



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd **The Environment and Sustainability Committee**

Dydd Mercher, 15 Ionawr 2014
Wednesday, 15 January 2014

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These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mick Antoni	Llafur Labour
Yr Arglwydd/Lord Elis-Thomas	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Llyr Gruffydd	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Julie James	Llafur Labour
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Antoinette Sandbach	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Julian Atkins	Cyfarwyddwr Rheoli Cefn Gwlad a Thir, Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog Director of Countryside and Land Management, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
James Byrne	Rheolwr Eiriolaeth Tirweddau Byw, Ymddiriedolaethau Natur Cymru Living Landscapes Advocacy Manager, Wildlife Trusts Wales
Geraint Jones	Swyddog Cadwraeth Ffermio, Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro Farm Conservation Officer, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Chris Lindley	Swyddog ar gyfer Ardal Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol Gŵyr, Dinas a Sir Abertawe Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Officer, City and County of Swansea
Paul Sinnadurai	Rheolwr Cadwraeth, Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog Conservation Manager, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Annie Smith	Rheolwr Datblygu Cynaliadwy, RSPB Cymru Sustainable Development Manager, RSPB Cymru
Arfon Williams	Rheolwr Cefn Gwlad, RSPB Cymru Countryside Manager, RSPB Cymru

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Alun Davidson	Clerc Clerc
Elfyn Henderson	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Catherine Hunt	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9:34.
The meeting began at 9:34.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Croeso, Aelodau, i gyfarfod y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd ac i dystion cyntaf y flwyddyn newydd. Mae'r rheolau arferol yn gweithredu, ac mae'r dulliau arferol o glywed cyfieithiad ac addasu sain yn gweithio. Mae gennym le gwag o hyd ar y pwyllgor ar ôl i Vaughan Gething gymryd swydd Dirprwy Weinidog. Nid oes ymddiheuriadau heddiw.

Lord Elis-Thomas: Welcome, Members, to this meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Committee and to the first witnesses of the new year. The usual rules apply, and the usual means of hearing the interpretation and adjusting the volume are operational. We still have a vacancy on the committee following Vaughan Gething's departure to be a Deputy Minister. There are no apologies today.

[2] Cyn i mi agor y sesiwn dystiolaeth, carwn ddweud gair o goffadwriaeth a theyrnged i hen gyfaill i mi a chyfaill i'r pwyllgor hwn—y diweddar Morgan Parry. Roedd yn aelod hynod werthfawr o fwrdd Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru, a chyn hynny ef oedd yr unig un o'r trydydd sector, rwy'n credu, i ddod yn gadeirydd y corff cyhoeddus blaenorol, Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru. Cyn hynny, roedd yn gyfrifol am sefydlu swyddfa'r WWF yng Nghymru o'r newydd, a hynny'n pwysleisio'r pwysigrwydd roedd yn ei roi ar faterion rhyngwladol ac ar ddeall Cymru mewn cyd-destun rhyngwladol. Yna, rhoddodd flynyddoedd o wasanaeth—bron i 10 mlynedd rwy'n credu, James—i'r Ymddiriedolaethau Natur yn y gogledd. Pan ddeuthum i'w adnabod gyntaf, roedd yn gweithio ym mharciau Glynllifon a Phadarn i Gynor Gwynedd.

Before I begin the evidence session, I would like to say a few words in memory of, and tribute to, an old friend of mine and this committee—the late Morgan Parry. He was a highly valued member of the Natural Resources Wales board, and previously he had been the only one from the third sector, I think, to become chair of the former public body, the Countryside Council for Wales. Before that, he was responsible for establishing the WWF office in Wales, which emphasised the importance that he placed on international issues and on understanding Wales in an international context. He then gave years of service—nearly 10 years, I think, James—to the Wildlife Trusts in north Wales. When I met him first, he worked in Glynllifon and Padarn parks for Gwynedd Council.

