



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

**Y Pwyllgor Cynaliadwyedd
The Sustainability Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 11 Tachwedd 2010
Thursday, 11 November 2010**

Cynnwys
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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

Alun Davies	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Karen Sinclair) Labour (substitute for Karen Sinclair)
Brian Gibbons	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Lorraine Barrett) Labour (substitute for Lorraine Barrett)
Sandy Mewies	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Irene James) Labour (substitute for Irene James)
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour
Kirsty Williams	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Leanne Wood	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Melanie Dodd	Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili Caerphilly County Borough Council
Dr Madeleine Havard	Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru Wales Environment Link
Alison Jones	Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili Caerphilly County Borough Council
Dr David Parker	Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru Countryside Council for Wales
Morgan Parry	Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru Countryside Council for Wales
Paul Sinnadurai	Cymdeithas Awdurdodau Parciau Cenedlaethol Cymru Association of Welsh National Parks Authorities

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

Aled Jones	Clerc Clerk
Meriel Singleton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 8.51 a.m.
The meeting began at 8.51 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Kirsty Williams:** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to this morning's meeting of the Sustainability Committee of the National Assembly for Wales. I remind everybody that, in the event of a fire alarm, you should leave the room by the marked fire exits and follow the instructions given by the ushers. Could everybody please ensure that their mobile phones, BlackBerrys, pagers and so on are switched off? I remind everybody that the

Assembly operates through the media of both Welsh and English and translation is available via the headsets. The interpretation is on channel 1 and the verbatim feed for sound amplification is on channel 0. So that our guests know, there is no need to touch the microphones as they will be operated for you.

[2] This morning, we have a long list of apologies, unfortunately. We have received apologies from Karen Sinclair, Irene James, Lorraine Barrett, Brynle Williams and Angela Burns. Alun Davies, Sandy Mewies and Dr Brian Gibbons will be substituting for their colleagues this morning.

8.53 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Fioamrywiaeth: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Biodiversity: Evidence Session

[3] **Kirsty Williams:** Today, we are going to take further evidence for our inquiry into biodiversity in Wales from the Association of Welsh National Parks Authorities, the Countryside Council for Wales, Wales Environment Link and Caerphilly County Borough Council. I am very pleased to welcome our first set of witnesses to the meeting this morning. Thank you very much for your attendance this morning and for the written evidence that you have submitted. We have Mr Morgan Parry and Mr David Parker from CCW—it is very nice to see you again, Mr Parry, you are a frequent visitor to the committee; representing the national parks, and working particularly in the Brecon Beacons area, we have Mr Paul Sinnadurai.

[4] Gentlemen, could you start by making some brief opening comments outlining the perspectives of both your organisations? Then, as usual, committee members have a long list of questions for you. Perhaps we could start with CCW and we will then move to the national parks.

[5] **Mr Parry:** Diolch yn fawr iawn am **Mr Parry:** Thank you very much for the y gwahoddiad. invitation.

[6] This is an important inquiry and this matter is a key issue for the Countryside Council for Wales. I will set the context, perhaps. We had a reception in the Senedd two days ago, which was the closing event for the year of biodiversity in Wales and the partners that have been working to promote biodiversity and working on the ground around Wales were represented there and Assembly Members were present. It is important, because this has been recognised as an important year as there is an understanding that more needs to be done globally to secure the future of biodiversity, but it was also an opportunity to celebrate successes, because there are plenty of examples of partners working together in Wales to bring species back, from the brink in some cases. Over a long period of securing sites that have been important for biodiversity, that work has brought forth considerable success. Alongside concerns around the decline of biodiversity globally, we have in Wales a system that has produced results, and there is quite a lot to be proud of.

[7] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Thank you for inviting the national parks authorities to submit oral evidence today in a follow-up to our written evidence. We welcome the recognition that is paid to biodiversity conservation within the Welsh policy landscape, and we also welcome the nettle-grasping that Ministers have done on the failure to meet the 2010 targets. Since submitting our written response to the inquiry, we have become increasingly involved in the 'A Living Wales' consultation process, and this has given rise to some good thought and debate, and we hope that this useful process will be extended to the Welsh population as a whole rather than restricted to a conversation with the initiated.

[8] **Kirsty Williams:** Perhaps I could start by asking the first question. To what extent do

you believe the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity targets was made a priority for the Government and for organisations throughout Wales?

[9] **Mr Parry:** My response would be that it has certainly been a priority for those organisations whose role it is to promote biodiversity and to manage the natural environment. It has been a focus and a way of organising the work. In a sense, that is a response to the period that has gone by. One of the critical decisions taken is the Government's decision to review the framework within which we operate—the new framework, which is currently out for consultation, will bring us up to date with current thinking, and it will make better connections with those beyond the managers of the environment, to those who are users of the environment and to the economic and social actors, who are all influential in determining what sort of environment we will have in the future. That recognition has been important, and the lesson learned is that it is about extending the ability of actors beyond the environment sector to engage with conservation, and that is critical. That is where the focus has not been good enough so far.

[10] **Kirsty Williams:** What is the parks authorities' perspective?

[11] **Mr Sinnadurai:** It was the kind of target that you find in an international treaty, and most people in the conservation organisations felt that we would never reach it, so why sign it in the first place? It was not a target that was set on the basis of sound science, and it was not set on the basis of individual nations measuring the rate of progress that they are currently making. That is why Wales, and Britain as a whole, have unfairly caught the conservation profession out of step, because good progress has been made, and continues to be made. We are on the right trajectory; it is just that it is not happening fast enough, and the simple truth is that not enough is being done as a whole to conserve biodiversity. We have clustered around the designated science process for a long time now, and despite it being a fantastic process, it was never designed to halt the loss of biodiversity. That was never its function; it was there to safeguard the best bits and representative examples while the rest of the troop ran around doing all the other stuff. The failure has been that we simply have not done the other stuff. If the 2010 target should have been a call for anything, it should have been a call for nations to come back and say, 'Right, let's look at all of the other stuff, and while we support our statutory science, let us get the other stuff going, too'. We have been saying that for a long time now in different forms and consultation responses, and it does not seem to register.

[12] **Kirsty Williams:** With whom does it not register?

[13] **Mr Sinnadurai:** With anyone, really. We talk about conservation in the wider countryside, and the latest manifestation of that is in the connectivity concepts that are being developed. We have articles 1, 2, 3 and 6 of the habitats directive, which talk about priority habitats and achieving favourable conservation status and management regimes for special areas of conservation and Natura 2000, but we forget article 10, which is all about important places for flora and fauna in the wider landscape. That has given us some sort of discretionary element, in that local authorities can recognise it if they wish to in their local plans, but actually, it is an article that is equally as strong and important as but it is an article that is just as strong and important as the rest of them. People at my end of things do not understand why it just discretionary and not mandatory.

9.00 a.m.

[14] **Alun Davies:** Thank you for that; that was very interesting. Mr Parry, taking you back to your written evidence, in answering question 1 on the top of page 6, you say something in the first sentence that I find quite interesting. You say

[15] 'we have not failed to deliver biodiversity conservation, but we have failed to meet

international biodiversity targets’.

[16] What do you mean by that?

[17] In the second part of that first paragraph, you say that

[18] ‘There is a need for an integrated approach to governance and environmental management that reflects the complexity of environmental systems and their interactions’.

[19] That implies a quite significant criticism of the Government’s approach, because surely it is the Government that is supposed to be providing that direction and the structures within which you and other organisations can deliver the things that you have been discussing?

[20] **Mr Parry:** The best way to answer that question is to understand what the drivers of biodiversity loss are. The reason why we have lost biodiversity globally is not because of the failure of conservation policy; we lose biodiversity for the fairly obvious reason that the global population of human beings is growing significantly, and therefore our use of resources is growing significantly. So, the main drivers of loss are economic ones. Within the context of the powers of the Welsh Assembly Government, we have powers, responsibilities and duties given to us through a number of pieces of legislation and European regulations. That gives tools to biodiversity organisations and environmental organisations to try to mitigate that global trend. We are in a position of having to deal with the consequences of something that is much wider, namely the human impact on the planet. I am optimistic that we can find a global means of continuing to allow economic development, to allow human societies to grow, while retaining the best parts of our natural world and maintaining them in perpetuity. That is a real challenge, but you have to understand that the drivers are economic and social, and what we have as conservation professionals is a toolbox to try to mitigate the worst excesses of those drivers. I think that we have done it well, within the confines of the tools and the legislation that we have.

[21] Do not forget that in the context of Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government’s powers are very limited. Powers are not devolved on biodiversity matters. We have some duties and responsibilities, and we carry those forward, but the challenge going forward is to put this in the context of economic development and social progress in the understanding that many other actors have to get involved in this if we are to stem what is a global trend. We have stemmed the trend in Wales; the figures show some ups and downs, but it is not a bleak picture. However, the global trend is a poor one, and we have to understand that the drivers lie elsewhere.

[22] **Alun Davies:** I am interested in what you said there, because I feel that the need for an integrated approach, which you discussed in that paragraph, referred to Wales, rather than the global situation. You list the legislative and policy frameworks on page 8, but I am surprised that you do not mention the Wales environment strategy in that list, although I am aware that you refer to it later in your evidence. When the strategy was launched in 2005, or whenever it was, it was supposed to be the overarching document that you seem to be searching for in other parts of your evidence. Do you not believe that it provides the direction and integration that you seem to be looking for?

[23] **Mr Parry:** The environment strategy was a very good thing because, for the first time in a Welsh context, it brought together all the different regimes that existed previously and it also set a reasonably medium-term target for Wales, which was a good thing to have. However, the strategy basically comprised a series of actions and strategies—many of which were ongoing—but it brought them together and prioritised them. That is the difference that the strategy made.

[24] There is a big question going forward about the new framework. I am firmly of the belief that the natural environment framework—or this new integrating way of putting biodiversity and conservation management into broader societal goals—is a really important step. It is bigger than strategies—this is not about toolboxes and strategies; this is about a new way of thinking and of conceptualising our relationship with the environment. So, that will be a big step forward. The environment strategy was good for the time when it was devised, however, because it was the first time we had attempted to bring all those different regimes together in Wales and prioritise them.

