



Ymddiriedolaeth
Genedlaethol
National Trust

Priorities for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

Consultation response

**Response submitted by National Trust Cymru to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee
31 August 2021**

The National Trust is a charity founded in 1895 by three people who saw the importance of our nation's heritage and open spaces and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. More than 125 years later, these values are still at the heart of everything we do.

Introduction

National Trust Cymru is proud to care for 46,000 hectares of land, 157 miles of coastline and 18 of the nation's finest castles, houses, gardens and industrial sites. With the support of our staff and volunteers in Wales, more than 1.8 million visitors enjoy our places in Wales every year.

We place great importance on the conservation, management and enjoyment of the natural and historic environment both within and beyond our boundaries. We are committed to supporting the nation's green recovery, ensuring everyone feels welcome at our places and playing our part to tackle climate change, with the ambition to become carbon net zero in Wales by 2030 and restore 4,600 hectares of priority habitat by 2025 to reverse the decline in wildlife.

We recognise that the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee covers a wide remit and will need to consider and balance a range of important work areas. We welcome the opportunity to share our views on Committee priorities and we look forward to working with you during this Senedd term. We would propose the below as areas that the Committee may wish to consider over the next term.

A Sustainable Farming Scheme that delivers for people and nature

Scrutinising the proposed draft Agriculture (Wales) Bill must be a priority for the Committee for the first term, with the Welsh Government announcing its intention to lay the Bill before the Senedd in summer 2022. The transition away from the Common Agricultural Policy is a once in a generation opportunity to shape a more sustainable future for the farming sector in Wales that meets the needs of people, nature and the environment and contributes to the nation's ambition to be carbon net zero by 2050 – scrutiny by the Committee will be essential to ensuring that this ambition is met.

We are encouraged to see the Welsh Government's current proposals to pay farmers and land managers for the environmental benefits that they can deliver, underpinned by a commitment to effective regulation, as set out in the recent Agriculture (Wales) White Paper. However, we do not underestimate the scale of change required to transition from one system to the next and would like to see a clear road map for the development of the new Sustainable Farming Scheme. We must also see a commitment from the Welsh Government that farmers and land managers will be able to take part in the trialling and testing, and provided with support to adapt to the new system and integrate the environment into their business model.

As indicated in the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee's Fifth Senedd Legacy Report, modelling, impact assessments and the establishment of pilot schemes will all be necessary in the early part of this Senedd¹ and of interest to the Committee.

With over 240 agricultural tenancies and 97% of our land classed as farmland in Wales, we recognise the part we play. We are currently running a Payment for Outcomes trial on three farms on the Llŷn Peninsula in collaboration with our tenants and partners to explore new ways of supporting farmers to help nature thrive on their farms, and to demonstrate the merits of sustainable farming, not just for the benefit of nature, but for the long-term future of farming. We hope that this approach will help unlock new sources of funding for sustainable land management and establish best practice, and would be pleased to share further information or welcome the Committee for a site visit to learn more.

Sustainable tourism and recovery of the visitor economy in Wales

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the tourism and hospitality sectors, including on charities and organisations that look after visitor attractions like National Trust Cymru. It is essential that the right choices are made now and the right plans put in place to enable a sustainable recovery in the medium and long-term – a recovery that balances economic, social and environmental needs.

Our tourism assets rely on our special landscapes, historic environment and cultural heritage. Tourism can bring a range of benefits to people and local economies. However, if tourism is not properly managed, it can harm the natural and built environment and alienate host communities – during the pandemic we have seen unprecedented visitor numbers to Wales' beauty spots and more investigation is needed to understand how we balance growth and sustainability. We welcome Visit Wales' 'Let's Shape the Future' plan and commitment to ongoing partnership working with the sector. The sector's approach must be managed in a coordinated way and the focus must shift from a volume-based economic model to a high-value model that seeks to balance economic, social and environmental considerations.

As we look ahead, it is also critical that we build resilience into the tourism sector in response to the changing climate and put in place appropriate mitigations and adaptations. All those involved in tourism need to work together to understand how we can achieve a successful, sustainable tourism offer, while also playing our part in moving towards a net zero carbon future. We have recently undertaken research to analyse how climate change could affect domestic tourism, assessing data from more than 85million visits to 170 of our sites in the UK between 2015 and 2019 to understand visitor patterns plotted against weather conditions. We have also produced a climate change 'hazard map' which plots potential climate change threats to specific locations across the country.

We would suggest that this is an area that the Committee may wish to explore in partnership with the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee and we would welcome the opportunity to share further information to support this work.

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¹ <https://senedd.wales/media/rzqeixsq/cr-ld14312-e.pdf>