[3] Roedd yn ŵr hynod o fwyn, tyner a charedig bob amser, ond roedd hefyd yn gwbl benderfynol. Mae colli rhywun felly yn golled i'r byd amgylcheddol yng Nghymru ac yn ehangach, ac yn golled i ni fel amgylcheddwyr sydd yn eistedd ar y pwyllgor hwn. Carwn anfon ein cydymdeimlad at Wendy a'r teulu ar ran y pwyllgor hwn. Coffa da amdano. Diolch yn

He was always a lovely, gentle and kind man, but he was also very determined. Losing someone like that is a loss to the environmental world in Wales and beyond, and it is a loss to us as environmentalists sitting on this committee. I would like to send our condolences to Wendy and the family on behalf of this committee. Blessed be his memory. Thank you very much.

fawr.

09:37

Rheoli Tir yn Gynaliadwy: RSPB Cymru ac Ymddiriedolaethau Natur Cymru Sustainable Land Management: RSPB Cymru and Wildlife Trusts Wales

[4] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Mae cyfle i ni bellach, felly, edrych ar holl gwestiwn rheoli tir yn gynaliadwy fel rhan o'n hymchwiliad. Mae'n dda gennyf unwaith eto groesawu grwpiau amgylcheddol i roi tystiolaeth. A hoffech ddweud gair—rwy'n siŵr yr hoffai James ddweud gair—ar y cychwyn, cyn inni symud i gwestiynau?

Lord Elis-Thomas: We now have an opportunity to look at the whole question of sustainable land management as part of our inquiry. I am pleased, once again, to welcome environmental groups to give evidence. Do you wish to make some opening remarks—I am sure that James would like to say a word—before we go to questions?

[5] **Ms Smith:** Thank you very much for your lovely words about Morgan, Chair. We completely share the sentiments and we will miss him very much.

[6] I want to open by saying that the RSPB feels that the Minister has recognised the challenge that we face in terms of the decline of our wildlife, the crisis of climate change and broader problems in terms of land management, and has recognised that we need a bold approach. His autumn statement said that rejecting the outdated assumption that economic growth can only be achieved at the expense of the environment is central to our future as a nation, which is very welcome.

[7] Unfortunately, we do not feel that they are quite carried through in terms of the policy development that is going on. The environment White Paper is a key example, which I know that this committee has discussed, as was the development of NRW prior to that. The direction feels a bit more like placating economic interests by getting environmental constraints out of the way, and looking at how we can exploit natural resources to the max, as opposed to looking at better stewardship, restoring what has been lost and working with the grain of nature to secure the long-term benefits that we derive from the environment. That is what I wanted to say to open.

[8] **Mr Byrne:** I would like to echo the Chair's words about Morgan Parry. He will be a sad loss to the conservation sector and to the Wildlife Trusts in particular.

[9] I want to mention the 'State of Nature' report, which is one of the reasons why we are involved, and which is a result of unsustainable land management, where 60% of our species have declined—63% of Welsh butterflies have declined, 75% of our iconic Welsh breeding waders, such as curlew and lapwing, have declined and 97% of our native wildflowers have declined. So, we want to see sustainable land management that achieves multiple objectives in terms of the water framework directive, catchment management, payment for ecosystem services and tourism et cetera in a vibrant countryside where peat bogs not only soak up carbon and water, but are alive with the song of curlew as well. So, if we are moving to an increasingly rapidly changing and less benign environment with climate change and the possible adverse socioeconomic implications that that has, it is imperative that we get sustainable land management. That is partly why we as the Wildlife Trusts are here today.

[10] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Arfon.

[11] **Mr Williams:** I think that Annie has spoken on behalf of the RSPB.

[12] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I want to pick up on the 'State of Nature' report. There were very little data in that report, and a lot of the data that were quoted in it were not Welsh data, but English data or UK-based data from which there were assumptions about the state of nature in Wales. We know that a lot of data are held in record offices in particular, but those data have not been co-ordinated. I wondered what the environmental charities, particularly with the Wales Environmental Link umbrella, where you combine together, which have, after all, the resources of membership as well as the resources of volunteers, have done to combine and layer their data and maybe look at what is available in the various county records offices. I hear a lot about the decline in species, and I am not saying that there has not been a decline in species, but I do not see it evidenced in a proper way in the Welsh context, and I think that data are key to that, because they help inform things on a factual and scientific basis.

