

Board Paper

3 April 2014

Paper Title	Natural Resource Management Update
Paper Reference:	NRW B O 23.14
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Purpose of Paper:	Discussion The Board is invited to:
Recommendation:	- Consider the scope and structure of the Interim Natural Resources Wales Position Statement on Natural Resource Management - Consider and comment on the key issues for Natural Resources Wales as set out in the draft Interim Position Statement
Decision Required:	The Board is asked to endorse the production of the Interim Position Statement, in consultation with Welsh Government and informed by a steer on the above key issues.

Impact:	Impact on the Environment: The Environment Bill White Paper will ultimately lead to an Environment Bill which will set a new agenda for natural resource management in Wales. Our response to the White Paper highlights the benefits to the environment, as well as to the economy and society, of the proposed improvements in the legal framework. Impact on the Economy: Our comments on the White Paper contribute positively to the development of the proposed new legislation to use natural resources in Wales to benefit the economy as well as communities and the environment. Impact on Community:
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	Our comments on the White Paper contribute positively to the development of the proposed new legislation to use natural resources in Wales to benefit communities as well the economy and the environment. Impact on Knowledge: Some of the proposals in the White Paper will have significant implications for the ways in which Natural Resources Wales (and others) gather, organise and share data, evidence and knowledge. This should lead to a common evidence base and understanding that decision makers can use to ensure natural resource use in Wales benefits the environment, the economy and communities.
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Issue

1. The White Paper on the Environment Bill contained proposals for new legislation that, if enacted, would enhance the management of natural resources in Wales and the role of Natural Resources Wales. In particular, the proposed new approach to integrated natural resource management sets out key challenges and opportunities for the organisation and management of the work of Natural Resources Wales and delivery via wider public service governance and delivery. There is a need for an Interim Natural Resources Wales Position Statement on Natural Resource Management for communication to staff and external stakeholders pending confirmation of Welsh Government's final policy and legislative proposals for integrated natural resource management.

Summary and Background

2. The Welsh Government published its White Paper *Towards the Sustainable Management of Wales' Natural Resources* on 23 September 2013. The White Paper contained proposals for a Wales Environment Bill. Natural Resources Wales' response to the White Paper welcomed the overall approach to integrated natural resource management whilst identifying key issues to be resolved pending confirmation of a final policy and legislative position. Discussion with Welsh Government officials continues on the policy and legislative framework for natural resource management.
3. Natural Resources Wales expressed views about the interrelationship between the Environment Bill and Draft Planning (Wales) Bill in our submission to the Welsh Government's consultation *Positive Planning-proposals to reform the Planning System in Wales*. Specifically we highlighted the importance of amending section 60 of the Draft Planning (Wales) Bill to require the emerging National Development Framework and Strategic Development Plans to have regard to National Natural Resources policy and the area based approach to integrated natural resource management.
4. We have subsequently discussed with the Board Environment Subgroup the governance arrangements to take forward integrated natural resource management within Natural Resources Wales and the outline proposals for an Interim Position Statement on Natural Resource Management.
5. The Natural Resources Wales Ecosystem Approach and Natural Resource Management Programme Board have confirmed a governance structure and Programme Initiation Document setting out programme objectives, deliverables and the establishment of trial

areas to test and learn from the application of integrated natural resource management. We are working with a range of external partners to explore opportunities to trial the new approach including the management planning process of protected landscapes in Wales.

6. An Interim Position Statement is required in order to:
 - Provide a common understanding of integrated natural resource management amongst Natural Resources Wales staff;
 - Clarify the interrelationship between integrated natural resource management, the ecosystem approach, green infrastructure and spatial and place based planning;
 - Clarify how natural resource management can deliver benefits for the environment, economy and society through integration within Natural Resources Wales and with wider public service governance and delivery mechanisms;
 - Outline how Natural Resources Wales is currently managing the development, trialling and implementation of the new approach to integrated natural resource management; and
 - Provide a context for Natural Resources Wales` advisory work with Government and other stakeholders.

Next Steps

7. The views of the Board will be taken into account in developing the Interim Position Statement.
8. Natural Resources Wales staff will continue to engage directly with Welsh Government officials to ensure our Interim Position Statement aligns with their emerging policy and legislative position.

Risks

9. The Interim Position Statement will help manage and address the risks identified in the Board Paper on 17 December 2013 outlining our draft response to the Environment White Paper consultation namely:

`There is a risk that Natural Resources Wales will be asked to take on significant new duties without being allocated the financial resources to undertake them. This risk is high in the development and early implementation phase, particularly where “new” and “old” legal requirements may need to run in parallel. In mitigation, we will assess the impact of these new duties in terms of the resource requirements. If we are unable to reallocate sufficient resources within Natural Resources Wales, we will flag the issue to Welsh Government, seeking extra funding and / or agreeing what work stops and the consequences of this.’ We have also flagged this risk in the consultation response.

10. Some of the proposals would require new ways of working at the same time that Natural Resources Wales will be seeking to undergo further structural changes as well as delivering day job requirements. This will represent significant change for staff who will need to develop new skills and capabilities to work in a different and more integrated way. We will address this risk through the workforce plan and by establishing an appropriate governance structure within Natural Resources Wales to deliver this transition programme of work.
11. There is a risk that the outcomes of the Environment Bill White Paper proposals will not be achieved in full regardless of the effort of Natural Resources Wales: this would impact

on our reputation. This is a particular issue where other bodies, who can deliver these outcomes through their work, do not commit to do so. We have flagged this risk in the consultation response and will seek to make the link through our input to related legislative change for example, Welsh Government's proposals for a Future Generations Bill and Planning Reform Bill.`

12. We will continue to discuss with Welsh Government the alignment of work programmes and resources dedicated to taking forward integrated natural resources management. Options include adopting a co-production approach to the design of the process for the proposed area based approach, with a view to managing out the longer term resource impacts and delivery risks at the design stage.

Financial Implications

13. The preparation and publication of the Interim Position Statement will not have direct financial implications for Natural Resources Wales. Its availability will help manage the financial implications of many of the proposals in the White Paper, which are significant for Natural Resources Wales but difficult to quantify at this stage and until the detail of the proposals is developed.

Communications

14. The Interim Position Statement will be communicated to Natural Resources Wales' staff and will be published bilingually on our website, in line with standard practice.
15. We will continue to input to Welsh Government's work on the detailed policy and legislative proposals and contribute through membership of, for example, Welsh Government's Natural Resources Management Reference Group and Welsh Government's Natural Resources Management Programme Board. We have also been invited to sit on the Welsh Government's Environment Bill Project Board.
16. We will continue to brief stakeholders as part of ongoing routine liaison meetings.

Equality impact assessment

17. No Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out as it is not considered that this paper raises any equality issues.

Annex

- Annex 1: Draft text for the Natural Resources Wales Interim Position Statement on Natural Resource Management.