or peri-urban context can provide a backdrop and space for community development to take place.

[119] In relation to your question on north-east Wales specifically, we are looking to turn our attention towards there—

[120] **Ann Jones:** It is not north-east Wales; it is the centre of north Wales. It starts in Prestatyn and ends in Colwyn Bay. So, it is not really north-east Wales.

[121] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae gan **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Brynle has a question Brynle gwestiwn i Gomisiwn Coedwigaeth for Forestry Commission Wales. Cymru.

[122] **Brynle Williams:** What impact have the actions that you have implemented had on the environment strategy's indicators?

[123] **Mr Thomas:** In our paper we have outlined that we are identified as supporting a suite of about 10 or 12 of the outcomes. Two action plans have identified specific actions that we are aiming to take forward, including those outcomes and others. I have tried to give you some practical examples in the paper of how activities and actions on the ground will, it is hoped, have a positive benefit.

[124] On the issue of measuring a direct correlation and a direct impact when we are working at an outcome level with partners, that is notoriously difficult to pin down. We have put some statistics in the paper. We talked earlier about the one regarding access to green

spaces, and we have been undertaking some monitoring in relation to looking at the accessibility of woodland that is within 500m and 2 km of communities in Wales. There have been modest improvements on both since 2005. Hopefully, that is down to some of the actions that we have been taking forward under the environment strategy.

[125] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae gan Leanne gwestiwn i Gymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru. **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Leanne, you have a question for the Welsh Local Government Association.

[126] **Leanne Wood:** Do you think that local authorities should be required to develop their own environment strategies in order to be more accountable for the aspects of the overall environment strategy that they have to follow?

[127] **Mr Mitchell:** In our paper we alluded to the plan's rationalisation process, and there was a lively debate about whether there should be statutory local strategies for environmental issues, or whether the role of the community strategy and the local development plan would fulfil those criteria. The debate about the environment and its importance has moved on since that point in time. However, the issue of whether those two statutory planning processes will fulfil our need to ensure that there is a political process for the environment on a local basis is partly to be tested, because the local development plans have not come forward. So, at this point in time we would find it difficult to say one way or another. We have to make sure that the local development plans and the community strategy fulfil that purpose.

[128] **Leanne Wood:** Do you think that there is a danger that there might not be a fit unless local authorities have specific environment strategies?

[129] **Mr Mitchell:** That was the risk that was identified in the initial debate. The thinking was that, if a plan has a statutory status, that immediately gives it importance on a local basis. However, as I say, the important trick is to deliver the outcomes through the planning process, whatever it is, and to ensure that the LDP and the community strategy fulfil those processes.

[130] **Leanne Wood:** Will you be able to measure those outcomes as outcomes of the environment strategy?

[131] **Mr Mitchell:** We are very interested in the concept that is currently being put forward in respect of the natural environment framework, and how that provides a context for measuring progress on the environment strategy. We will have a session with members and officers on that on 20 May, and CCW and the Welsh Assembly Government are leading on that. Until we start to understand what is involved in that process and what is required around it, it is difficult to understand where the linkages are and the reporting lines and the accountability in that.

10.20 a.m.

[132] **Leanne Wood:** We should come back to that at some point in the future, Chair, because it sounds as if there might be a danger of some links and fits being missed if we are not careful.

[133] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Certainly.

[134] **Lorraine Barrett:** Earlier this year, the Minister acknowledged that Wales has missed its target to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010. Can you say something about what you are doing to halt the loss of biodiversity?

[135] **Mr Thomas:** The Countryside Council for Wales was describing the process that was

taking place around outcome 21, which talks about the biodiversity targets. We have been actively involved in that, particularly as a land manager and a regulator, to ensure that the agreements that have been reached about the actions that need to be taken to achieve favourable condition are embedded, as I said earlier, into the plans for the management of the public forestry estate and into the grant scheme for the rest of the woodland. The other thing that I would pick up on is that the proposition in ‘Woodlands for Wales’ and much of the work in our corporate plan is about focusing on the wider ecosystem. If we can get some of the fundamentals right, we will create a resilient environment within which biodiversity can operate and thrive. That sits comfortably with the concept of managing an ecosystem with the long time frames dictated by woodlands, and the landscape level of the management that we are involved in. By focusing on those landscape-level actions, we will hopefully create a more resilient set of woodland ecosystems that will contribute to the environmental resilience of Wales at a landscape level. However, we are also taking some specific action on the targets.