[25] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yr ydych wedi sôn am edrych ymlaen at y dyfodol yn hytrach nag edrych ar y ffaith ein bod wedi methu â chyrraedd targedau 2010, ac yr ydych wedi sôn am y fframwaith newydd. A ydych wedi ystyried y ffaith y byddai polisi'r Blaid Geidwadol o ddiogelu'r gyllideb iechyd, sef rhyw 40 y cant o gyllideb Llywodraeth y Cynulliad, yn golygu 20 y cant o doriad yn y gyllideb ar gyfer yr amgylchedd ac unrhyw ymdrechion gennych i geisio hyrwyddo bioamrywiaeth a diogelu'r amgylchedd?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You have mentioned looking to the future rather than concentrating on the fact that we have failed to meet the 2010 targets, and you have mentioned the new framework. Have you given any consideration to fact that the Conservative Party's policy of safeguarding the health budget, which accounts for some 40 per cent of the Assembly Government's budget, would mean cuts of 20 per cent in the budget for the environment and your efforts to promote biodiversity and safeguard the environment?

[26] **Mr Parry:** Nid wyf yn gwybod—

Mr Parry: I do not know—

[27] **Kirsty Williams:** Nice try, Rhodri Glyn.

[28] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I thought that it was, too.

[29] **Kirsty Williams:** Indeed. You know that budget considerations will be exercising the committee shortly. Can you keep your answer brief, Mr Parry, and then we can return to our main focus of why we did not get where we should? If we have time, we can get to resourcing later.

[30] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We did not get anywhere near it under the Tories.

[31] **Mr Parry:** Byddet yn disgwyl imi ymateb drwy ddweud bod angen mwy o adnoddau i'r amgylchedd, Rhodri. Nid ydym yn gwybod eto faint o adnoddau a fydd gennym yn ystod y misoedd nesaf. Nid ydym wedi clywed y penderfyniad eto. Fodd bynnag, yr wyf yn gobeithio y bydd unrhyw sector sydd yn cael arian cyhoeddus yng Nghymru yn ystyried yr amgylchedd fel rhan o'i waith. Mae gan y sector iechyd a'r sector addysg rôl i'w chwarae yn y dyfodol. Felly, nid oes angen gweld yr holl adnodd o'r cyllid amgylcheddol. Yr wyf yn ffyddiog mai'r ffordd ymlaen yw i bawb weld bod ganddo gyfraniad i'w wneud yn y maes hwn.

Mr Parry: You would expect me to respond by saying that greater resources are needed for the environment, Rhodri. We do not yet know what resources we will have over the next months. We have not been informed of the decision yet. However, I hope that any sector that receives public money in Wales considers the environment as part of its remit. The health and education sectors have a role to play in the future. So, there is no need to presume that all the resource will come from the environmental budget. I am confident that the way forward is for everyone to realise that they have a contribution to make in this area.

[32] **Kirsty Williams:** Nicely answered, Mr Parry.

[33] **Brian Gibbons:** On the headline point that you have been making, if you are right in saying that economic drivers are affecting biodiversity, do you think that the economic advantages of protecting biodiversity are strong enough to work? For example, with carbon emissions and so forth, the Stern review and its like say that unless you put a price on carbon that reflects the market price of the damage that has been done, it will just not work. So, I would suggest that the reason why you are not succeeding in the main is that a proper market price is not being put on promoting biodiversity and that nothing else will work. You are playing against the wind.

[34] **Mr Sinnadurai:** I am concerned. The current 'A Living Wales' debate is throwing up a lot of useful thoughts. One thought that is coming through is that having an approach to ecosystem management is clearly a logical thing to do in order to set the context for biodiversity within the landscape. However, there is also a risk in talking about ecosystem services, because it can boil down to that horrible lowest common denominator of asking, 'What is in it for me?' If there is nothing in it for 'me', 'I' will not necessarily care about it. If you can come up with a technological solution, rather than a landscape solution, and the technological solution is more cost-effective than the other, then the landscape solution can take the highway as far as most people are concerned. They will weigh up the costs in terms of their pocket. So, we need to be careful that we do not totally rely on economic processes to measure biodiversity. There is an intrinsic value to things, and we need to ensure that we try to appeal to people's understanding of that rather than to the extrinsic. We need to make them realise that you must value things for their own sake. Society is held together by altruism, not by selfishness.

[35] **Mr Parry:** I will ask David to give some examples of the current thinking on this. This is an excellent question, and it is exercising environmentalists at the moment. The current problem is that the environment and our natural assets are invisible to the marketplace. You were right to say that. They are not traded and they do not have value in that sense. However, there is a real worry about whether we can attach a market value to them that is commensurate with their real value to society and the economy. In other words, it is not about buying and selling a product. It is something different. So, attaching a value does not necessarily mean that it will have the right value in the marketplace, but work is currently ongoing to try to understand the value of ecosystem services to us. Maybe you can say more about that, David, and to what extent it will be incorporated in the new framework.

9.10 a.m.

[36] **Dr Parker:** The United Nations has completed a process of looking at the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity. It is a question of looking—not for the first time, but more successfully, it is hoped—at a way of valuing ecosystem services, that is, those services that the environment gives us and on which we rely, and on which we do not put a monetary value at the moment. There are obvious things that come from our environment, such as the supply of water, food, timber and so on, but the key thing about that work is the TEEB process, which stands for 'The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity', and I have a copy of that report that I can give you. It is trying to link biodiversity with the whole concept of the ecosystem approach to our work. It also links into the natural environment framework, and the Minister has started the process in relation to that—in fact, she started it the best part of a year ago. We at the Countryside Council for Wales, along with our partners, have a number of work streams as part of our work on the natural environment framework, and one of those involves looking at the economic value of the environment. Value does not relate only to monetary things, although being able to put a monetary value on aspects of the environment on which we do not currently put one will be powerful in the future, I think.

[37] Secondly, I agree with Paul that there are certain aspects of biodiversity on which it would be difficult to put a monetary value, but we need to try. History shows that we tried to

do exactly that in the early 1980s, when there was quite a strong movement to do it, but we failed, and did not see it through. However, it is now being done, particularly in Wales, where we have the natural environment framework. A piece of work called the Lawton report has been undertaken in England, and there have been similar pieces of work in Scotland. So, we are really beginning to think about how we will manage our environment in a holistic way. We have talked about designated sites, and they are the cornerstones, the nodes, or the most important parts of our countryside. However, they are not sustainable in the long term, and they need to be joined up and connected, and we need to manage the whole of our environment in a more sustainable way. Going back to your question, the valuation side will be very important in the future.

[38] **Kirsty Williams:** Paul, did you want to add anything before we move on?

[39] **Mr Sinnadurai:** If we are to value ecosystem goods and services, there needs to be more of an entrepreneurial understanding of how that will happen. At the moment, the way in which we seem to be heading with the common agricultural policy and agri-environment schemes is to invent a shopping list and see how much we can buy for the nation, and then, when the money runs out, we see what we have, but do not necessarily carry out an evaluation of that. I wonder whether a much more entrepreneurial approach could be taken to agri-environment schemes, so that we use them much more like incubation capital and invite landowners and farmers to invest in a business idea, so that they can grow their own biodiversity products, goods and services. They would not then feel that they were being interfered with and that they were necessarily having to march to one drum, because they could devise their own systems. As a result, there would be geographical variation, farmers talking among themselves, and they could grow the money and so on. So, you, effectively, get a return on the investment from the farm based on what the farmer is doing, and the fact that the farmers have invested in goods and services themselves might mean that that is how the environmental monitoring is carried out, because if they fail in the marketplace, they have failed environmentally, too. We have worked up ideas about that, and we can submit a paper to you on that if it would be useful.

[40] **Kirsty Williams:** That would be interesting, and I am sure that the Rural Development Sub-committee would also be interested to see that alternative approach to agri-environment support systems.

[41] **Sandy Mewies:** You have talked in a broad-brush way about what went wrong, about 'them' and what 'they' did that did not work and so on. Mr Parker gave us an idea of what could be done in the future, and we hear of another paper. However, you are members of organisations, so did those organisations have a specific role in reaching the 2010 target? If they did, have you reviewed your contribution to reaching it? If so, has the information that you have gained from that review been shared with the Welsh Government? We are where we are, and we can all say, 'It was him', 'It was her' or whoever, but what will we do to get it right in the future?

[42] **Mr Parry:** I will ask David Parker to fill in the details. We recognised that target, but it was a fairly general target, it must be said. It was about preventing the further decline of biodiversity, and underneath that there had been a programme of work concentrated on a range of species and habitats. Those priority species and habitats, which had been identified through international processes and confirmed at European and UK level, formed the work programme for a great deal of that aspect of our work. However, the targets you are talking about were fairly general, and I think that it is true that, going forward, if we are to follow the agreement set at Nagoya, internationally, to set another target for 2020, it needs to be properly followed up with some real, tangible, measurable processes to put in place to achieve that target, rather than it being too aspirational. I will ask David to say how we have been reporting against those targets to answer your question more precisely.

[43] **Dr Parker:** There are a number of areas where we report. The Welsh Assembly Government has the Wales biodiversity partnership, which brings together the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency and a number of other organisations with the non-governmental organisations—the third sector organisations—to work on biodiversity targets. These are broken down to local authority areas through local plans. We also report through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to Europe on the condition of our Natura 2000 series of sites, which are special areas of conservation and special protection areas for birds. We also report on the condition of our protected sites. Part of the reporting to Europe last time, in addition to the Natura reporting on protected sites, was Natura reporting for habitats and species at a Wales-wide level. So, for example, we reported on the condition of the otter in Wales or the condition of our acid grasslands, and the different habitats. So, there is a great deal of reporting going on. We are pretty good at reporting, so you could argue that we are very good at seeing what is being lost, but we need good monitoring and surveillance mechanisms to see how we are getting on.

