



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol**
Cymru
**Natural
Resources**
Wales

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Communities and Regeneration Enabling Plan 2015 - 2020



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Introduction

We all want to live in a country where everyone understands, values and protects our amazing natural resources, our unique landscapes and culture. The core purpose of Natural Resources Wales ensures that everything we do helps to make this vision a reality. We can't achieve it alone. Collaboration - involving and empowering our citizens, our communities, service-users and partners - is central to the way we work.

Together, we will identify priorities. We'll share knowledge, skills and resources. We will listen to and learn alongside our communities. And together we will develop sustainable and cost-effective solutions that help to make Wales a better place for all.

This Communities and Regeneration Enabling Plan sets out our high level objectives for this work. An accompanying Action Plan sets out detailed actions.

By '**communities**' we mean:

- communities of geographical place – rural and urban - where people live, work and play, and
- communities of shared interest, activities and values

By '**regeneration**' we mean work programmes and activities that support:

- improved environments
- access to opportunities for skill development and employment
- better health and well-being

We're using the Office for National Statistics definition of **well-being**: '*how we are doing as individuals, as communities and as a nation and how sustainable this is for the future ... It includes ... areas such as health, relationships, education and skills, what we do, where we live, our finances, the economy, governance, the environment and measures of 'personal well-being' (individuals' assessment of their own well-being).*'



The scope of the Enabling Plan is wide – it covers the way in which we:

- run our business and enable others to use the land we manage to deliver a range of environmental, economic and social benefits (we directly manage 7% of the land area of Wales – much of it near to where people live and work: 120,000ha of woodland, 42 National Nature Reserves and 5 Visitor Centres. We also influence the management of protected areas - a further 23%)
- advise and support others to deliver similar wide-ranging benefits for communities across Wales

Actions support delivery of the overarching Welsh Government goals set out in the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill* and the *Environment Bill*, and delivery of existing Welsh Government priorities – in particular the *Child Poverty Strategy*, *Tackling Poverty Action Plan*, *Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Framework*¹, and *Woodlands for Wales*.

The Plan also links closely with priorities set out in our Education and Sector Skills Enabling Plan and our Outdoor Recreation and Access Enabling Plan – and with our Communications, Enterprise and Procurement Strategies. It should be read in conjunction with these as many of the aims and actions are cross cutting.

Our work with communities will be considered within a wider natural resource management framework, where social, environmental and economic benefits are considered and optimised in the round, taking account of local characteristics, needs and issues. Spatial planning will be a crucial element of this approach.

We have statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and we are working with Diverse Cymru to develop a detailed Equality Impact Assessment for this Plan.

2. Natural resources: building understanding, changing how we live

To ensure that future generations continue to benefit from our rich natural resources, we need to reduce inequalities, and change the way we live and consume. Promoting understanding and creating greater connections between people and their surroundings is a key step towards this. Research shows that when communities engage with their local green spaces, and when green spaces are fully integrated with the built environment - there are direct health and well-being benefits for people, wildlife and habitats. Green spaces can help to create social cohesion, provide opportunities for skills development and learning, and help reduce the impacts of climate change, flooding and air pollution. Management of our green spaces and woodlands – and carefully planned creation of new green space - also supports employment, enterprise and inward investment.

Recent initiatives such as the Valleys Regional Park and WECAN² programmes have demonstrated that an integrated approach to the management of natural resources

¹ The Framework charges NRW directly with ‘close engagement with local communities in identifying the opportunities available to them.’

² WECAN was an Interreg IWB-funded project working to maximise the potential of the environment as a socio-economic driver for sustainable regeneration in the south Wales valleys (and other European regions).

can make a significant contribution to community regeneration and tackling poverty. Working with others, we will build on this learning in our strategic delivery.

Key issues for communities in Wales

Health inequalities: health inequalities remain within and between communities in Wales. It has been estimated that the cost of physical inactivity to Wales is around £650 million per year,³ whilst healthy lifespans are often dramatically different between neighbouring Unitary Authorities e.g. 57.1 years in Blaenau Gwent to 68.2 years in Monmouthshire. One in four adults in Wales experiences mental health problems or illness at some point during their lifetime, with an estimated annual cost of £7.2billion to Wales.

Access to natural green and blue spaces: these include parks, hedges, trees, woodland, rivers and ponds, beaches. Even in our 'green' country, not everyone has access to the green space required to maintain physical health and mental well-being. Of the 16 local authorities which reported in 2010, only 56% of their population met the standard for access to natural green space within a 300m walk of home. Passive contact with green space can be psychologically and physiologically restorative, reducing blood pressure and stress levels.⁴ The development of path networks, urban woodlands and other green infrastructure aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of the local environment can all play an important role in improving the health and well-being of people in Wales.

NRW enables access to the woodlands and reserves it manages for others to undertake events and activities of all kinds. We need to work with communities to improve our understanding of the types of access needed and likely to be used, and then facilitate delivery in the right places.