[136] **Lorraine Barrett:** The Minister intends to develop a natural environment framework to build on the collaborative action between the public, business and voluntary sectors. Do you think that that will support the environment strategy, particularly with regard to halting the loss of biodiversity?

[137] **Mr Thomas:** In my previous answer, I was looking forward to that. In forestry policy terms, we would be very comfortable with the natural environment framework, because the concept is similar to what we call sustainable forest management which has been around for a while, and is about trying to optimise the three-legged stool of sustainability—economics, the environment and social outcomes. To us, the natural environment framework feels like a natural extension of that work.

[138] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Craig, do you have anything to add on that?

[139] **Mr Mitchell:** Only that we have developed a network of member champions on biodiversity issues across the 22 local authorities. They meet annually with CCW and WAG officials to discuss, in qualitative terms, how biodiversity issues are dealt with on a local basis and how issues such as Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 duties are tackled. We are also currently working on a project to develop guidance for scrutiny committees, so that they can hold executives to account on how they approach biodiversity issues in their locality. So, that is being done to support the scrutiny role.

[140] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** The final question is a question for a written note rather than an oral reply. We also posed this question to the countryside council and the Environment Agency. Do you think that the environment strategy, as it currently stands, is fit for purpose, or do you believe that it needs to be reviewed? It would be useful for our inquiry if we were to have a note stating what areas you believe could be strengthened or improved.

[141] Other than that, thank you for your evidence today. You will receive a copy of the transcript of this evidence session and if you feel that there are things to be corrected, please let us know. If there are areas that you did not have the opportunity to touch upon this morning, which you want to make part of our evidence, please share them.

10.24 a.m.

**Craffu ar y Strategaeth Amgylcheddol: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth—RSPB**  
**Scrutiny of the Environment Strategy: Evidence Session—RSPB**

[142] Symudwn ymlaen at y sesiwn We move on to the final evidence session of dystiolaeth olaf y bore yma oddi wrth y the morning from the Royal Society for the Gymdeithas Frenhinol er Gwarchod Adar. Protection of Birds. I invite Annie Smith and



Gwahoddaf Annie Smith a Stephen Bladwell i ddod at y bwrdd. Croeso i'r ddau ohonoch. Yr ydych wedi bod yn gwranddo ar beth o'r dystiolaeth a roddwyd eisoes, felly byddwch yn gyfarwydd â rhai o'r meysydd y byddwn yn eu trafod gyda chi. Fe'ch gwahoddaf yn y lle cyntaf i wneud unrhyw sylwadau agoriadol.

Stephen Bladwell to come to the table. Welcome to both of you. You have been listening to some of the evidence that has already been given, so you will be familiar with some of the areas that we will discuss with you. I invite you, at the outset, to make any opening comments.

[143] **Mr Bladwell:** Thank you, Chair and committee. We represent the RSPB and our involvement as a stakeholder in the environment strategy action plan and the environment strategy itself extends from being a land holder and land manager in Wales as well as a voluntary organisation with a particular interest in the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources.

[144] First, the environment strategy identifies a number of environmental outcomes for Wales and core to those are the outcomes that relate to biodiversity, the conservation and sustainable use of our natural resources and the interaction with the ecosystems, both land and sea in and around Wales. The environment strategy also articulates how Wales will meet its international and EU commitments relating to biodiversity conservation and it is now quite clear, as we have heard mention this morning, that we will not meet those targets, particularly the 2010 targets, or, consequently, our sustainable development objectives. These continuing declines at this point in our wildlife and in the integrity of our natural environment clearly indicate that we are living beyond our environmental limits.

[145] We are pleased that the committee is undertaking this particular inquiry, which looks at part of the picture. However, we also believe that, in order to understand the complex issues surrounding the current state of biodiversity in Wales and our failure to meet the 2010 targets, a full and open inquiry around that is also required.

[146] We need this appraisal in order to move forward with confidence and clarity towards meeting future targets and obligations and also our aspirations as a sustainable society. There are many reasons why it is vital and urgent that the environment strategy action plans are implemented fully and in a timely manner. In order to do that properly, sufficient priority and resources need to be identified and allocated to get the job done. It is challenging, in this current political and economic climate, to do this, but effective investment in the national environment offers a far better return on investment and value for money than many other initiatives that the Welsh Government and other organisations may wish to invest in or have invested in previously. Furthermore, we believe that it provides support rather than competition to investment in other sectors.