[44] No-one has mentioned the marine environment today. It is also a very important piece of work. The Assembly Government has responsibilities out to 12 nautical miles, and CCW provides that advice. There is a good deal of information becoming available now on the condition of our seas—not just the condition of, say, fish populations, but of our marine mammals, cetaceans, and the habitats that we have in the marine environment. It can be a case of out of sight, out of mind with the marine environment, but we have a huge responsibility for looking after the biodiversity of our seas. That is also being reported in a much more effective way now.

[45] **Kirsty Williams:** Mr Parker, forgive me, but I think that we all know that we have these responsibilities. What we are trying to get at here is what it is that has stopped us making the impacts that we would all have liked to have made, and what the Welsh Assembly Government and the National Assembly need to do so that, in 10 years' time, the next sustainability committee is not sitting here talking to another group of experts like yourselves, who will be saying, 'Oh well, the target was too vague' or 'It was the wrong target'.

[46] **Sandy Mewies:** That is exactly what I was trying to get at. You are talking about they, he, she, it. You are talking about things that could have happened and should have happened. However, Wales Environment Link talks about lack of ownership in its paper. So, really, we are asking you who should be taking ownership and saying, 'These are the outcomes we expect to be achieved and this is when we expect them to be achieved'? Sometimes, I think that you have to set your targets quite high. Setting easy targets does not get you anywhere. Who should be doing this in future? The future is creeping up on us all the time. Who should be setting these targets? Who should be monitoring them? What will your role be in all of that?

[47] **Kirsty Williams:** Let us start with Mr Parry, and then we will move on to the parks authorities.

9.20 a.m.

[48] **Mr Parry:** This is important territory, and we need to understand this. We have been presenting to you what we have been dealing with thus far, and the tools, the resources, and the legislation that we have thus far. One thing that is very encouraging to me is that the new economic renewal strategy, which the Welsh Assembly Government has adopted, includes the idea that our economic wealth and future depend on natural resources. Sustainably managing the land of Wales is fundamental to our success. It is a big step forward to have that as part of an economic strategy.

[49] You could repeat the same across a number of different policy areas. The coming review of the common agricultural policy is another example. I have given evidence here previously to your committee about this. However, it is about understanding that the support that the public purse gives to farming should be very much shifting to a support for the public goods and benefits that the taxpayers get for their funding. That is an example in the agricultural field.

[50] There are many other fields. We need to orientate public policy across a range of different fields so that, in every field, it supports the sustainable management of the land and the sea, and also ensure the efficient use of resources so that we reduce our impact on the planet's resources. Over time, as technology develops, we can do this better, but there needs to be a drive right across every single sector; education needs to play its part, because one of the real challenges is engaging people in an understanding and appreciation of this.

[51] Therefore, there is a real challenge across every policy sector. Adding that to the work that exists within the environment sector and the tools and legislation that we have is where we will make progress.

[52] **Kirsty Williams:** I apologise for the noise caused by the wind on the roof. The roof is about to fly off by the sounds of it.

[53] **Mr Sinnadurai:** There are many relevant answers to this question. We could go on for hours just answering this one question, but perhaps I could give a bit of a gloves-off answer. Part of the problem is that there is a lot of good strategy, policy and consultation in Wales. I am one of those who are almost suffering from consultation fatigue, because we have been asked to answer the same questions over and over again during the past decade. I just wonder who is paying attention to the answers, because you could pool the answers and find out an awful lot of what you want to know and then come and ask us some new things, rather than asking us the same things over and over again. For all that, poor decisions get made.

[54] We have had such things as the spatial plan, which has been well developed, but I remember some of my colleagues, who have talked to Wales spatial plan officers, telling me, 'They were not aware of the implications of climate change; they are not talking about peak oil. They did not realise that biodiversity this and biodiversity that is actually relevant to the local economy'. So, you think, 'Blimey; why on earth not? Why is that not obvious?' That is one of the risks with the natural environment framework. It is a great concept, but if there is no buy-in and if there is no real understanding at the highest level within this building and among the officials, it is hot air. We will be left with trying to fire the gun with blanks, because no one will be actually backing us.

[55] A lot of conservation effort is just dealing with paradoxes. Despite all of the policies, the improvements of the habitats regulations, the improvements of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and so on, biodiversity conservation is as difficult now as it ever has been. The ask of the public sector is now bigger than it has been, but the resource commitment has not been commensurate with that. We are always asked to do more with less—as everyone else is, so perhaps we are just making special pleading, but the fact is that we are grappling with more and more. Through the planning system, planning developments are asking more and more of developers through technical advice notes 5 and 15 and so on. However, take TAN 15, for example, on developments in the floodplain: how many years has that been out, and how many developments in the floodplain still go ahead? We see wind turbines going up in Wales on carbon-rich peat soil. Why on earth is that happening? That is a conflict. Organisations such as CCW spend an awful lot of their time investing their expertise in just trying to deal with those kinds of conflicts of interest. Therefore, it is not moving us forward at all; we are just dealing with new conflicts and problems that are being pushed in front of us. It is no wonder,

therefore, that we cannot move forward when we are just being held back the whole time.

[56] **Kirsty Williams:** We have a long list of people who want to speak. First, I call on Joyce and Alun.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** You paint a picture of just firefighting to stay still and of other policies getting in the way, and you cited wind turbines on peat bogs. While we might accept all that you have said, what we are trying to get to is that there must have been some sort of action plan driving the environmental issues to the foreground. On the other hand, are you saying that there is not an action plan or that there are parts of a plan, but that it is not comprehensive? If that is the case, the performance indicators are not measurable. Is that what you are really saying, that unless we start at the beginning, we cannot arrive at the end?

[58] **Mr Parry:** There are plans, and one of the good things about the context in which we work in Wales is that we have a sustainable development scheme, under which, in theory, all of the plans and strategies are located. Environmental management sits under that scheme, as well as economic development and social policy. So, that architecture of public policy in Wales is the right one. We are beginning to make progress, and I made reference to the fact that the economic renewal programme acknowledges the importance of the sustainable management of our natural resources; that is a big step forward. One of the opportunities going forward is to think differently about the environment, and I will come back to that later.

[59] The new framework is about conceptualising our relationship with the environment in a different way. The opportunity provided by spatial planning is enormous. If we want to refresh our thinking about spatial planning, by looking at Wales's territory and seas, and understanding how all the different actors, influences and economic forces at work in those spaces can work together and integrate their efforts better to conserve our natural capital, I think that we can take a huge step forward. It would be a real missed opportunity if we did not see the spatial planning process in Wales as being the vehicle for this.

[60] The natural resources in any area are the fundamental issue. Everything else—all the transport and housing issues and economic and social policies that are arranged on a spatial scale—should have as their starting point the natural resources that that territory and sea area provides us. If we get that right, over time we will see significant changes. However, by way of caution, the Assembly Government has only been in place for 11 years, and a lot of economic policy takes a long time to result in change on the ground that is measurable. It takes time for the policies that were introduced in Acts in the 1980s and 1990s, and through European legislation with the habitats directive, for example, to come through. So, another thing to factor in is that the process of change is very slow, and that we therefore need to think in longer timescales.

[61] **Kirsty Williams:** Alun, please be brief, because I want to make some progress.

[62] **Alun Davies:** My problem, Mr Parry, is that we have been going for nearly 40 minutes now, and I am still not entirely clear as to why you think that the Government missed its targets for 2010. That is the purpose of this scrutiny inquiry and this committee meeting. I understand the wider issues of biodiversity, the global context and all of that, but this committee is looking at the actions and the leadership of the Assembly Government. The Assembly Government set targets for itself, but it failed to meet those targets, and we want to understand why. Could you therefore focus on that question and let us have the view of the Countryside Council for Wales as to why it failed to meet its targets?

[63] **Kirsty Williams:** I will let you think about that for a minute and we will move on to Paul, on the wider issues that Joyce raised.

[64] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Could you give me a quick reminder of the issues?

[65] **Joyce Watson:** What I asked was very similar. If there is an action plan, we should know where we are going, and if we know where we are going, we should have at least some performance indicators in at the start. If we do not know where we are travelling to at the beginning, how on earth can we be expected to arrive at our goal?

[66] **Brian Gibbons:** To follow up on that, is there a performance framework underpinning this, so that people can monitor what is delivered, or is there a strategy—as I suspect there is—where money is thrown out and there is no connection in between?

[67] **Dr Parker:** The Wales environment strategy has a clear set of outcomes and targets within it.

9.30 a.m.

[68] **Alun Davies:** Including this target?

[69] **Dr Parker:** Yes, including this target. About three of the outcomes in the Wales environment strategy are related particularly to biodiversity targets. So, for the last six years, there has been a clear framework of targets within the Wales environment strategy.

[70] **Brian Gibbons:** So, who is managing the performance of that?

[71] **Dr Parker:** This is a Welsh Assembly Government strategy, but a number of partners will be delivering the different elements of it.

[72] **Brian Gibbons:** My question was about who is managing the performance, not about who is delivering ineffectively.

[73] **Dr Parker:** It is a Welsh Assembly Government strategy.

[74] **Brian Gibbons:** We know that, but the question is: who is managing the performance?

[75] **Dr Parker:** I would say that that would be the Government, but with a lot of advice from the delivery bodies, particularly the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency, and the rest of the statutory and non-statutory sector.

[76] **Kirsty Williams:** I think we get the point, Brian. Paul?

[77] **Mr Sinnadurai:** I would just like to make a quick point, which also touches upon your question about the reporting process. All of these things are interrelated, and I am quite happy to provide a written response to that question following the meeting due to time constraints today.

[78] What you have highlighted is important, because there is no statutory framework behind the Wales environment strategy. All we have in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 is a duty to 'have regard to'. It is weak; it is woolly. Someone could say, 'There it is, let us now get on with doing what we are doing.' That is 'having regard to'; there needs to be a duty to support and promote. That is what is missing. If there is certainly a duty to support and promote, it becomes a national priority. We see this being presented to us, but then the organisations may say, 'We've got the Wales environment strategy and all this other stuff, okay, so what don't we do? If we're going to do this, it will require a resource commitment, so what don't we do?' Due to the fact that there are so many conflicting

demands internally, from above, from below, from the public, the decision is not made. That is part of the problem as well. That is what I fear with the natural environment framework: unless there is a strong Government framework to push these things forward, we will all still be pushing in different directions—it is like herding cats.

