

# Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Factsheet



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Delivery Framework



We recognise that our natural resources are amongst our most important assets. The Environment (Wales) Act includes an iterative framework that will ensure that managing our natural resources sustainably will be a core consideration in decision-making. This framework includes the State of Natural Resources Report, the National Natural Resources Policy and area statements.

### The State of Natural Resources Report

Accurate data, evidence and information are crucial for the decisions we all make on a daily basis. We want an up to date and comprehensive evidence base to guide us to manage our natural resources in a more sustainable way. That's why the Act requires Natural Resources Wales to produce a State of Natural Resources Report. It will be a critical part of our new approach. It will provide an assessment of the state of natural resources in relation to Wales and shows the condition and extent of our natural resources, their ability to respond to the pressures they face and their capacity to adapt to climate change.

The State of Natural Resources Report will also provide the key evidence, which will assist the Welsh Government in adopting a new, more integrated approach to managing our natural resources in a more sustainable way. This evidence base will enable us to identify the opportunities to improve the resilience of our natural resources and provide opportunities for long term social, economic and environmental benefits for Wales.

Of course, the State of Natural Resources Report will not just be used by the Welsh Government. It will be used by public authorities in complying with their new biodiversity duty and will be open and accessible to all. Our goal is for the evidence to be used throughout Wales to inform decisions made by range of stakeholders such as; businesses, social groups, charities and communities.

Other public bodies will be under a duty to provide information and assistance to Natural Resources Wales in producing the State of Natural Resources Report if they are asked to do so.

We also recognise that things change, new information comes to light, new methods are tried and new solutions are found. The State of Natural Resources Report will be updated before every National Assembly for Wales election. From the second SoNaRR a draft will be published 12 months in advance of the final report. This will allow every new Welsh Government to use the most up to date information available to inform its policies.

## National Natural Resource Policy

The Act requires the Welsh Ministers to publish a National Natural Resources Policy outlining their policies on how our natural resources can be sustainably managed.

The National Natural Resources Policy will be informed by the best available evidence as provided in the State of Natural Resources Report. It will also take account of other sources of information, such as the Future Trends Report and evidence from our progress towards the Well-being goals contained within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Through the National Natural Resources Policy the Welsh Ministers will set the priorities, risks and opportunities for the sustainable management of natural resources in Wales. It will set the high level direction of travel including where sustainable management of natural resources can help to optimise economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities for now and the long term. This will also include actions that the Welsh Ministers will take in relation to climate change and biodiversity.

This will promote a joined-up approach to the policies that the Welsh Government develops, as well as supporting the achievement of the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the National Development Framework in the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.

The National Natural Resources Policy will also set the context for area statements produced by Natural Resources Wales, ensuring that the national priorities for sustainable management of our natural resources inform our approach to local delivery.

## Area Statements

The Act has been designed so that the National Natural Resources Policy has a positive impact at the most appropriate geographical scale. That's why it requires Natural Resources Wales to prepare, publish and review area statements. Each area of Wales must be included within at least one area statement.

Area statements will consider the evidence from the State of Natural Resources Report and implement the priorities, risks and opportunities identified by the National Natural Resources Policy for the sustainable management of natural resources at the local level. Natural Resources Wales can also use area statements to help deliver any of its functions, and must consider opportunities for rationalising, where appropriate, any plans, programmes or strategies within an area statement.

Area statements will provide a local evidence base which can contribute to future publications of the State of Natural Resources Report. They must be taken into account in local well-being assessments undertaken by a public service board which are required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Local planning authorities must have regard to area statements when preparing their local development plan and National Park Authorities must have regard to them when preparing or reviewing their management plans for National Parks.

Although Natural Resources Wales is responsible for producing area statements, it is also able to ask other public bodies to provide information and assistance in producing and implementing them. In applying the principles of sustainable management of natural resources, Natural Resources Wales must also use collaborative approaches to develop area statements.

This approach improves decision making and reduces duplication through collaborative working between Natural Resources Wales and other public bodies.

## Area Trials

We are keen to learn lessons early to feed into this new approach. To help with this, Natural Resources Wales have undertaken three area trials in the Rhondda, Tawe and Dyfi river catchment areas. These trials have explored how natural resource management can best work at a local level. The trials have helped to deliver practical benefits on the ground for the communities within each trial area; the trials have also helped to demonstrate how Natural Resource Management can be applied in practical terms whilst importantly capturing the learning along the way. The information and learning gathered from the trials will be used to develop area statements setting out the key local challenges, opportunities and priorities for the future use and management of natural resources.

## Timeline

We published a Natural Resources Policy Statement in September 2015 to illustrate the potential priorities and opportunities for our natural resources. This statement was a precursor to the first statutory National Natural Resources Policy and can be used to engage our partners to develop and inform the first statutory policy.

The first statutory State of Natural Resources Report is scheduled for publication in autumn 2016. This will be updated before each National Assembly for Wales election with a draft published 12 months in advance. The first Natural Resources Policy Statement will be published in Spring 2017. Thereafter it will be reviewed after any National Assembly for Wales' election and the formation of a new Welsh Government. This allows the Welsh Ministers to take account of the progress made towards sustainable management of our natural resources and refreshed evidence from Natural Resources Wales' State of Natural Resources Report. The first area statements will begin to be developed after these publications and the first iteration of area statements to be completed by 2019.

## More information

The Act became law in March 2016. You can find out more about the Act on our website at:

<http://gov.wales/environmentact>

You can also subscribe to our monthly e-bulletin by emailing us at:

[NRBulletin@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:NRBulletin@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.