[147] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yn eich dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig a hefyd yn y dystiolaeth yr ydych newydd ei chyflwyno inni ar lafar, yr ydych wedi bod yn weddol feirniadol o'r monitro o'r strategaeth hon ac o'r dulliau o fesur unrhyw gyflawniadau o fewn y strategaeth. Beth yw'r prif rwystrau rhag sicrhau llwyddiant y strategaeth hon?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** In your written evidence and in the oral evidence that you just presented, you are quite critical of the monitoring of this strategy and of the means of measuring any achievements within the strategy. What are the main barriers to ensuring the success of this strategy?

[148] **Mr Bladwell:** On the monitoring and measuring—

[149] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You highlight that in your written evidence, so that seems to be deficient in your view. What are the main obstacles or barriers to making the strategy a success?

[150] **Mr Bladwell:** It is slightly different depending on whether you are looking at barriers to the success of the strategy or at monitoring and measuring. However, I guess that one of the main barriers to full implementation of the strategy and the action plan is resources and not only as they are now, but how they are allocated and used across all of the organisations with a stake in delivering the various actions in the action plan.

[151] On how you monitor and measure progress against those, we do not feel, particularly with the biodiversity suite of actions and outcomes, that there is sufficient monitoring and/or information or data available to make really good measures of success in that regard.

10.30 a.m.

[152] If resources could be allocated to this, and the indicators developed as well, that would be helpful, because as we understand it, the full set of indicators for this strategy has not yet been completed. Again, our focus is on land use, land management, management of our inshore waters, and biodiversity.

[153] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** That leads us into Rhodri Morgan's questions.

[154] **Rhodri Morgan:** It certainly does. On this question of indicators and the monitoring and collection of the data, would it be useful if they were split into three categories? One would show where the underlying trend is getting worse, as with biodiversity, which means that merely slowing down the adverse trend would be a considerable achievement for the community to target. The second would show where things are getting slightly worse, so that, if you could hold your ground, that would be a major achievement. The third would show where the underlying trend is getting better, as with water quality and rivers, but we would want to accelerate that by making better use of that fact, helping people to access fishing, jogging and cycling along the riverbanks and so on. Would that kind of segregation help people to get a clear picture of what we mean by progress?

[155] **Mr Bladwell:** That is a very good point. The way you provide that information to the general public and the organisations actively involved is important. As for segregating the indicators into groups and trying to get the message across that way, it is inherently difficult with indicators to tease out the individual or collective smaller components that feed into them, the wild bird indicator being a case in point. If you look at that as a whole, you can generally see a fairly stable picture, but if you look at the segments that make up that indicator, you see a vastly different picture, with decline in various specialties within species and suites of species. As for the sectors more broadly and getting the message across, however, I guess it would be a useful route to take for the individual components that the environment strategy is trying to deliver on. However, you have to take that, too, as a collective and look at it holistically. You need to look at the data together, and assess what they are telling you about the interaction of various components of the ecosystem and the environment.

[156] **Rhodri Morgan:** My next question is on funding. You are the only non-statutory body that we have heard evidence from today. You are a voluntary body, but you are also a very powerful body, because the size of your membership, the endowments, the major landowners, and so on means that you have a funding capability. As a lobbying body, when you refer to resource difficulties and so on, are you referring to what you would like to do more of if you had more money, or are you referring to what you think Government should be doing more of via the different bodies that we have heard from today, such as Forestry Commission Wales, the Environment Agency Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association?

[157] **Mr Bladwell:** Generally speaking, when we talk about issues of resources, particularly around the various strategies and their implementation, we are referring to the collective rather than just ourselves—although we are part of that as a stakeholder. When we say that more resources are needed, that existing resources need to be better deployed, or that something fundamental is lacking, we are referring to the collective rather than to us as an individual organisation.

[158] **Rhodri Morgan:** That is, it is not exclusively other people's money or state money that you are talking about; you include your own money.

[159] **Mr Bladwell:** Yes, we include our own money. As a conservation organisation and a charity, most, if not all, of our resources are directed towards the fundamental objectives of the organisation, and essentially that is fairly well aligned with the environment strategy.