[79] **Kirsty Williams:** Mr Parry, would you address Alun's point briefly please?

[80] **Mr Parry:** I will try to answer Alun's question, as it is an important one. When the target was set, Governments, including Governments in the UK, thought that you could address the decline in biodiversity by applying environmental policies. My main point here is that the drivers of biodiversity loss are not due to the failure of environmental policy, they are economic and social. We could philosophically say that it is inevitable that biodiversity declines as the human population and the human impact on the planet grows globally. We can be optimistic that we can come up with technological solutions for the way in which we live on this planet, in a way that provides some space for biodiversity. We can do it; we have to have the belief that we, as a species, can do that. However, going forward, perhaps we should acknowledge the fact that the targets were missed because we simply tried to apply protected areas or tried to concentrate on individual species and declining or threatened species instead of understanding the broader economic context. As we set new targets, every sector needs to understand that it has a contribution to make. For me, economic policy is one of the most important to address. If that is not there, we will miss the targets again.

[81] **Kirsty Williams:** That is clear.

[82] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yr ydych wedi bod yn hynod o ddiplomyddol yn eich ymateb i'r cwestiynau ynglŷn â pham yr ydym wedi methu â chyrraedd targedau 2010. Efallai mai'r rheswm dros hynny yw'r ffaith eich bod yn gorff sy'n cael ei ariannu gan Lywodraeth Cymru. Pan ddaeth Gweinidogion a chyn-Weinidogion i'r pwyllgor i drafod eu cyfrifoldebau o ran cynaliadwyedd—ac mae bioamrywiaeth yn rhan o hynny—yr oedd yn amlwg inni nad oedd rhai Gweinidogion yn credu bod ganddynt unrhyw gyfrifoldeb o ran cynaliadwyedd yng Nghymru. A ydych yn credu fod methiant ar ran y Llywodraeth o ran gweld bioamrywiaeth ar draws yr holl adrannau ac yn gyfrifoldeb i bob Gweinidog? Yr ydym yn gwybod am angerdd y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynaliadwyedd a Thai ynglŷn â'r materion hyn, ond a yw'r ffaith nad yw Gweinidogion eraill yn teimlo bod ganddynt unrhyw fath o gyfrifoldeb yn y maes hwn yn golygu ein bod wedi methu a chyrraedd targedau 2010? Yr wyf yn derbyn pwynt Morgan, na ddylem edrych i'r gorffennol, ond bydd hwn yn rhwystr mawr o ran y dyfodol a cheisio gwneud gwahaniaeth sylfaenol yn y maes hwn.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You have been very diplomatic in your response to questions about why we have failed to meet the 2010 targets. Perhaps the reason for that is that you represent an organisation that is funded by the Welsh Government. When Ministers and former Ministers have come to committee to discuss their responsibilities relating to sustainability—and biodiversity is part of that—it was clear to us that some Ministers did not believe that they had any responsibility in terms of sustainability in Wales. Do you believe that there has been a failure on the part of the Government to see biodiversity as a cross-departmental issue and the responsibility of every Minister? We know that the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing is passionate about these issues, but has the fact that other Ministers have not felt any kind of responsibility in this area led to our failure to meet the 2010 targets? I accept Morgan's point that we should not look to the past, but this will be a major obstacle in the future and in terms of any attempt to make a fundamental difference in this area.

[83] **Mr Parry:** Mae Llywodraeth yng **Mr Parry:** Governments in Wales and

Nghymru ac mewn lleoedd eraill yn gweithio mewn bocsys. Mae gan bob Gweinidog gyfrifoldeb dros un maes, ac mae cymaint o bethau i'w gwneud gan fod her yn wynebu'r Llywodraeth ym mhob maes, efallai nad oes amser i feddwl am faterion sydd wedi cael eu blaenoriaethu gan adrannau eraill. Dyna'r trawsnewidiad sydd ei angen yn y ffordd yr ydym yn edrych ar yr amgylchedd a'n hadnoddau naturiol, sef eu bod yn rhywbeth sydd yn berthnasol i bawb. Nid wyf am roi'r bai ar y Llywodraeth neu'r Gweinidogion, gan ei bod yn broblem ar draws cymdeithas; mae'r amgylchedd yn cael ei weld fel rhywbeth sydd rhywsut ar yr ymylon i'r ffordd yr ydym yn byw yn yr unfed ganrif ar hugain. Mae'n broblem ar draws cymdeithas, ac nid yw'n fater i'r Llywodraeth yn unig. Fodd bynnag, pe baem yn gallu cael meddylfryd newydd ar draws Llywodraeth o dan y cynllun datblygu cynaliadwy yng Nghymru, lle byddai pawb yn gweld y cysylltiad gydag adnoddau naturiol a byd natur, byddem yn symud ymlaen. Dyna'r her i'r ddegawd nesaf wrth inni osod targed newydd, sef fod pawb yn gweld ei fod yn bwysig iddynt hwy.

elsewhere tend to work in boxes. Every Minister is responsible for a certain area, and there are so many things to do as the Government faces challenges in every area, that there might not be enough time to think about issues that have been prioritised by other departments. That is the transformation that we need in the way in which we think about the environment and our natural resources, in that they are something that is relevant to everyone. I am not going to blame the Government or Ministers, as it is a problem across society; the environment is seen as something that is somehow peripheral to the way in which we live in the twenty-first century. It is a problem across society, and it is not only a matter for the Government. However, if we were able to create a new mindset across Government under the sustainable development plan in Wales, which would mean that everyone could see the linkages with natural resources and wildlife, we would make progress. That is the challenge for the next decade as we set a new target, namely that everyone can see that it is important to them.

[84] **Kirsty Williams:** Brian, did you want to raise some issues about resourcing?

[85] **Brian Gibbons:** Yes, this is a 'sign the blank cheque' moment. How far are the delivery mechanisms for achieving the 2010 targets adequately funded?

[86] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Clearly not enough, although I am almost duty-bound to say that. However, in fact, I can give concrete examples. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is involved at the moment in a cross-border project in the Black Mountains between Wales and England with the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and the Black Mountains Graziers Association on trying to restore two separate blocks of heavily eroded peat. In England, they have the environmental stewardship scheme, which means that they have been throwing money at the English side of that SSSI for a decade. Embarrassingly, we have not been able to throw anything at it from the Welsh side. It all started 10 years ago when English Nature, as it was then called, came to us saying that it wanted to start a countryside stewardship scheme to look at the contiguous commons in that area. It asked what Wales could do, and we said, 'Nothing, because we have a different agri-environment scheme that has different governance rules, different financial rules, and so on, and we cannot splice the two together'. Since that time, the environmental stewardship scheme has come along, but the work is only happening on the English side of Offa's Dyke, not in Wales. In two 40ha blocks of land, they could end up spending the best part of £400,000 on each block, so they could spend £800,000—nearly £1 million—on just 80ha of eroded peat, which is a very small area of a massive SSSI. That is the type of resource that we are dealing with.

[87] Clearly, the Welsh Government cannot afford that, so we need to find another mechanism; we cannot rely on the same old agri-environment measures and on public spending for that side of things. However, at the same time, there are other instances where more targeted resourcing could achieve better results. I am sure that my colleagues in CCW

are capable of giving really good examples where money has been spent very well, and can continue to be done so.

[88] **Kirsty Williams:** I suspect that your answer would be the same, Mr Parry: ‘not enough’.

[89] **Mr Parry:** It is important for you to realise the range of activities that we carry out, such as land management, in the way in which Paul has described, where resources are really needed and where they should probably come from agri-environment schemes. They could come from new thinking about how business pays for the use of ecosystem services, which we touched on earlier. There is also the work of research, science and monitoring, which the Welsh Assembly Government has resourced reasonably well, and it is important that that is maintained going forward. We are also involved in advising other organisations such as local authorities on planning processes and advising energy developers on the best way to take forward that work, and that has been funded. There are good examples of how the resources put into that have brought forward some very positive results. There is funding for many different things, but perhaps David could give specific examples.

[90] **Dr Parker:** This is not just about resources, which we have heard about; it is very much about policy. We can achieve a great deal of good environmental management through changes in policy, and CCW provides advice on that to great lengths, not least to the Department for Rural Affairs and Heritage.

9.40 a.m.

[91] There have been many examples, and we have put some of them in our evidence. This is where science comes in, as we have good evidence of how to get good management of a particular piece of our environment, whether on land or at sea. That is to achieve more with less, if you like, and to make the best use of the money available. I suppose that the best example is the advice that CCW has been giving on the development of the new Glastir scheme, to make sure that it provides biodiversity benefits and also rewards landowners for their contribution to carbon conservation, water resource management, and so on. So, the evidence base in Wales is important to get the best use of the resources that we have. We could always do with more resources, but the policy change is equally as powerful as the resource issue, if not more so.

[92] **Mr Sinnadurai:** One suggestion for the committee would be for it to commission a financial audit of how much it costs to manage Wales’s biodiversity, and the cost of not doing so. How much do firefighting measures currently cost us? How much do conflicts of interest cost us, and what savings could be made from reducing those? How much of that public cost could be covered by agri-environment schemes and how much by better integrated working practices, better buy-in from other departments, and so on? How many skills can be fostered? How much can the economy benefit from that? What are the opportunities? Just to give the national parks a bit of a plug, we watched the submission by the RSPB closely, and we have prepared a list of the things that are happening in the national parks, which we would be happy to submit, as well.

[93] **Kirsty Williams:** We were going to come on to what the RSPB and others have said in oral and written evidence.

[94] **Leanne Wood:** As has been said, the purpose of this committee inquiry is to try to understand why the Government failed to meet the 2010 targets, and to look at what we can do to make sure that we do not fail the next time. I am picking up from you that there are two recommendations that you might support. You said earlier that there is a problem with the duty to have regard for sustainable development, and that, if it were strengthened to be a duty

to support and promote sustainable development, it would be much stronger, as it would have to cut across all departments, and every decision would have to be driven by that. So, is that one recommendation that we could run with, as a committee? The second potential recommendation relates to the Wales spatial plan. Spatial planning has the potential to address many of the issues here, so could you be a bit more specific about what needs to happen with the spatial plan? Does it need to be given more priority and more importance within Government? Can you give us something a bit more concrete on that, please?

