



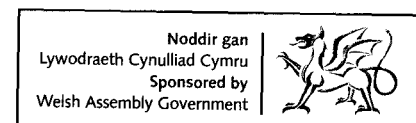
Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru Countryside Council for Wales

National Assembly for Wales' Sustainability Committee Scrutiny of CCW - 11 February 2010

1. The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body (AGSB), established under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 which brought together the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission into a single organisation in Wales. CCW has advisory and executive functions; advice, grounded in science, is provided to Government and others on terrestrial and marine nature conservation, enhancement and management for the benefit of present and future generations, in the context of sustainable development. CCW has a range of statutory and non statutory functions/ duties set out in European, UK and Welsh legislation and policy. Whilst our focus is on environmental legislation, now largely emanating from Europe, our strategic agenda is guided by the priorities identified by the Welsh Assembly Government in One Wales: A Progressive Agenda for the Government of Wales 2007-2011, within the overall framework of the Sustainable Development Scheme. Integrating social, economic and environmental objectives is fundamental to our work.

CCW's Council comprises 12 members, including the Chair. Council Members are accountable, individually and collectively, to the Welsh Assembly Government and National Assembly for Wales. The Council is responsible for setting organisational policy and ensuring delivery of its duties within the statutory, policy and financial framework. Members are accountable to the National Assembly for Wales, users of services, individual citizens and staff, for the activities of Council, its stewardship of public funds and the extent to which key performance targets and objectives are met. Meetings are open to members of the public and details of meetings are available on our website.

2. We operate throughout Wales, working out of 12 major bases and a number of satellite locations (eg Skomer Marine Nature Reserve team of four is based at Martin's Haven, Pembrokeshire). By March of this year, our FTE equivalent staff will have reduced to 486 (39 of whom will be on temporary contracts). Our budget for the financial year 2009/10 is £43m, of which £24m meets the running costs of CCW and £2m provides capital investment. Our £17m Programme budget includes £6m that is used to grant-aid a variety of third sector and public sector organisations to deliver environmental benefits in four discrete streams. We also manage two major programmes supported by EC money through the Convergence Fund: the Communities and Nature Programme (£23m over its life) and the £2m per year Coastal Access



Gofalu am natur Cymru – ar y tir ac yn y môr • Caring for our natural heritage – on land and in the sea

Programme. Additionally there is a LIFE project in north west Wales worth a total of €5m.

3. Our mission statement – *Working for a better Wales where people understand and value our natural environment* – translates into three work programmes. The first is aimed at protecting the benefits that we gain from the natural environment, the so-called ecosystems goods and services. The second aims to gain a wide appreciation amongst the public of these benefits, in order that we understand their value and, through our collective actions, ensure that they remain available for future generations. The third programme is concerned with driving continuous efficiency throughout the organisation so that an increasing proportion of our budget can go towards Programme activities.
4. We understand, in advance of the Committee's meeting, that you are interested in information in response to four main areas of intended scrutiny:
 - performance against our Remit Letters over the last three years
 - our contribution to the implementation of the Environment Strategy for Wales
 - our actions to make our operations more sustainable
 - any areas of overlap with the activities of Environment Agency Wales
5. **Remit Letters** – we have delivered all the key targets set for us in our Remit Letters in 2006/7, 2007/8 and 2008/9. We are, in addition, on course to deliver all our key targets in the current financial year, 2009/10. With respect to financial management, we now have a record of 19 years of unqualified accounts and no issues were raised in our latest clearance letter from the Wales Audit Office.
6. **Environment Strategy** – CCW has, as would be expected, played a key role in the development of the Environment Strategy and plays a key role in both the implementation and monitoring of the associated Action Plan. Of the many actions in the Environment Strategy that require CCW's input, our major role is in the improvement of the features for which Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are designated. This has involved the division of 1021 sites into manageable units, the identification of actions appropriate to delivering improvement and the sharing of those actions with the owners and occupiers of these sites. We are now at the stage where these actions are being shared and will soon begin monitoring their implementation. In addition we will, of course, be continuing actions at those sites for which we are directly responsible. This includes Wales' suite of National Nature Reserves.

In this, the International Year of Biodiversity, we have failed on a pan-European (and probably global) basis to achieve the target set in 2002 of halting the decline in biodiversity. New targets are being derived by the global Convention on Biological Diversity and our Minister, Jane Davidson, has reaffirmed the strong commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government to

achieving the outcomes for biodiversity that are articulated in the Environment Strategy.

- 7. Operating sustainably** – we were the first organisation in the UK to train its staff in the challenges of adapting to and mitigating for climate change. We were also the first AGSB to achieve Level 5 accreditation under the Green Dragon environmental management standard, in addition to being registered under ISO14001. We have also led in managing the reduction of our carbon footprint, since 2006/7 reducing our emissions by 5% (this data was independently confirmed when we obtained Carbon Trust Standard Certification). Our ambitious carbon reduction plan will achieve further savings of 24% (on 2007/8 baseline data) by 2012 and we are also signatories to the 10:10 (10% reduction by the end of 2010) campaign.