[160] **Rhodri Morgan:** One last question: which species of bird do you regard as being in most peril in Wales? What could the RSPB and the statutory bodies do most urgently to stop that peril from developing into something close to extinction? Where could you do another red kite turnaround exercise, as it were?

[161] **Mr Bladwell:** That is a very difficult question.

[162] **Rhodri Morgan:** If you do not know the answer, I certainly do not.

[163] **Mr Bladwell:** It is very difficult, and I would not like to single out one particular species, but to answer your question, we could use the curlew as an example. The curlew is a characteristic feature of Welsh biodiversity, particularly in the uplands these days, although it used to be more widespread. It is probably synonymous with or characteristic of a lot of the biodiversity issues in Wales, in that it was once widespread and was found in the Valleys, on the tops and along the coast. I am talking about our breeding population, because it is a migratory species. We look at our breeding population when we consider declines in Wales. It is an iconic species that is readily recognisable, and it has drastically declined in recent years by more than 80 per cent. It comes under the near threatened category at the international level, so we have a particular duty or obligation in Wales to do something about the decline. It is something that we can do fairly readily, and at this point, we are looking at one of the strongholds of the curlew in Wales, namely the Hiraethog moors in north Wales. We are monitoring that population this year, and we are looking at the characteristics of the vegetation over time and trying to correlate the decline of the curlew with the characteristics of the surrounding habitats and vegetation. From next year, we will try to find more resources to get some work done on the ground to turn that decline around. We are doing this in partnership with a number of organisations, including the Countryside Council for Wales. We also hope to get the Environment Agency involved, as well as the national parks and the local authorities. So, it will be a collective effort and we are looking forward to doing that work.

[164] **Brynle Williams:** In your evidence in relation to network environmental regions, you state,

[165] 'We welcome this development, and have contributed to the initial development of the concept through the [Wales Spatial Plan] South East Wales Area Environment sub-group.'

[166] From your work on the development of a networked environment region in south-east Wales, do you believe it could successfully assist, to implement elements of the environment strategy?

[167] **Ms Smith:** Yes, I think that it is a really promising initiative that has the potential, if it is well used, to identify how we can look after our biodiversity priorities on a larger scale,

for example, on a landscape scale, to connect habitats that have become fragmented over the years. It will also have the potential to recognise much better the benefits that ecosystem services provide to populations in those areas in the form of water resource management, carbon storage and the health and economic benefits that arise from access to nature or from access to sustainable transport routes with improved cycling and so on. There is certainly great promise in it as an initiative, but we are anxious that the biodiversity priorities be well integrated into the process so that we can get lots of win-win outcomes.

[168] **Leanne Wood:** It is widely recognised, and you refer to this in your report, that the EU targets to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 have been missed. Can you tell us why you think they have been missed?

[169] **Mr Bladwell:** Again, these are complex issues, and leading up to the target this year and the failure to meet it, there has been a very complex set of circumstances. I guess that, fundamentally, there seems to have been no real commitment to meet that target. Wales is not alone in failing to meet what is a global target, and I do not think that any single country, certainly in the EU, could claim to have met or that they will meet that target.

10.40 a.m.

[170] **Leanne Wood:** Were they achievable targets? Were baseline data set in; were countries clear about what they had to do, or was it all a bit fluid?

[171] **Mr Bladwell:** That is possibly part of the issue. For some components of that biodiversity target, there were baseline data to measure against, and for others there are still no data. So, again, it is very difficult to measure progress in that regard. Therefore, we have to look at indicators, but as we have previously mentioned, they are complex in themselves, and they are only as good as the data that underpin them. That was an issue in meeting those targets, but against the overall commitment to biodiversity and meeting those targets, it is clear that we have not got anywhere near meeting them. For a small range or set under that component of biodiversity, particularly in Wales, we have had some successes and we have done a lot of work that has worked well over the years in that aim, but it comes back to the resources and the allocation of resources, and the collective and political commitment to integrating biodiversity as it should be in our sustainability aspirations.

[172] **Leanne Wood:** You said earlier that, globally, all countries have missed their targets, as far as you are aware, and certainly those in the EU. Can you give us a sense of by how much we have missed the target in Wales? Is it a spectacular miss? Have other countries done much better than us, or have they done much worse? Can we have a sense of that without these baseline data?