[95] **Mr Parry:** Paul, do you want to answer the first question on the duty to have regard for sustainable development?

[96] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Yes, but it has been said very succinctly and I cannot really add to that. There is clearly a difference between having regard for something and having a duty to do something. That makes all the difference in the world to local governance, because if an organisation is not doing something, that suddenly becomes a risk.

[97] **Mr Parry:** I will ask David Parker to reply on the issue of the spatial plan, and to give a bit more detail about our thinking on that.

[98] **Dr Parker:** The natural environment framework, the 'A Living Wales' work that is going on at the moment, is considering in quite a lot of detail how the Welsh environment will look, and particularly how different districts, areas and parts of the seas will need to work in the future, and an output of that is, indeed, better spatial planning. So, we have a good idea, on a map, of what different parts of the country and the seas will look like. I should say that this is really happening at the moment with the sea, because with the new Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Welsh Assembly Government is working hard, and there is a lot of advice coming in, on marine spatial planning. The way in which we are dealing with spatial planning of the seas would be a good model that could be transferred to the spatial planning of land.

[99] **Alun Davies:** On the funding issues, it would be quite useful if people looked at the evidence that we received last week, which I thought was excellent, about different biodiversity projects in land management. I felt that we had some excellent examples of good practice. It might be useful if you were to look at the transcript of oral evidence and at the written evidence and provide the committee with a note of your comments on it, given the time constraints on us this morning. Mr Sinnadurai, it would be useful if you could respond on the record to the comments of the RSPB in our first evidence session on this. I found that evidence quite compelling, I have to say, and in terms of the role and function of national parks, it was quite challenging evidence that was sustained by the points that they were able to make at the meeting.

[100] **Mr Sinnadurai:** I have a 19-page response to that.

[101] **Alun Davies:** Perhaps you could circulate that.

[102] **Kirsty Williams:** The RSPB was critical of both your organisations when it gave evidence here, I felt. We have also received evidence from the Wildlife Trust in which it states that there is plenty of policy out there, but that implementation on the ground is the problem. We have had evidence from other organisations, such as the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, saying that you are not communicating very well, or educating the public and getting those messages out there. So, it is not just the RSPB—there has been veiled criticism from other organisations of your ability to deliver. The policy is there. You have said that there is the money to do things in some cases but not in others. It is the implementation on the ground that is the problem.

[103] **Mr Sinnadurai:** As I said before, the responsibilities and requirements have grown—they have not got smaller—and they have become more diverse as a consequence. It must be borne in mind that the same resource is being stretched further, and on a personal basis, I feel that strongly. The national parks welcome the fact that the RSPB mentioned us, because that gave us a chance to present our case. I will not have time to do it properly now, but I will run through the general notes.

[104] There is a long list of projects that are examples of the kinds of things that are going on, including an awful lot of projects that the RSPB is directly involved with, in national parks. It is a shame that it was not even aware of that fact, or it chose not to mention it, not to mention the funding that the RSPB has received from national parks to carry out some of those projects. So, we would like to correct the record a little on that.

[105] There are numerous CCW national nature reserves in national parks, and National Trust Wales is well represented in all three national parks, as is the Welsh Wildlife Trust. RSPB Cymru is active in two of the three national parks, and all three Welsh NPAs have been asked to develop ecological footprinting methodology by the Welsh Assembly Government. All three park authorities have adopted the Association of National Park Authorities' statement by the ecologists of the national parks in England, Scotland and Wales on biodiversity, conservation and climate change. Until 2010, the NPAs were excluded from CCW's grant-funding for local authorities, but we are now included, so we have a chance to grab more resources for the first time. Ten per cent of all environmental employment in Wales happens within national parks. All three national parks sit on both the board and council of NATUR, which is the Welsh institute for countryside and conservation management, and in the past, all three have been represented on the board of Pori Natur a Threftadaeth, also known as PONT.

[106] **Alun Davies:** However, it is the outcomes that are important. If you circulate that document, we can come back to it.

[107] **Mr Sinnadurai:** I have pages of outcomes here.

[108] **Alun Davies:** You can sit on as many boards as you like, but unless you are delivering things, it does not matter.

[109] **Mr Sinnadurai:** We are delivering.

[110] **Sandy Mewies:** Should we have the paper circulated, Chair? We can read it then and digest what Mr Sinnadurai is saying. I will not remember what you have said so quickly today.

[111] **Kirsty Williams:** It would be very helpful if we could have that paper. Members can then look at it and, if necessary, we can get the RSPB back to challenge its assumptions.

[112] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Could I request that you do not set this up as a boxing match? I would much rather a proper and serious discussion. The one thing that we were disappointed about was that the RSPB did not choose to come and talk to us before it came before you. That was a disappointment, because they are colleagues and friends, and it was a bit of a surprise. We would therefore much rather that you did not set us against each other across the table, as we would sooner have a discussion.

[113] **Kirsty Williams:** Absolutely, and if we could have that paper, we will publish it so that it is widely available to members of the public, and not just Assembly Members, so they will be able to see the parks' response to those comments. Morgan, would you like to comment?

[114] **Mr Parry:** I am afraid that I have not seen the Record for last week's evidence session, so I was not aware that the RSPB had criticised the Countryside Council for Wales, if that is what has happened. I would like a chance to read that, and perhaps we will put in a written response to it. I welcome the fact that the non-governmental organisations are active. Having been on the other side of the fence, I think that it is good that they are holding the Government and its agencies to account. It is all good stuff, but I would like to have the opportunity to reply to any detailed criticism that it might have made.

9.50 a.m.

[115] **Kirsty Williams:** Of course. Joyce, you had some questions on strategy, but I think that we have heard about that.

[116] **Joyce Watson:** We have covered everything as far as I am concerned.

[117] **Kirsty Williams:** Do Members have any other questions?

[118] **Sandy Mewies:** I have a simple question. Having listened to everything that has been said today, could you comment on whether there are far too many frameworks, strategies, spatial plans and so on? I have a theory that all people do in certain offices is pick up a strategy and rewrite it by adding a few comments and so on, and on and on it goes. Does the whole system need simplification?

[119] **Mr Sinnadurai:** In any organisation or institution, when there is not that much money, you sit down, have a meeting and write a strategy, because that makes you feel better. However, when you have more money, you do not have to do that; you can just go out and get on with it.

[120] **Sandy Mewies:** Is that a 'yes'?

[121] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Yes.

[122] **Mr Parry:** Yes, there are far too many strategies, and I hope that, under the new framework, we pull all the activities and work that is going on under various strategies together, so that the existing plans and strategies come to an end at some point. Of course, we need strategies, and we need strategic planning. You have to remember that the work of the Countryside Council for Wales and much of the work in relation to the environment is derived from Acts of Parliament that go back 60 years. They are on different spatial scale: some of them relate to England and Wales, others to England, Wales and Scotland, and some relate to the whole of the UK. There are many different levels. What is needed in Wales is for all of those to be brought together in one place, so that the duties and responsibilities on public bodies in Wales are clear and the many plans and strategies they derive from are replaced over time by a much simpler framework to work to.

[123] **Kirsty Williams:** That would free up your resources, because you could stop writing answers to consultations and get on with what you want to do.

[124] **Brian Gibbons:** Have you audited your resources to see how much time you spend on pure policy and on feeding the beast that is the National Assembly rather than on delivering on the ground?

[125] **Dr Parker:** That is an interesting question. We undertake a great deal of planning of our work. There is a lot of internal debate, particularly about the advice that the Countryside Council for Wales gives. That advice goes to an enormous number of places. It goes to

Government, local planning authorities, and sometimes to individuals. We can balance that against the points that have been raised about getting action on the ground, which is what it is all about, through our grant aid programmes. You have probably heard examples of butterfly conservation, with good action on the ground to conserve High Brown Fritillaries in Glamorgan and Marsh Fritillaries in other parts of south Wales. A lot of that is done through CCW grant aid. So, we can do it in that way.

[126] I should also mention our national nature reserves, which are some of the best wildlife sites in Wales. We use them as exemplars of best practice. We would like to see the kind of management that we have there being adopted in the wider environment. So, getting the balance right between how we spend CCW resources is a constant exercise. We are planning our work much more closely now with the Welsh Assembly Government. So, we make sure that we are taking forward priorities from Government.

[127] **Kirsty Williams:** Paul, could you give us an insight into the resources that you have in Brecon to deliver on all the things that you have been asked to deliver on? How many of you are there?

[128] **Mr Sinnadurai:** There are three of us. I line-manage two members of staff: a conservation officer who is on a fixed-term contract, which is about to end, and a biodiversity project officer, who is seconded two days a week to the Green Valleys project. He works with me three days a week at the moment. Probably 50 to 60 per cent of my time is spent on handling consultations.

[129] We happen to own about nearly 20,000 ha of land, all of which has priority habitats on it. A large proportion of it comprises sites of special scientific interest, and we bump along on the surface. So, we do little projects here and there, but we do not necessarily get any benefit from convergence funding, because most of the national park is outside the convergence zone, which means that most of that has to come from core funding, because we are also applying for other funding for other things and a small organisation has only a finite capacity to make funding applications. We have two area teams, but, mostly, they are dealing with litter, local situations and public rights of way work. It is a massive undertaking to keep the public rights of way work going. That frustrates the staff, because they would much rather be doing the positive biodiversity conservation stuff.

[130] **Kirsty Williams:** That is a salutary picture of the reality on the ground and how difficult it is for organisations to manage all of these competing strategies and issues. Thank you very much for your time and energies this morning. If you could supply the committee with the additional material that you have mentioned, we would be very grateful. Thank you very much for your attendance.

[131] **Leanne Wood:** Chair, could we ask for a research briefing note on the spatial planning question and exactly how, in practical terms, it is working with regard to the sea, under the new Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009?

[132] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes.

[133] **Alun Davies:** There is also quite a lot of overlap between the evidence we have received on this inquiry with the planning stuff that we are doing.