[13] **Mr Byrne:** I would say that the wildlife charities are working together on our data. We have a lot of volunteers and we have an ongoing system of monitoring and recording. From those data, from the information that we are getting from our volunteers and from what we see in the countryside, we see that decline in wildlife. RSPB data, in terms of the red and amber species as well as its curlew information, have been very well referenced. However, yes, you are right that you could always have more information, and we are looking to get that. We do not really want to see us continually going after more data to prove something that we believe is already happening—there is a serious decline in wildlife—without doing something about it first. Even taking your issues regarding the data on board, taking a precautionary approach to land management is, we believe, a wise idea.

[14] **Mr Williams:** I think that the point about becoming more integrated and joining us up is well made and it is something that we have attended a meeting about recently with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, which has the Glastir monitoring programme and has been contracted by the Welsh Government to help define high nature value. RSPB has been pushing quite hard, because we have had concerns about the limitations of the Glastir monitoring, and, following a 12-month period, we are in a position now where CEH, the environmental non-governmental organisations and the record centre are going to sit down together to see what datasets are out there and how many of them can be brought in to the monitoring programme to help support the ecosystem approach to monitoring, so that the monitoring programme will look at species as well. However, I think that that process will highlight that there are some areas where we can improve the monitoring, but that there are also large areas where there is an increase. I think that you are right—there is a need for increased data. Mammals are one area; I think it will be shown that there is very little understanding about the distribution of Welsh mammals. There are definite deficiencies in there, but there are also gains in closer working as well.

09:45

[15] **Antoinette Sandbach:** It just seems to me that, if you do not have a baseline—although I understand what you say, James, that you would like to show more than just what is happening—you cannot actually monitor the success or failures of any particular programme properly or effectively or scientifically.

[16] **Mr Williams:** Absolutely. That has been a big concern of ours with the Glastir scheme. We have been arguing that, for many of the scheme's objectives—the species objectives within the scheme—monitoring and the collection of baseline data just have not been adequate. Thankfully, the Welsh Government has acknowledged this deficiency and, depending on the outcome of the meeting in February, we will see how much progress we will make on this issue. However, it may be that we look to members of the committee to support the non-governmental organisations in this work because we feel that, with a scheme spending public money designed to deliver benefits to species, if we do not know how many species we have got or where they are, we do not know how we can then say that this money

is being used wisely.

[17] **Antoinette Sandbach:** However, in terms of your own landholdings—because all of you have really quite large landholdings and the Welsh Government has enormous landholdings in Wales—how have you been working with the Welsh Government? What are you monitoring on your own landholdings, where you are presumably managing for maximum environmental benefit?

[18] **Mr Byrne:** For example, on the Gwent levels, we have been working with the NRW, and, formerly, the Environment Agency, to re-establish water voles in the Gwent levels, and we have been working with the RSPB. Water voles are one of the creatures that have seen a significant decline. I think it was a 97% decline in numbers. So, we are working with NRW and the Welsh Government to re-establish the populations within the Gwent levels and we are working with other organisations in different parts of Wales to try, where they were very abundant, to locate the hotspots and then re-establish water voles in the wider context.

[19] **Antoinette Sandbach:** What I am saying is that environmental protection is your primary purpose as environmental charities. Sustainable land management involves bringing in farmers whose primary purpose is food production, not environmental land management. You have additional resources in terms of membership fees paid to you as well as volunteer time and professional employees, both scientists and professional staff, who work for your organisation. Effectively, it is not a level playing field, is it, in terms of what you are asking land managers who are not professional environmentalists to do in managing their land? So, how do you see sustainable land management in those terms where, if you like, you have got resources that simply are not available to an owner-occupier of a 200 acre farm who is running it for himself and trying to make a living for him and his family or her and her family? How do you see that working in the context of the real advantage you have over others? Presumably, the 'State of Nature' report also illustrates that your management of your reserves and your land perhaps may not have been successful if there has been such a dramatic decline in the species.