[173] **Mr Bladwell:** It is difficult because we have a different suite of biodiversity in Wales and the UK than our neighbours in western Europe and an even greater difference than countries in the southern hemisphere, for example. The UK is not classed as a mega-diverse country by any means, but the biodiversity that we hold, particularly in Wales, is unique. In our woodland species in particular, we have a big resource at a UK level and at a European level for some of the western Atlantic oakwood, for example. If you are looking at aspects of our biodiversity where we have possibly missed the target, it is, fairly majorly, in farmland and woodland habitats and species.

[174] **Leanne Wood:** Do you think there is a danger that some planned Government projects could make the situation worse? I am thinking for example of the potential Severn barrage. I know that the RSPB has done a lot of research into the potential outcomes for biodiversity in that area. The Gwent levels were also under threat when a motorway was being planned to go through that area. Sometimes, Government objectives contradict each

other. Do you have a view on that?

[175] **Ms Smith:** That is exactly right. The critical point is that we are not achieving sustainable development, and we are not living within environmental limits, and we therefore continue to allow actions to go ahead in spite of their impact on biodiversity and the ecosystems, which, as we said, we all rely on. The Severn estuary is a good example of where the RSPB would argue that it is a brilliant idea to see how we can get energy from that amazing tidal range, but the approach, if you are thinking in a sustainable development context, should be to ask what the most sustainable way we can get energy from this system is. That is, how can we do it in the least damaging way to the biodiversity that also depends on it as opposed to, ‘what is the biggest project we can do that will potentially generate the most energy?’ That is an arguable point, and while we await the outcomes of the study, we would argue that the approach was back to front.

[176] **Leanne Wood:** My last question is: what do you think the Welsh Government needs to do to halt the loss of further biodiversity and to meet those EU targets?

[177] **Mr Bladwell:** Fundamentally, there needs to be a shift in the way that it is viewed and how it is incorporated into other policies and plans, as we have just mentioned. It is well recognised that the natural environment and biodiversity underpin other sectors and other work that we do as a nation, so they need to be made a fundamental part of everyday decision making across the board. Biodiversity, the natural environment and ecosystems need to come first—or need to be considered from the outset—in all of the functions of the National Assembly, rather than being tacked on at the end or seen as constraints. We should be seeing these things as assets and a natural resource that we need to protect and nurture into the future.

[178] **Ms Smith:** Part of that is recognising the value of ecosystems to our society; the cost of losing them is, perhaps, an easier way of thinking of it. Some could be monetised and some cannot; it is challenging, but it is an important area that is being looked at more and more.

[179] **Rhodri Morgan:** How do you cope with the fact that you could have biodiversity remaining static, but the species mix within it would be different due to the climate change that you cannot avoid because it is now built into the system, in that the warming of the climate will happen regardless of what anybody does today? You could still have 5,000 species in Wales, but they would not be the same 5,000 species in 20 years’ time because some would migrate northwards to Scotland—they could not cope in Wales—and other species will migrate into Wales from southern France, southern England, Spain and so on, as we get the kind of climate in 2020 that they have now. The Countryside Council for Wales changed its view on the idea that you cannot protect a static environment if the weather is changing. Does the RSPB share that view? Are you now trying to hit a moving target?

[180] **Mr Bladwell:** We share that view. If you look at the longer term and at larger scales, the fundamental point is that we need to be looking at, and protecting, what we have now; we need to look after it and make sure that the countryside in Wales, and our surrounding seas, are able to accommodate those changes in diversity of species as they move.

[181] **Rhodri Morgan:** What do you mean by, ‘protecting what we have now’?

[182] **Mr Bladwell:** We need to protect the areas that we have now, such as the special sites and the protected landscapes, to ensure that they can maintain their functionality—in terms of the ecosystems that they possess and the components of the species and habitats that make up those ecosystems—to try to protect them from any further loss, degradation or fragmentation.

[183] **Rhodri Morgan:** You have lost me; you either accept that it is a moving target or you do not.

[184] **Mr Bladwell:** It is a moving target, but that is the nature of nature; it is diverse, and it moves, shifts and changes over time. We are accelerating that change rapidly with climate change and the impact that we have in terms of where we are moving and our developments. However, we still need to try to maintain the level of functionality within the environment, in terms of the ecosystems, the species that make them up, how they interact and how we derive benefits from them.