Poverty: Wales faces high levels of poverty and inequality – low incomes are prevalent⁵ and rates of economic inactivity are high.⁶ As a result, 31% children in Wales are living in relative poverty and it's acknowledged that this figure is unlikely to reduce in the short term. Rising levels of chronic ill-health exacerbate these issues. Although poverty is often thought of in an urban context, rural poverty is also an important issue.

Climate change and flood risk: Adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change will in future shape how and why we will need to engage with communities. Flood risk is a constant but unpredictable threat – 11% of all properties in Wales are at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. Changes in our climate, such as more severe storms and wetter summers and winters will increase the risk.

³ *Climbing higher: creating an active Wales* by the Welsh Government 2009

⁴ *Preference for Nature in Urbanized Societies* by Van den Berg et al, cited in *Benefits of Green Infrastructure* by Forest Research October 2010

⁵ over the three years to 2011/12, 23% of people in Wales were living in low income households Source: Department for Work and Pensions

⁶ 26.5% of the working age population was economically inactive in 2012 – higher than in Scotland or any English region Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

Air pollution: Poor air quality and long-term exposure to fine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs has a direct effect on health and places a financial burden on the health service. In 2009 the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution estimated that air pollution in the UK caused at least 29,000 premature deaths. The Environmental Audit Commission estimated that the cost to health from poor air quality in the UK ranges from £8.5 to £20 billion per annum which is equivalent to the economic cost of obesity. Recent research shows that vehicle emissions account for more deaths in the UK than road traffic accidents and passive smoking combined. Air pollution also adversely affects wildlife – protected sites have thresholds of pollutants that should not be exceeded under the habitats directive, but often are.



3. Corporate Priorities

Most of our work with communities to address these key issues fits under the 'Good for People' section of our Corporate and Business Plans. However, activities and programmes are also 'Good for Business' and 'Good for the Environment' and there are cross cutting benefits.

Our [Corporate Plan 2014 -2017](#) includes the following commitments:

- Delivering an effective response to environmental incidents and risks
- Maintaining our liabilities to help ensure public safety in our forests, National Nature Reserves and the flood defences we manage.

- Working with other organisations to develop a programme of projects, including the Welsh Government ‘Cynefin’ project, to improve local environmental quality and provide opportunities for disadvantaged communities.
- Working with local communities to get more people involved in place-based decisions, and developing future plans together using a principle of community ownership and co-production, particularly close to land and water we manage
- Maximising the economic benefits of our work, focussing particularly on Communities First areas and other communities with evidence of deprivation
- Developing our approach to volunteering by working in partnership with others, and working with existing volunteer networks
- Facilitating new business opportunities, developing our enterprise capability, and working with Welsh Government and others to support schemes and future plans, including renewable energy generation, as well as recreation and tourism opportunities

4. Delivering Results

We aim to work as inclusively as possible, considering people at different life-stages, of different ages, of different races or faiths, with disabilities, and with any of the other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act, 2010.

We are committed to building an organisational culture of working openly and fairly with partners and communities – sharing decision making and working together as equal participants. We recognise that this means that we need to work and plan differently.

We want to provide opportunities for people throughout all the communities we serve. However, as there are inequalities in levels and ranges of opportunities, provision and participation, NRW will target resources where there is the greatest need and will adhere to the following **principles** to ensure that:

- Our work with communities takes place within a natural resource management framework, optimising social, environmental and economic benefits
- Community engagement work is developed and delivered in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- We use a spatial, evidence based approach, focussing first on actions that deliver the greatest multiple benefits for people and communities – especially those in Wales’ most deprived areas.
- All NRW staff work with communities and partner organisations confidently, openly and fairly and on equal terms, supported by skilled staff with community engagement expertise.

What do we want to achieve?

The overarching aim of this Plan is that:

Natural resources make a greater contribution to improving the well-being and resilience of communities

This supports our duty to “have regard to the health and social well-being of individuals and communities” ⁷ and will contribute to:

- Increased public understanding of and care for natural resources – leading to behaviour change and more sustainable ways of living
- Improved social equity and community cohesion
- Increased economic benefits for people and communities – reducing levels of poverty

How will we achieve our aim?

We will achieve this by working collaboratively with others to:

- Be an exemplar public body, promoting and maximising opportunities for enterprise, skills development, and the promotion of well-being through the land we manage and influence, and the way we run our business (*as a public body and land manager*)
- Increase community resilience in relation to the impacts of pollution, flooding and climate change (*as a regulator*)
- Increase provision of and community involvement in the management of accessible natural green space (*as a facilitator*)
- Champion the contribution of green space and trees as powerful and versatile natural assets which support well-being, local economies and climate change mitigation (*as a facilitator and statutory adviser*)

How we'll work with others

Working with our customers and communities is a core activity for Natural Resources Wales. Recognising that other organisations and groups have specific expertise in community engagement and community development work, we will enable and support project and programme delivery by others wherever this is most appropriate. We will design our community engagement resources in the following ways:

• On land we manage

We will ensure that we have skilled staff with the expertise to engage with communities, the third sector and other potential partners – enabling and supporting activities by others. We will incorporate and build on existing expertise and formalise this as our business as usual approach, providing training and regular supervision, establishing a culture of best engagement practice. The skills of staff members with an aptitude for and interest in this work will be identified and developed and they will provide support and guidance to others – ensuring consistent best practice throughout Wales. We will work in partnership with organisations with specialist community development skills where necessary.