[20] **Mr Williams:** There are lots of questions there and lots of overlapping issues. It might take a while to tease some of those out. If I understand you, to answer you, the land managers we work with and who we hope to influence through things such as Glastir are land managers who, in the main, still have this wildlife. Speaking to these farmers, we learn that they have a vested interest in managing the land for these species. How you then monitor those goes back to my point about Glastir. We have helped design the scheme, prescriptions and the guidance. Through involvement with the steering groups or the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, we are in a position where we can try to influence the monitoring programmes. Those monitoring programmes should be adequate in order to assess the impact of the scheme on farms. The success of those schemes and the land management undertaken by farmers is dependent on the quality of the scheme, the follow-up advice and that sort of thing. Hopefully, that answers that part.

[21] In terms of how we then monitor what we do with our own monitoring, obviously we have programmes for monitoring our own holdings. We are still undertaking a contract for Natural Resources Wales, which has looked at monitoring all of the avian SSSIs within Wales, and also monitoring non-avian objectives on our reserves. That information then contributes to the kind of greater understanding of species and land management for species within Wales.

[22] **Ms Smith:** Perhaps I could just add quickly that our nature reserves are often places where wildlife thrives, and where we have strong populations of species in a way that is not reflected throughout the wider countryside. This cannot replace a healthy countryside. It is not a sustainable solution for lapwings to breed on RSPB reserves only because that would mean

that species occupying a very small fraction of the range that it could occupy in the countryside.

[23] **Mr Byrne:** I would also say that the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, the Woodland Trust and others do have a lot of specialists, but we are working with landowners and farmers throughout Wales, not just on our landscape management schemes, such as Living Landscapes and Futurescapes, but also outwith these areas. So, we are working with farmers, for example in the Pumlumon project, where we are also actively working with farmers and giving them money through a payments for ecosystem services pilot to re-establish their blanket bogs to block the ditches. In areas where farmers have done that, some agricultural production has gone up, for example as a result of the work in Lake Vyrnwy. I believe that there has been a reduction in land loss because land is not being lost into these gullies and ditches. So, throughout Wales, the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and other organisations are trying to work very effectively with farmers to advise them and to co-operate with them. We also have farms. The Wildlife Trusts has farms, as does the RSPB; so, we know what the farmer is going through, and we can sympathise, advise and proactively work with them.

[24] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Would it also be true—it is certainly true in my experience—that a lot of the contractors that are getting this kind of ecosystem to work are, in fact, people from farming backgrounds, part-time farmers, or farming families themselves.

[25] **Mr Byrne:** Yes. For example, in the Pumlumon project we employ local contractors to undertake the work. So, we are trying to keep the money in local areas, employing local people, upskilling people and volunteers in jobs so that they can go into the green economy. So, we are actively looking at keeping things local.

[26] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Galwaf **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I now call on Mick ar Mick Antoniwi, ac yna Llyr a Julie. Antoniwi, and then Llyr and Julie.

[27] **Mick Antoniwi:** I appreciate the answers to some of the questions. A lot of it is quite difficult to put into a framework; it is so dependent upon individual examples. So, in terms of sustainable land management, we have three pieces of legislation that will be coming before us; there will be three Bills: the environment Bill, the planning Bill, and the future generations Bill. Is there scope for legislation in terms of achieving improved or better sustainable land management and so on? If so, what should that legislation be, and in which particular items of that legislation should it be included? The latter bits of my question might be a bit complicated. What are the key areas where you think there is actually a need for legislation that we should be considering?

[28] **Ms Smith:** I will start, if I may. To say a little bit about the proposals for the environment Bill, there is great potential there because, in terms of holding up the environment and restoring it as the basis for ongoing sustainable land management, we have a lot of tools in the toolkit already. We have legislation around protected areas and getting water bodies into good condition; we have similar legislation for the marine environment as well. However, the delivery of those tools and the implementation of the legislation is not as good as it should be. Our protected areas are failing to meet the condition they should be in and water bodies are failing on quality targets in the water framework directive, for example. The environment Bill sets out proposals for an integrated approach to natural resource management, which is going to involve an area-based focus around trying to bring together the various issues to do with sustainable land management, such as involving local authorities in land-use planning issues, farming and rural payments et cetera, as well as the delivery of those key environmental responsibilities. That could be a fantastic opportunity to really start thinking about strategic opportunities for the environment, to restore some of what has been lost and to look at the landscape-scale conservation that our organisations are trying to develop through our projects, working with the broadest range of partners as possible.