[185] **Rhodri Morgan:** However, at the top end, you will have species dropping off and other species moving into the bottom end, as we get a more Spanish or southern England-type climate moving into Wales gradually over the next quarter of a century.

[186] **Mr Bladwell:** We will. It is very difficult to predict what the winners and losers will be, but we will have to take that into account.

[187] **Ms Smith:** As Stephen said, it will be hard to predict what the winners and losers will be; different species will react in different ways, and we are still trying to figure out what that means for some of the bird species, for example, that we are concerned with. If we look at lapwing and curlew in Wales, which have declined in numbers by 80 per cent over the last couple of decades, we cannot say that because they will not be here in 25 years that we can let them go extinct locally now. A significant effort is still being made to keep those populations there, so that, if it does turn out that their climate space moves, the birds are there to move with it. If we allow populations of wildlife to be seriously eroded, or if we allow habitats to be further degraded and fragmented, we will not have an environment that is suitable for wildlife to move into, or for that sort of climate-driven migration to continue in the long term.

10.50 a.m.

[188] **Brynle Williams:** Following on from that, if there are insufficient numbers of farmers going into Glastir, how do you see this having an influence? You emphasise the need to establish habitats and so on, but if farmers cannot achieve the required number of points to get into Glastir, can you expand on the influence that that may have?

[189] **Mr Bladwell:** That is a very good point and it would be a fundamental issue with regard to the priority species or biodiversity in Wales. The farming community has a huge role to play as a steward of biodiversity, species and habitats that it works with every day in terms of its farming operations. If farmers take the decision not to enter Glastir for whatever reason, or are unable to do so, that will have a huge impact on the outcome of the collective efforts that we are making through the environment strategy to bring the wider countryside to a condition that is suitable for the greatest number of species and habitats to be able to co-exist with us.

[190] **Brynle Williams:** How can we progress this?

[191] **Mr Bladwell:** The Glastir scheme fundamentally provides the potential to have a positive impact in that regard. Making it as beneficial for environmental outcomes as possible, but still retaining flexibility for the farming community to see it as a viable option in their farm business plans and farm business management operations, is essential. It is incredibly challenging to balance those two aspects, but we still have some time in the development period of the Glastir scheme to achieve that.

[192] **Lorraine Barrett:** On marine issues, in your evidence you have expressed concern that the draft marine policy statement currently fails to integrate sectoral policies. Can you

explain your concerns in that regard?

[193] **Ms Smith:** The marine policy statement is the first bit of a new marine planning system, the likes of which we have not had before. Our great aspiration for this new system of marine planning is that it will allow a strategic overview of all activities in, and impacts on, our marine environment so that they can be managed within environmental limits, and so that the functionality of the ecosystem can be well-maintained. To do that, we must recognise those environmental limits and develop ways of managing activities synergistically and identify how many different activities can go on in different areas. There is a level of detail there that will have to be covered by development plans for specific areas, but as a starting point, many of those in the marine community were hoping that the marine policy statement would start to identify what issues should be prioritised for the sustainable development of the marine environment, what might be prioritised in developing those plans and how that would relate to nature conservation and the respect for environmental limits that need to be built into the system.

[194] We have a wish list of how different sectors might develop, which are not integrated, and a list of constraints on those, such as the different legislation that impacts on how things need to be managed and where that can happen. So, the disappointing thing is that it has not brought us any closer to the strategic approach that we were looking for; it has only put things that people already know about in one document. The marine community was hoping for more from this.

[195] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** There is a final question that we have put to all of the witnesses and which you have heard at least once. Do you think that the environment strategy as it currently stands is fit for purpose, or do you believe that it needs to be reviewed? That question asks for a note rather than oral evidence this morning. So, could you furnish us with a note on that as soon as possible? You will get the text of this session; if you feel that something needs to be corrected, please do so. If you feel that there are areas that we have not covered this morning and you wish to include them in further written evidence, please do so. Diolch.

[196] The next meeting of the Sustainability Committee will be on 26 May, when we will be scrutinising the Minister on the environmental strategy.

10.56 a.m.

### **Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion**

[197] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I move that

*the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37.*

[198] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig  
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.56 a.m.  
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.56 a.m.*