[134] **Kirsty Williams:** Yes, there is.

[135] **Alun Davies:** It would be useful for us to be able to cross-reference that.

[136] **Kirsty Williams:** We will make sure that that is available, Leanne. That is a very

good idea. We do not spend a great deal of time looking at marine issues.

[137] **Leanne Wood:** I think that there were three potential recommendations coming out of that session: one on the duty, one on spatial planning, and one that they mentioned at the end about bringing all of the strategies into one document.

[138] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I—

[139] **Kirsty Williams:** We are still on the record.

[140] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I am aware of that.

[141] **Kirsty Williams:** I am just warning you, Rhodri Glyn. [*Laughter.*] Just in case you say something that you might later—. Please go ahead.

[142] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** That was a very worrying piece of evidence about lack of ownership and non-governmental organisations existing to justify their own existence. The point that Paul made about responding to consultations rather than actually doing anything is very worrying.

[143] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you. Let us not have this discussion now, because our next guest is here. We can have this discussion later.

9.57 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Fioamrywiaeth: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Biodiversity: Evidence Session

[144] **Kirsty Williams:** I welcome to the committee Dr Madeleine Havard from Wales Environment Link. Thank you so much for taking the time to come here this morning. We are quite stretched for time, so if you could make some very brief introductory remarks about your organisation's view on biodiversity loss, we will then move to questions.

[145] **Dr Havard:** Thank you very much for inviting us along today. We are always very pleased to have an input to the discussions that go on in committees, which are a crucial part of looking at the future of our country. We know that biodiversity is in decline; you have heard lots of evidence about that, and you have heard again today that the general belief is that it is the economic pressures of development and production that are causing the issues. That is certainly the belief of Wales Environment Link. Degradation and the loss of habitats are the main drivers of our current predicament. Of course, we also know that the economic value of a good and healthy environment is very high. The natural environment is the source of raw materials in industry and agriculture, and landscapes and wildlife obviously underpin the tourism and recreational sector in Wales, which is such an important aspect. We believe that the opportunity to get out into the environment is absolutely crucial: whether it be walking round a park in the centre of town or going round the whole of the Welsh coast along our new path, it is really important to health and wellbeing in Wales. There are many statistics, and we have offered some on how crucial this is.

10.00 a.m.

[146] As a voluntary sector body, we really appreciate the new thinking that the Welsh Assembly Government has been producing in a whole range of areas of policy. There has been much talk about policy this morning already. We believe that the Wales spatial plan, green infrastructure, Glastir and 'A Living Wales', the natural environment framework, are showing a change of approach, and aspire to having a much more joined up, linked and cross-

sectoral approach from Government. We need that approach. We do not need a new approach, but a development of that approach to really help stop biodiversity loss.

[147] Across all departments and all levels of Government, we must have this mission to restore ecosystems and to make space for biodiversity. An ecologically sustainable Wales is vital and we need that clear route forward to achieve it.

[148] It is very important that we focus on practical issues. You have heard that said already this morning, and I know that you have received that message previously. We need to deliver tangible benefits. There have to be proper systems in place to give feedback and also to show to the state, to society and to individuals, the results of their action—good results from good actions, and also the bad results from bad actions. There has to be that feedback. The people of Wales are the ultimate beneficiaries of the change that is needed. There is a whole range of champions, such as business champions in the economy. It is the people of Wales who need a healthy and wealthy environment. We need to inspire champions of tomorrow, as well as supporting change now. I think that we all believe, as you have already heard this morning, that linking and reconnecting people to the environment is crucial; it is the only way to not only stop the loss, but recreate.

[149] I know that you have heard this morning from a number of members of Wales Environment Link, as well as from the statutory bodies, about the importance of the current system of designated sites and protected landscapes. They really are the cornerstones, but we need to ensure that these form part of a coherent and resilient network of sites and spaces because we are looking for the ability of species to adapt and move because of climate change, in particular.

[150] Conservation and ecosystem restoration is very important. It can be cost-effective, and there can be huge benefits to society. Partnership working is crucial, and the voluntary sector is determined to act in partnership with public and private partners. The cross-sectoral policies have to be coherent, consistent and underpinned by a sound science.

[151] **Kirsty Williams:** Could I stop you there?

[152] **Dr Havard:** We are at the end now. The crucial part is that we must look at resource allocation. We must be sensible. I think that what the sector is saying is that we cannot afford not to do this. If you look at the ecosystem services that are provided, you will see that we cannot afford not to do so.

[153] **Kirsty Williams:** In your paper to the committee you are quite damning about why the Government has not reached the targets. You say that the delivery of the environment strategy outcome 21 and the condition of protected sites is not being driven through as quickly as hoped for, that there is an inconsistent buy-in to the process across the Countryside Council for Wales, a lack of effective mechanisms to deliver biodiversity improvements in the wider countryside, inadequate monitoring, and a lack of legislative tools and resources. That is quite strong criticism of leadership to drive policy to achieve these targets. Where do you think that that leadership fell down?

[154] **Dr Havard:** One of the major concerns was that the targets were given and driven without the science base behind them. Therefore, we were starting from a not good position in any case, in terms of knowledge and a full background as to where we were going. However, the work that has been done since then has been impressive in volume and intent in getting us almost to the stage where we can set the targets, and we should be able to do the work now. Unfortunately, during that time—not since the summit in Rio de Janeiro, but in the last decade or so, or the lifetime of the National Assembly for Wales—things have moved on as well and, as I said initially, the economic drivers have intensified and increased. As Morgan

was saying, global issues have caused issues in Wales as well. That is not to say that we could not have had clearer guidance and that there could not have been clearer areas of responsibility. The sector as a whole has been aware that we have not been working as effectively and as efficiently, but we have also been aware that there have been other huge pressures, distractions and so on, and not the buy-in across the piece that we need.

[155] **Kirsty Williams:** Sandy has the next question.

[156] **Sandy Mewies:** I think that it has been answered. You mentioned ‘buy-in’. Do you mean by that that the statutory agencies and the Government did not perhaps make the targets a high enough priority?

[157] **Dr Havard:** Yes, that is probably the bottom line. Where we were starting from was not ideal, because we were not really engaged in setting those targets. By ‘we’, I do not mean the voluntary sector, but the whole of the environment sector. This is a sweeping comment, but the targets were almost arbitrary, and it was a case of saying, ‘We will cut it by X per cent’ or by half or whatever, without the knowledge to underpin that. It was not because of a lack of intent, but because the underpinning knowledge was not there. The work that has been done since that time has not only put it in a much better place in respect of knowledge, but has created much better awareness of the fact that the ask was huge.

[158] **Alun Davies:** I enjoyed reading your paper, Dr Havard. Following on from the points that Kirsty and Sandy have made, in the first paragraph on page 4 you talk about an absence of ownership across the political spectrum, and a lack of leadership with regard to the overall biodiversity strategy. That is a considerable criticism to make of Government—I assume that you are referring to Government. Could you sustain that criticism?

[159] **Kirsty Williams:** Could Leanne ask her question as well? You can then address both points, Dr Havard.

[160] **Leanne Wood:** I wanted to follow-up on the question that Sandy asked on whether the Government did not prioritise biodiversity, because I took from what you said in your opening remarks that the targets were wrong; they were not based on evidence and should probably not have been set. If they were wrong, they were never going to be met, were they?

[161] **Dr Havard:** We do not have a clear biodiversity strategy, but we do have a number of strategies that bring a lot of information together, and, as you have heard, there are three clear biodiversity-linked outcomes in the Wales environment strategy. However, they are strategies, not legal obligations. I believe that the prioritisation has not occurred because of the other issues across Government. For example, you mentioned the huge health budget this morning, and asked whether we are talking about funds being moved from health to the environment. There are smart ways in which the health budget should be used. For example, prescriptions for outdoor activities are crucial, because otherwise we will face a massive problem with obesity and increasing demands on the health budget, and, by using some of these other budgets in a smarter way, we will also benefit biodiversity. You need to get people out into the environment.

10.10 a.m.

[162] **Kirsty Williams:** To bring us back to the fundamental question, Leanne was saying that we would never reach those targets, because the way that they were set and the basis on which they were set is fundamentally flawed. Is that correct?

[163] **Dr Havard:** It was a general target. At that time, we did not have the information about the species, habitats and so on that we do now.

[164] **Kirsty Williams:** Alun was saying that you have been very critical of leadership in this paper. Can you back that up by demonstrating where that leadership was lacking?

[165] **Alun Davies:** It seems that it did not matter what the target was; we would have missed any target.

[166] **Dr Havard:** That is true. If you look at some of the actions that have been taken or have not been taken by the other sectors—not the environment sector—you will see that the statutory departments and the Welsh Assembly Government departments have been working hard on the environment, but although we understand that there are pressures elsewhere, we are indicating that it has not been accepted in many parts of Welsh public life. As you have heard again this morning, everyone in Welsh public life has a responsibility for biodiversity and it does not have to detract from their core purpose; it can be in addition to it, and it can have many spin-off benefits.

[167] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** We have heard much evidence this morning about who is not taking ownership of this issue and what is not being done. What should be done? What should the Government be doing? What should organisations that are funded by the Government in Wales be doing? What should the voluntary sector be doing? It seems that everyone is criticising one another, but no-one is telling us what should be done.

[168] **Dr Havard:** You are holding an inquiry into why we did not meet targets. We have said that these are the reasons that we believe that the targets have not been met. Over the same period, we have also been able to celebrate some huge successes. I know that you heard from members of Wales Environment Link last week about some of the areas that are going particularly well, such as the Cambrian mountains, and some of the specific site and species work that is going on. There are a lot of successes, but, sadly, we all know that a huge amount more could be done.

[169] The message that the whole environment sector is trying to convey clearly is that this is not an add-on. If we do not consider the environment and biodiversity as a linchpin, society's costs will increase. The cost of flooding is a major issue—flood defence and flood mitigation—whereas, as you would have heard last week, some relatively low-cost interventions at the top of catchments can not only make a huge difference to biodiversity, but can make a major difference to the people living downstream in floodplains. So, it is clear that it is a very complicated and complex issue. It is also much simpler—we all do it—for people and departments to focus on what they see as their core business without considering some of the underlying aspects that will help to improve delivery, not only in their core activities, but more widely. From our country's point of view, we should all be thinking about the sustainable development scheme in all aspects of our life. It is hard to get that engagement, and that is one of the areas at which the voluntary sector as well as the statutory sector and the whole of society must work much harder.