[29] The disappointing aspect of it at the moment is that it seems to be very focused on exploitation and use and the ideal of taking account of socioeconomic aspirations in identifying what the environment needs, rather than looking at what the environment needs and then seeking those creative solutions that make sure that that resource base and nature is sustained in the longer term. So, that is reflected in some of the technical stuff proposed in the White Paper around definitions of natural resources, integrated management et cetera, which really focus on use to the exclusion almost of conservation. Whether you approach conservation from the perspective of our organisations, for example in terms of the intrinsic value of nature and our responsibility to protect it, or whether you approach it simply as a resource base, conservation has to be part of sustainable management or the resource will be eroded and will not be there for sustainable use in the future.

[30] **Mr Byrne:** I will just add to that. Some of the new Bills—the sustainable development Bill and the environment Bill—bring concepts such as living within environmental limits and land management not just to Natural Resources Wales or to the Minister, Alun Davies’s portfolio, but to other portfolios as well. It is about trying to bring about opportunities in other ministerial portfolios to look at land management and sustainable land management as well. So, we think that that is a potential benefit from some of this legislation. I agree with what Annie said.

[31] **Mick Antoniw:** A lot of the legislation is going to be about consolidation; the future generations Bill is still on the drawing board to some extent. Is it your view that, in terms of sustainable land issues, most of the tools are actually already there, and that it is the pulling them together and the enforcement that is the key issue, or is there a specific need for new powers and new legislation? That is the point that I was trying to get at.

[32] **Ms Smith:** I think that it is fair to say that the broad vehicle is there. It is also fair to say that the area-based approach to natural resource management set out in the environment Bill could actually add a missing piece, which is the driver for restoring what we have lost. We would like to see the environment Bill carry a statutory target for biodiversity recovery, to reflect the international commitments and help ensure that that process is driven by the need to restore what we have lost, which we think is fundamental to sustainability. However, getting those existing legislative tools to work better and to work together, and getting overall management to work with the grain of what they are trying to do, is the big challenge.

10:00

[33] **Mick Antoniw:** Is the major philosophical or ideological conflict within all of this the compatibility between the socioeconomic objectives and the environmental objectives? Also, what are your views, within the whole context of sustainable land management, as to how you balance those? We protect the environment and we want sustainable management and so on because we want people to be able to live on the land and to make a living, and not for its own sake, if we are honest about it. So, how do we marry those two, and what are your thoughts on how we bring those things together?

[34] **Ms Smith:** I agree that that is absolutely the issue. There are a few issues to tease apart. The RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts are strong advocates of the benefits that we derive from nature. While, philosophically, we are motivated—and we believe that a lot of our members are motivated—by the love of nature and our responsibility to be custodians, if you like, the truth is that nature and the natural environment underpin society and the economy. Some of those connections are really clear in Wales, where the value and beauty of the countryside is one of our big selling points. The fundamental challenge in reaching those sustainable solutions is to not always focus on trading off the environment in favour of socioeconomic aims, but to integrate those better. We have talked a little about some of the

opportunities in terms of the green economy, including the land management skills that have been developed through some of the projects that we have discussed, such as the Lake Vyrnwy project and the Pumlumon project. They have skilled up people and offered creative new trades for them, in a way, which is a really important illustration of the role of the green economy in the future. There will always be trade-offs and tough decisions to make. However, if we are at a place where we properly understand the importance of the environment and natural resources as the basis for ongoing sustainability, we will be much more likely to achieve sustainable development in the future.

