

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
NRW 2015 – 79
Natural Resources Wales – Annual Scrutiny 2015
Response from One Voice Wales

1. Background

One Voice Wales is recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government as the national representative body for community and town councils in Wales. It represents the sector on the Local Government Partnership Council and over 70% of the 735 community and town councils are in membership. As well as our representative role, we also provide support and advice to councils on an individual basis and have previously launched, with Welsh Government support, a modular training programme for councillors. We believe strongly that community councils are well-placed to develop the economic, social and environmental well-being of the areas they serve and, as such, are active and proactive in debating key issues such as energy policies, environmental issues and strategic planning.

Whilst individual councils, indeed individual members, may submit responses directly to this consultation exercise, this collective response is made on behalf of the sector as a whole.

2. General

Members see the work of NRW as contributing an important role for the nation, with teams of committed experts providing advice, guidance and other statutory and non-statutory services both nationally and locally. There are very many examples on an almost daily basis where NRW teams or officers have assisted or worked with members of the local council sector, possibly with other agencies, to solve issues or to progress developmental projects. In general, the feedback we have received from members is that this work has been rewarding, with NRW playing its part in the main in an acceptable and satisfactory manner.

3. Specific Issues

There are always individual aspects and issues that members raise, where there have been specific problems in relation to working with the NRW, although we are not aware that these

instances are particularly numerous. The one issue that has arisen in more than one situation is that of the (perceived) overly protective approach by NRW to certain planning aspects in respect of flood potential. One Voice Wales has at least two exemplars of this in the upper Neath Valley, should further details be required. In one case, the development of a residential care home has been blocked, whilst the other case exemplifies an instance where potential planning permission has been made easier by virtue of the outcome of site inspections by NRW personnel. Therefore, questions of consistency have also arisen from time to time.

Dr. J.D. Morgan
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