[170] **Leanne Wood:** On page 5 of your paper, you give us a number of potential recommendations or things that you think should happen, such as linking, expanding and buffering Wales's special habitats and creating new habitats. Do you think that the spatial plan has a role to play in that work? Should we map out all the areas in Wales that are rich in biodiversity and have a strategy for ensuring that those linkages are put in place? Is there anything else that we can do in the spatial plan to help?

[171] **Dr Havard:** A lot of work has already been done in that area. Dr Parker referred to that earlier, and, indeed, the Countryside Council for Wales has done a huge amount of habitat mapping, which has then been taken up by the voluntary sector and the local authorities. We know where the hot spots are, and we also know where the potential linkages

are. The crucial thing is putting that into the spatial plan, because we need to ensure that we are engaging and that we avoid conflicts, because there will always be potential conflicts. When there are inevitable conflicts, there needs to be discussion and awareness of how you can build adaptation and mitigation into those areas. We have to work through the spatial plan areas. The environment-regions aspect of it is helpful, and the trial. The fact that they have all worked slightly differently has been difficult, but one would understand that because south-east Wales will have a very different approach to spatial planning to the north west.

[172] **Brian Gibbons:** Has the Government been set up to fail on this? Is it impossible to deliver? If so, might one of the reasons be that biodiversity is insufficiently valued? So, we have a good strategy, but the implementation is not being valued. One of the reasons for that is that it reflects the public perception of priorities. In other words, the public out there does not regard this as being as important as you do, and would prefer public money to be spent on hospitals, leisure activities, or something else. Alternatively, is it the case that they just do not believe the message that some groups are giving them? There is an example of that in your paper, which is generally balanced and informative, where you refer to us facing a ‘staggering decline’ in wildlife; that is one of the phrases used. Someone else might say that the decline is just a normal period of change that is happening just a little faster than before. This sort of apocalyptic language does not help anyone because it overstates the case and the message is not credible, so people will move on elsewhere to something that they think is more important or credible.

[173] **Dr Havard:** I hope that we will never move into media headlines. I thank you for your comments about the paper being balanced, because that is important; as an umbrella body, we are careful about that. As I said at the start, the Government was almost inevitably going to fail on these targets, but sadly, I agree with your point that we have not done enough to inform people about the importance of the environment. I have talked to a lot of people about environmental issues, and it is clear that, to many people, ‘environment’ just means that bit of green outside. People say that they do not go to the Brecon Beacons, or whatever, and are not interested in that kind of thing. They do not think about the atmosphere as being part of the environment or the fact that the people of Port Talbot face some key issues with air quality, and that mine pollution still has an impact on our rivers. You have already used the example of flooding. If people were able to get out more, or felt safe in doing so, or understood how they could do that, then they would feel better, which would help the whole wellbeing agenda. I really feel that we have failed to get the message out. The voluntary sector will certainly hold its hands up on that, although it has been trying, and is still trying hard to engage people with the idea that a healthy environment means a healthy and wealthy nation. It really underpins everything that we do, and that is where we feel that the changes have been helpful. The linking up of the newer thinking and strategies have certainly started to show this, and in ‘A Living Wales’, there is much better engagement about how the environment supports life. It does, but we have become divorced from it. It is very interesting to see the change—

10.20 a.m.

[174] **Kirsty Williams:** We are talking about how successful we have been in communicating to people, so that they put pressure on politicians to prioritise this area rather than other areas that are, perhaps, more tangible. Rhodri Glyn, do you have a question on communication?

[175] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** That is the question that I was going to ask. [*Laughter.*]

[176] **Kirsty Williams:** I am sorry.

[177] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Brian has touched on an important point. I have been

listening to this evidence for an hour and a half and I am not very much clearer about the responsibility of the Government, the responsibility of organisations financed by the Government, and the responsibilities of the voluntary sector. It is a difficult subject, is it not?

[178] **Dr Havard:** Yes, it underpins everything that we do.

[179] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** It is easy to generalise about it, but in terms of specifics and communicating that message, I am not a lot clearer about what I, as an individual, should be doing in terms of biodiversity in Wales. That is the problem. As well as looking at why we failed to reach the 2010 targets, this review is looking at how we can change that and meet targets in the future and, perhaps, not set targets that are similar to those that we have set in the past, but do something about biodiversity.

[180] **Dr Havard:** If that can be the outcome of all of the work that you are putting in, that will be the most positive thing, because, sadly, what has gone has gone and we have not met the targets. The chance that we have now is to look at how we can improve this and how we can prevent failure in the future.

[181] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** How do we do that? Have a go at it.

[182] **Dr Havard:** The really important thing is to ensure that we all understand the importance of biodiversity. However, it is about the environment. It is not just about asking, 'Isn't a single dormouse very important?' Yes, it is in its entity and it works well in engaging people, to a certain extent, but the healthy environment and people's engagement with that healthy environment is the bottom line. We are all working in that area and it is being promoted through a lot of Government action, but we need to be very clear about how important the environment is to our economy. It clearly is important if you look at the statistics, with about one in six jobs relying on it—it is vital to the Welsh economy—and if we get it wrong, or if it is seen to be declining, that will hit us hard. We need to communicate a clear message about how important it is for people to engage with the environment, to get out and to use the environment, and to convey the benefits for mental and physical health and so on. There are many statistics, but they do not tell the story. The important thing is to engage on an individual basis. The story that we are trying to promote particularly is how having an allotment, going for a walk, or engaging in volunteering activities in the environment makes a difference to an individual, because that is the only way to do it.

[183] **Kirsty Williams:** I am really sorry to interrupt. Time is against us and there is additional pressure as we are trying to finish before 11 a.m. today. Joyce, please be brief in your comments and then we will wrap up this session.

[184] **Joyce Watson:** It is about having your cake and eating it, is it not? It comes back to persuading people that they can do what they need to do, such as go to work, play, eat, sleep and drink and, at the same time, think about the environment. We have the strategy, but it seems that we do not have a framework. How do we move forward with regard to convincing people that they can have their cake and eat it? People need to earn a living, but they also want to go out to the countryside at the weekend. How do we do that? We are trying to do it and we are trying to capture carbon emissions from industry and so on, but how do we sell the message that you can have your cake and eat it in this case?

[185] **Dr Havard:** I prefer the positive approach, always. We have used the frighteners, and there are frighteners that can be used and, sadly, there are incidents that lead people to realise that, had there been better investment or a better way of managing the environment, certain things would not have happened. We need to take those positive messages about why you want to go out into the environment at the weekend, because your enjoyment is based on the fantastic landscapes and habitats that we have. That message needs to be reinforced. It comes

down to the key areas in which you can engage people at an individual level.

[186] **Kirsty Williams:** We have not been able to reach a number of questions. If we put them in writing, could you write back to us?

[187] **Dr Havard:** We would be delighted to do so.

[188] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you for your attendance and for your paper, which clearly sets out the steps that you feel need to be taken.

[189] **Dr Havard:** Good luck in your deliberations.

[190] **Kirsty Williams:** We now move to our final set of witnesses. I am sorry that we have to try to get through things quickly, but it is necessary to look at the discussion paper on planning. We are not going to be able to have that discussion before 11 a.m., so we can either reconvene after 11 a.m. or try to create a space for an informal meeting, perhaps over lunch, next week to have a look at that planning paper.

[191] **Sandy Mewies:** I have meetings planned for all of next week, so I will have to see.

[192] **Kirsty Williams:** We will discuss that later; we will try to accommodate everyone.

10.26 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Fioamrywiaeth: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Biodiversity: Evidence Session

[193] **Kirsty Williams:** I welcome Alison Jones and Melanie Dodd from Caerphilly County Borough Council. Thank you for joining us this morning. We are really up against the clock. Would you mind if we went straight to questions from the committee, as we have your evidence paper?

[194] **Ms Jones:** That is no problem at all.

[195] **Kirsty Williams:** Brilliant. To what extent was the adoption of the 2010 targets translated into action on the ground at a local authority level? What did the target mean to you at a local level?

[196] **Ms Jones:** As local authorities, we were charged with taking forward local biodiversity action. Once we were given that task, we set up local biodiversity partnerships—I am the chair of the Caerphilly biodiversity partnership—and we set out to write action plans at a local level, derived from the Welsh targets that were disseminated to us from the Wales biodiversity partnership and the UK targets. That is where local authorities started to look at trying to deliver the action on the ground, by working with other organisations.

[197] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you, that is very clear.

[198] **Sandy Mewies:** Thank you for your paper. To what extent is delivery on biodiversity targets regarded as a corporate priority within local authorities, particularly when there are so many other calls on officer time and the money that you have available?

[199] **Ms Jones:** Unfortunately, it is not really a core priority. Most of the driving forces come from the officer level upwards, rather than from the top down in the local authority hierarchy. It is taken more seriously in some local authorities than others. In Caerphilly, it is taken more seriously than in other authorities. Councillors and senior staff have generally

been very supportive, but that is not the case in local authorities throughout Wales. We have three officers in Caerphilly—two ecologists and a biodiversity officer—but that is quite unusual in Wales. In some authorities, there is only one officer to deliver everything, within the authority and for biodiversity in the wider partnerships.

10.30 a.m.

[200] **Leanne Wood:** Before I ask my question, I would like to go back to Kirsty's first question, which was about action on the ground. You mentioned that it has meant setting up local partnerships and drawing up action plans, but I would like to get a sense of what is in the action plans. What does action on the ground look like? What does it mean in different communities?

[201] **Ms Jones:** We focused on the species and habitats that we had in our area and what we could deliver as individual organisations and volunteers in a private capacity.

[202] **Leanne Wood:** Did you map out your green areas throughout the county borough?