[35] **Mr Byrne:** I would add to that that the Minister has said on many occasions that he does not see a choice between a bad environment and sustainable land management. A scheme like the Pontbren project is a good example. We have noted Pontbren and other examples, such as Pumlumon, in our evidence to you, which shows that you can have sustainable land management, you can have clean water and you can have silt reduction, as well as profitable economic farms. The Pontbren project, Pumlumon and Lake Vyrnwy are very good examples of that. There are other examples throughout the country: big catchment management schemes such as the Upstream Thinking project with South West Water, which has been working with the Westcountry Rivers Trust and the Devon and Cornwall Wildlife Trusts. They restore upland habitats, create clean water and work with and advise farmers, getting them income, paying them for their services and storing floodwater. Ofwat has looked at it, and in one of Ofwat's recent papers, 'From catchment to customer', it said that there was potentially a 1:65 ratio in the benefits—not just the economics, but the multiple objectives. So, that is part of what we are talking about. Sustainable land management does not have to be one element—environment or farming, and so on; it is about multiple outcomes. So, I believe that there is a way in which we can achieve sustainable land management using a lot of the tools that we already have, such as the Glastir scheme and the agri-environment schemes. CAP should really be the ultimate payment for ecosystem services—public money for public good. So, we have the systems in place, we just need to utilise them more efficiently.

[36] **Mr Williams:** There is a perception that it is either environment or production—if we are looking at the farming example—and that there is a tension there and they are not compatible. Environmental considerations and obligations have been seen as a barrier to production in large parts in Wales. However, you only have to look at farm economics to see that it is farm economics that are the barrier and there are parts of Wales where farmers struggle to make a living because of markets and so on.

[37] When you look at those areas as well as at issues like decoupling, you see that the decoupling of headage payments from subsidies has had a greater impact on farm activity in lots of these areas. In these cases, rather than being a hindrance to the environment and associated activities and support for farmers, it has been a lifeline in large parts of Wales. Without environmental initiatives and support, we would see greater levels of abandonment and much less farming activity in parts of Wales. So, the environment is important, and the point has already been made that protecting the environment is the right thing to do—and that is a very strong argument—but there are also very strong economic arguments for protecting and enhancing the environment.

[38] The committee has been to Vyrnwy and has seen the importance of simple things like sphagnum moss and blanket bog in storing water and carbon sequestration. The economic argument around that is quite an easy argument to understand. It then becomes more of a challenge. I am not saying that we should always think of this in economic terms, but, in terms of the more charismatic species within these areas, such as the black grouse, water voles or a lot of the bird species, there are facts and figures that demonstrate that wildlife tourism in Wales is a growing industry and is worth £1.8 billion in Wales, and a lot of this activity will be in these areas that are important for the environment—the uplands of Wales.

Whereas farming is struggling in these areas, we are looking at a growth industry that, if fully integrated, should and could benefit farming industries. Farmers' role is farming, but they can do that in a way that enhances and protects the environment and has much wider benefits for them and for rural economies.

[39] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Bu ichi gyfeirio at CAP yn gynharach, Arfon, ac, yn amlwg, cawsom gyhoeddiad ddoe gan y Gweinidog ynglŷn â sut y bydd CAP yn cael ei weithredu nawr yng Nghymru. Mae nifer yn darogan y bydd cynhyrchiant bwyd yng Nghymru yn disgyn, efallai, yn sgîl rhai o'r penderfyniadau. Hoffwn holi ynglŷn â *sustainable intensification* a'r agenda hwnnw. Sut ydych yn gweld hwnnw yn cyfrannu at rai o'r meysydd? Pan rydym yn sôn am reoli tir yn gynaliadwy, faint o *mileage* sydd mewn *sustainable intensification* mewn gwirionedd?

Llyr Gruffydd: You referred to CAP earlier, Arfon, and, obviously, we had an announcement yesterday on how CAP will be implemented now in Wales. Many predict that the production of food will decrease in Wales, perhaps, following some of the decisions that have been made. I would like to ask about sustainable intensification and that agenda. How do you see that agenda contributing to some of these areas? When we talk about sustainable land management, how much mileage is there in sustainable intensification in reality?

[40] **Mr Williams:** Atebaf yn Saesneg, os yw hynny'n iawn.

Mr Williams: I will answer in English, if I may.

[41] Sustainable intensification is being seen in some sectors as a way forward to produce more food and limit or reduce the impact on the environment. A report was produced by ADAS last year that looked at sustainable intensification. In the report—and I support the findings of the report—it states that there are sectors in Wales where there is scope to improve efficiencies and to introduce innovation that will lead to reduced environmental impact. So, in the more intensive elements of the farming sector, the intensive beef sector and the dairy industries, there is scope there to reduce the environmental impact. The findings of that report, when looking at the pastoral sectors and the upland sectors, were that sustainable intensification is not really a viable concept. It was felt that the increased productivity would require increased inputs and an increase in the importation of feedstuffs, which would have a carbon footprint, be it from within Wales or further afield. A lot of the grazing systems described there are not the types of things that we should be looking to increase productivity around. We should be looking at these areas and asking what they are important for and then establishing appropriate levels of agricultural activity.