Sustainability also means ensuring that CCW as an organisation is fit for purpose. Our Governance Review, the first for an AGSB and published in the summer of 2010, reported that *'CCW is a well-respected organisation, with highly committed staff and acknowledged experts. The organisation is active in promoting partnerships, delivering on its Remit Letter and is engaged with national strategies'*. We strive to maintain and develop the strong scientific base upon which our evidence, advice and actions are founded through supporting our staff in their professional development. We have also instituted a series of family-friendly employment policies for our staff and we led in the Assembly Government's Work-Life Balance initiative. We have a strong Equality Scheme but, alongside many organisations, do not yet have sufficient women in the senior ranks of the organisation. Our Welsh Language Scheme is regularly cited as an exemplar by the Welsh Language Board. The recent reassessment of our Investors in People accreditation, which was reported in January of this year, confirmed that we have made significant advances since our last assessment. We will be assessed against the Corporate Health Standard within the coming months.

Our sustainability action in financial terms includes the widespread use of video and audio conferencing to reduce travelling costs. We banned first class travel for members and staff seven years ago, although could not find any significant evidence of its use before we withdrew this option. We avoid flying in the UK – and in Europe except when it is not possible to get to a destination within a reasonable time. Our Council led in deciding that business mileage in private cars should be reimbursed at only 60% of the Inland Revenue's tax free rate. Our approach to Fleet Management was positively reviewed when it was scrutinised by WAO in their Making the Connections consideration of Fleet Management across the whole of the Welsh Public Sector in 2008. This has led to examples of good practice from CCW being placed on the WAO website.

Our principle in pursuing accreditation under various business management schemes is not to gain an award that we can add to our letterhead but to become engaged in a process of continuous improvement through external assessment.

8. **Overlapping duties with EAW** – CCW and EAW have complementary roles in environmental management. We would describe our respective roles thus: the EAW's responsibilities lie in fluxes (in air quality, water quality and of wastes) through the environment, whilst CCW's responsibilities are concerned with landscape, habitat, species and enjoyment. The approaches of the two organisations differ in line with these complementary responsibilities, so that EAW is primarily a regulator and CCW is primarily an enabler.

We overlap in aspects of our biodiversity work, where EAW also has a role in freshwaters, and in promoting enjoyment of the natural environment, where EAW leads on access to water (CCW leads on terrestrial access and has been responsible for the highly-successful implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way legislation).

We already work together to ensure, through joint representation at meetings (eg. Spatial Plan Areas and Local Service Boards), that we can between us satisfy all the demands for an environmental perspective and presence. We are undertaking further work, together also with Forestry Commission Wales, to extend these arrangements to shared services in both 'back office' functions and potentially some of our core activities.

9. **Our broader environmental management approach** is, as stated earlier, to ensure that we develop and maintain a strong evidence base upon which our advice and actions are founded. We have therefore mapped all the terrestrial habitats of Wales and, in 2008, completed the mapping of our coastal intertidal habitats – Wales being the only country in Europe which has achieved this goal.

The importance of these maps is in their use in developing advice to the Assembly Government, local government, developers and our partners. A key opportunity is using such information to identify the lowest risk options for development proposals. Examples include our advice on the optimum sites for terrestrial windfarms, which contributed to the TAN8 guidance, and, very recently, our fisheries sensitivity mapping has identified areas within which scallop fishing can be continued and has informed the Assembly Government's decision on this particular activity. We are currently identifying the lowest risk areas for pilot-testing novel renewable energy technologies in the marine environment. The terrestrial maps provide the basis for our advice to the Assembly Government on the development of the new agri-environment scheme, Glastir.

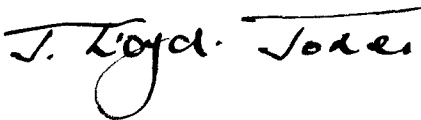
We have developed various methodologies and tools to help others in decision-making processes. Our Landmap methodology, which won the coveted Council of Europe Landscape Award 2000, is now aiding planning decisions in every local authority in Wales. We have recently concluded pioneering work on seascapes to help in determining which developments can be sited where in our coastal waters, in the process winning the Landscape Institute's Award for Innovation in 2009.

With the increasing rate of change in our natural environment, we are

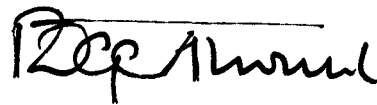
developing remote sensing technology to provide rapid identification of change. This will help focus attention and resources on the highest priority issues and will enable us to keep our terrestrial and coastal evidence base current.

As well as developing and maintaining a sound evidence base, together with advice, methodologies and tools for others to use, we are also engaged in implementation. In moving beyond special sites, we have focused our attention on the benefits that accrue from our natural environment – the so-called ecosystems goods and services. We have also been developing concepts of connectivity between habitats and for species. These are leading us to actions on a larger scale, for example in the WAG-led Networked Environmental Regions pilot, and we have been instrumental in establishing the Cambrian Mountains project, where mechanisms to support landowners in ensuring the continued provision of ecosystems goods and services are being trialled.

10. A fuller review of CCW's role, responsibilities and actions is included as an Annex to this paper. We look forward to meeting the Committee on 11 February.



John Lloyd Jones OBE
Chairman



Roger Thomas
Chief Executive