[203] **Ms Jones:** We have identified sites that are of value for biodiversity throughout the county borough, and those are in the local development plan. It does not cover all biodiversity; it is the areas that we know about. There are still areas within the county borough for which we do not have that information.

[204] **Leanne Wood:** Have you prioritised particular species or rivers or mountain tops? How have you prioritised the action on the ground?

[205] **Ms Jones:** It really comes down to deliverability—to what actions we can achieve with the funding mechanisms available. That has been the difficulty. We have tended to go for the actions that we think we can achieve, rather than the ones where biodiversity is really an issue. If we have not been able to source the funding to implement such actions, they are just waiting to be delivered. That has been one of our big difficulties.

[206] **Ms Dodd:** This is also dependent on local expertise. For example, we have done quite a bit with great crested newts in Caerphilly, but that is because we have that expertise there. We are reliant on other people telling us what our priorities should be. Obviously, we cannot cover the whole spectrum of species—it is dependent on expertise.

[207] **Leanne Wood:** I am just trying to get a sense of how you translate this into practical action. That leads me on to the next question about funding. In your paper, you say that the main issue holding back local biodiversity action is funding and you talk about local groups being in competition with each other. We all know that huge cuts are on their way, which is going to cause even more of a problem. What other actions can you take in light of the funding situation?

[208] **Ms Jones:** Unfortunately, many of the things that we need to achieve require an element of money for implementation. That is our big difficulty at the moment.

[209] **Leanne Wood:** Does that mean that we will not be able to meet the targets in future?

[210] **Ms Jones:** I think that we will have difficulty unless we can target funding at the areas where we really need to deliver biodiversity, particularly habitats and species that are very vulnerable at the moment. I know that the environment framework is looking to take a more landscape-scale approach. That is a good way to go, but, obviously, it is about ensuring that the funding is targeted at ensuring that those particularly vulnerable habitats are a very high priority.

[211] **Ms Dodd:** A landscape-scale approach requires us to look at longer term biodiversity action. At the moment, it is done very much on an annual, two-yearly or three-yearly programme of funding. We need to know what funding we are going to have, year on year, so that we can plan ahead. Even at the moment, funding is only done on a three-yearly basis, and many projects start not knowing what will happen after that—

[212] **Leanne Wood:** It is only going to get worse.

[213] **Ms Dodd:** There are many good projects that have been successful at biodiversity conservation, but the funding is not sufficiently long term.

[214] **Leanne Wood:** In that case, could we roll back? Could the biodiversity situation get worse, because of the funding situation? Is that your position?

[215] **Ms Jones:** At the moment, funding is very constrained, and many of the projects that we have been trying to deliver are not being delivered at their best, because of time constraints imposed on us by funding. We are waiting for approval for funding to come in, and we are missing the survey season or the management season, then we are running out of money, or we have not spent the money, and that means that it is not being used in the best way. That is the difficulty. We need to ensure that whatever funding is available is made available over much longer periods, so that we can structure and get the best out of the funding that is available.

[216] **Alun Davies:** That is interesting; thank you for that, and thank you for the paper—I enjoyed reading it. Your paper seemed very positive, and was focused on actions that have been taken in Caerphilly county borough. You said that it was not a core corporate priority for the council, but, given some of the evidence that we received, both earlier this morning and on other occasions, do you feel that you have ownership, direction and guidance when you embark on projects to support biodiversity?

[217] **Ms Jones:** Ownership and guidance from where?

[218] **Alun Davies:** Is the policy framework within which you are operating clear? Does it give you targets to work towards? Does it give you direction within which to set your strategies?

[219] **Ms Jones:** There is a Wales biodiversity action plan, and those targets have been disseminated to the local level. So, yes, we have that.

[220] **Alun Davies:** Are they helpful?

[221] **Ms Jones:** They are helpful where we are able to implement them, but it is the implementation that is difficult in certain areas. We get good guidance; the Welsh Local Government Association recently put out some good guidance about trying to encourage biodiversity, to be considered at local authority scrutiny committee meetings, for example. That is something that we are looking to pursue within our local authority. It is not there at the moment, but it is something that we think is worth pursuing. It is looking for a trial authority to try raising the profile of biodiversity within scrutiny committees, so all projects within the authority will have some consideration of biodiversity before they are approved.

[222] **Alun Davies:** Does the Wales environment strategy play any part in your planning?

[223] **Ms Jones:** It does in the wider sense, but there is not enough specific detail that encourages biodiversity to be delivered within the environment strategy, in my opinion.

[224] **Alun Davies:** Some of the work that you have outlined in your paper—you talk about the verge audit, for example, and some woodlands management—are quite simple actions, I would think. Do they contribute actively to your work? To what extent do you believe you have the policy context to deliver on what you find? An audit only gives you a snapshot.

[225] **Ms Jones:** Absolutely.

[226] **Alun Davies:** That is fine for what it is. It gives you a benchmark, and a starting point. Do you then feel that you have both a policy context and the resources to deliver something on top of that? I am familiar with some of the work that you have done within the county borough on woodlands, and it has been very good, especially along the Sirhowy valley, but do you have the resources and sufficient leadership from the local authority to deliver on what you would like to achieve as a consequence of those audits?

10.40 a.m.

[227] **Ms Jones:** In terms of delivery within the local authority, there are very limited budgets for management of local-authority-owned land, and that is one of our big difficulties, as well as trying to find budgets that can be directed towards managing biodiversity. We have looked at ways of changing existing management; for example, we have reduced the cutting regime in some of our country parks, which has had immediate benefits for biodiversity. So, there are ways of trying to adjust existing management, but we are constrained, for example on the highways, by the need to consider safety and other issues. It is about feeding that information through to the departments that are responsible for those areas of land. That is what we are trying to do as part of our biodiversity duty, although it is a slow process. We are rolling out training to all the relevant departments that can have an impact on biodiversity. It is a process that is starting to work, but we need to continue with that.

[228] **Joyce Watson:** You talked about policies, and I want to talk about a specific one, namely the Welsh Assembly Government's natural environment framework. Do you think that it will help you to facilitate better delivery of your local biodiversity improvements? I am just talking about that document. Are you aware of it?

[229] **Ms Dodd:** I am not sure how much of an impact it will have at the local level. It is a better way of looking at biodiversity with regard to promotion and awareness raising at a higher level of politics and at the corporate level within local authorities, to make biodiversity much more of a priority than it currently is with regard to ecosystems services and that sort of thing. We have failed with landscape-scale projects, but work is currently going on to look at more landscape-scale work in Caerphilly. We are working with our neighbouring local authorities on wetland habitat creation, for example. The much larger-scale work on the habitat restoration and creation side of things has not been happening very much up until now, but that is the way forward as it has benefits for a much wider range of species.

[230] At the local level, we will still be working our hardest for biodiversity as a biodiversity team in the local authority and with our Caerphilly biodiversity partnership, which is quite active at the moment. However, I think that a strategic approach should be taken at the national level and then fed down to us at the local level, so that we are told about the landscape-scale projects that we can get involved with and can therefore initiate action in partnership with national groups.

[231] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Dychwelaf at y pwynt ynghylch cyfathrebu. A gredwch fod trigolion Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili yn ymwybodol o'r neges am ddiogelu **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I will return to the point about communication. Do you think that Caerphilly County Borough Council's residents are aware of the message on

bioamrywiaeth o fewn ffiniau'r awdurdod? Sylwais eich bod wedi cynnal cynllun peilot gyda disgyblion blynyddoedd 11 a 12 mewn rhai ysgolion o fewn yr awdurdod. Ai canolbwyntio ar blant a phobl ifanc yw'r dyfodol, oherwydd efallai nad yw'r rhai ohonom sy'n hŷn bellach yn abl i dderbyn y neges honno?

protecting biodiversity within the authority's boundaries? I noticed that you have undertaken a pilot scheme with year 11 and 12 pupils in some schools within the authority. Is the future about focusing on children and young people, because perhaps some of us who are older are not now able to take that message on board?

[232] **Ms Jones:** We have done a lot of work to raise awareness of biodiversity in Caerphilly county.

[233] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Has it worked?

[234] **Ms Jones:** Yes, in part, but there is still a long way to go, because there are different levels to trying to tackle it. I agree that schools are important, and the need is to keep tackling the issue with children to raise their awareness, because that feeds back to parents and the older generation. However, I do not think that we should dismiss the older generation, as many of them have time on their hands once they finish work. They are often the people who will be active on the ground and become our volunteers in the future. It will be a balance between raising awareness in children and among members of the public. We have to tackle it at all levels. This year, we decided that we wanted to tackle people who are just not interested in biodiversity, so we took a roadshow around the local towns in Caerphilly county borough, taking the good old-fashioned nature table into town centres where people were shopping. Many people stopped by who had not had an opportunity to pick up a badger skull or to see a dead otter or an owl pellet—we need to feed in all elements. We need to tackle it at all levels. It is not just one area. We are continuing to do that and we are committed to raising awareness among the general public.

[235] **Ms Dodd:** Many in the Caerphilly biodiversity partnership are of the older generation. Many of the enthusiastic individual local residents who are members of our biodiversity partnership are retired or over 50, and they are very keen on biodiversity.

[236] **Kirsty Williams:** Thank you very much. It is important to have an understanding of your work. Thank you very much for your paper and for your efforts within your own local authority to really drive this particular agenda forward. I also thank you for your attendance here this morning. I am afraid that time has beaten us. A number of questions have not been asked; if we drop you a note about those, perhaps you would be good enough to respond to them in writing. Thank you very much for taking the time to explain about some of your work in your own local authority.

[237] I therefore end the formal part of this committee meeting. The clerk will be in touch with regard to an opportunity to discuss the emerging outcomes of the planning paper. We need to do that urgently if we want to avoid having that last meeting in December. If people could make their best efforts to make themselves available next week, it would mean that we can get on with that paper and avoid having that meeting—

[238] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Can we do it by e-mail, Chair?

[239] **Leanne Wood:** Will that be straight after this meeting?

[240] **Kirsty Williams:** Perhaps we should move to the procedural motion now.

10.48 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol
Procedural Motion

[241] **Kirsty Williams:** I move that

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

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

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.48 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.48 a.m.