• Elsewhere

We will lead when it is clear that direct intervention and delivery is required and that we are best placed to do this. We will work in a supporting role when our participation in a wider partnership or network will ensure better delivery of our strategic outcomes.

⁷ Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013

In July 2013, we signed up to the [National Principles for Public Engagement](#). We re-affirm our commitment to this approach in the delivery of our projects, programmes and services.

5. Our focus over the next five years

Over the next five years we will focus our efforts on ensuring that we deliver to people and places which will benefit the most, ensuring that our activities support our overarching aim. An Action Plan accompanies this Enabling Plan, setting out priorities across NRW to help us plan and deliver our work.

The activities that can help to make a real difference include:

- Working actively to enable others to use the land we manage - developing and promoting our current public access scheme, Woodlands and You⁸, and rolling it out as an NRW-wide scheme
- Working to ensure that our communities are well informed and actively involved to reduce the impacts of flood and pollution incidents
- Developing and implementing our Procurement Strategy with community benefit a key outcome
- Ensuring that communities are engaged appropriately in natural resource planning – including in relation to land we manage and the natural resource management pilots (Tawe, Rhondda, Dyfi)
- Working to ensure that communities understand, value and protect their environment – reducing incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour
- Promoting the provision of and community involvement in, high quality, welcoming green-space where people work and live – promoting the use of objective standards (e.g. Green and Blue Flag Awards) to assess that green space provision is fit for purpose
- Promoting the role of green space and trees in delivering health and well-being benefits - reducing the impacts of climate change, connecting people with nature, removing pollutants and dust from air, storing carbon, encouraging inward investment, lowering crime levels
- Providing advice and best practice guidance on planning matters and Local Development Plans – promoting the development and use of Supplementary Planning Guidance for the provision and safeguarding of green infrastructure
- Developing our Cyfoeth⁹ scheme (supporting the Welsh Government's Esgyn/Lift programme): offering work placements, graduate placements, volunteering, apprenticeships
- Learning from innovative and best-practice ways of working with communities (Communities First, Come Outside!, Woodlands and You, Cynefin) to establish a community of best engagement practice within NRW, with dedicated leads.

⁸ Woodlands and You is NRW's national scheme for facilitating access to the land we manage for activities, events, projects and enterprise activities on the Woodland Estate – see Appendix 1

⁹ NRW's Cyfoeth scheme supports the development of a skilled workforce for Wales and offers placement opportunities for work experience, volunteering, under- or post-graduate study, apprenticeships – see Appendix 2

- Co-ordinating, supporting and evidencing our contribution to the development and delivery of Well-being Plans across Wales as members of Public Service Boards.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

We will monitor and evaluate this Enabling Plan, and the associated action plan, using the Results Based Accountability (RBA) approach. This approach includes identifying data and evidence gaps and suggesting ways in which these could be filled.

Our RBA proposals are detailed in an accompanying document: *Communities and Regeneration Enabling Plan – Results Based Accountability Plan*.

7. Reviewing our work

In addition to monitoring and evaluating our contribution through our Results Based Accountability Plan, we will regularly review this Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose. This is particularly important in light of the forthcoming Wellbeing of Future Generations and the Environment legislation.

We will also request and act on customer feedback as a core and routine part of our service delivery, undertake customer satisfaction surveys and publish the results of these with improvement plans where needed.

8. Communications

The Enabling Plan will be actively promoted both within NRW and to external organisations and partners. Tasks to support this work are included in the Action Plan.

Appendix 1 – Woodlands and You

Woodlands and You is NRW's national scheme to facilitate, manage and promote public access to the Welsh Government Woodland Estate for a wide range of activities, projects and enterprises.

Through the scheme, we enable others to undertake and deliver many of our strategic aims. It is key to achieving a number of cross-cutting actions in the Corporate Plan – mainly those in the 'Good for People' section (e.g. 'working with local communities to get more people involved in place-based decisions, and developing future plans together using a principle of community ownership and co-production, particularly close to land and water we manage'), but also those which are 'Good for the Environment' and 'Good for Business'. The data provided by the scheme supports reporting against performance measures.

Soon to be extended to all land managed by NRW (the Welsh Government Woodland Estate, National Nature Reserves, flood assets) the scheme will be rebranded and promoted as 'Mynediad' in 2015.

Appendix 2 – Cyfoeth

Cyfoeth is NRW's developing national umbrella scheme for the co-ordination and management of work placements, volunteering, graduate and sandwich placements, apprenticeships. It will offer a single, user-focussed, easy to access entry point for people interested in spend time working alongside staff in a range of settings.