[42] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Felly, nid ydych yn credu bod yr agenda hwn yn realistig mewn gwirionedd.

Llyr Gruffydd: So, you do not think that this agenda is a realistic one.

[43] **Mr Williams:** It is something that needs further consideration. It is not a blunt tool; it may work within certain sectors in Wales. There are elements and parts of all farming sectors that would certainly benefit from increased efficiencies. That is something that our work on Vyrnwy has been very keen to look at. If a given area can carry only x amount of stock, are there ways in which you can improve, not necessarily the numbers on there, but what is actually being produced? Can you reduce the cost of production? Can you increase the lambing percentages coming off the flock? Can you keep more of your lambs alive? Can you increase their weight before they go to market? Can you improve the market? Can you get a better price for that product in the market? Can you shorten your food chains? Can you somehow get the market to reflect the environmental credentials of environmentally sound produced food? All of those things need looking at. There will be scope for efficiencies within farming sectors, but the very simple need to produce more food for a growing global population as a justification for sustainable intensification needs a lot more light shone on it.

It is just too simplistic at the moment.

[44] **Llyr Gruffydd:** A ydych yn rhagweld y byddai'r RDP yn chwarae rôl? Rydych wedi sôn am gyflwyno mwy o *efficiencies* o fewn y diwydiant. A fydddech yn edrych i'r cyfeiriad hwnnw ar gyfer y math o waith i gefnogi ffermwyr a datblygu arloesedd, ac yn y blaen, sydd angen digwydd?

Llyr Gruffydd: Do you anticipate that the RDP would play a role? You have talked about introducing greater efficiencies to the industry. Would you look in that direction for the type of work to support farmers and develop innovation, and so on, that needs to happen?

[45] **Mr Williams:** Yn sicr.

Mr Williams: Definitely.

[46] With the move away from the axes within the RDP and looking at priorities, there now exist the framework and the structure to look at efficiencies, competitiveness and innovation, to embed them within the RDP, and importantly to ensure that pillar 1 and the RDP work very closely together to ensure that we use the next seven years properly. This period is a period when there is less money in this CAP and there will be less money in the next CAP. We should be using the money in a way that helps all elements and all sectors of the farming industry to put themselves on a firm footing for the future. That has to look at the farming systems themselves, what they are producing, how they are being marketed, where the cost efficiencies are and where the room for join-up is. There needs to be a much more joined-up look at what farming is about and what the important outputs of farming are. There will be areas of Wales where, as we have described already, environmental outputs will be an incredibly important element of what farmers will have to produce for wider society. It is important that that is reflected in the markets or in the short-term or medium-term CAP payments as well.

10:15

[47] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** We will have Julie James, Joyce Watson, Julie Morgan, and William Powell perhaps.

[48] **William Powell:** In a moment, yes.

[49] **Julie James:** I would like to go back to some of the remarks that you made. I am very interested in some of the points that you were discussing with Mick Antoniw earlier around the definitions and the tools that we have. I want to ensure that the suite of Bills that we are putting through at the moment is at least fit for propose, even if the implementation leaves something to be desired—I do not want to go back through that, I take your point entirely. You spoke about the definition, but in section 2 of the White Paper, there is quite a long, reflective discussion about the need to ensure that 'natural resources' is defined in a way that is not just about economic and social need, for example. To me, when I read it, I thought that it was a breath of fresh air, so I was a bit disappointed to find that you were not very happy with it. I wonder whether you could elaborate on that a bit.

[50] **Ms Smith:** Of course. I think that I recognise the message that you were talking about. I found that, within a paragraph, there was a reflection that natural resources should not just be about economic value, but I am concerned that the definitions do not quite bear that out. The whole approach that the White Paper is developing had its origins in the ecosystem approach that was developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The ecosystem approach in that convention is described as a strategy for the sustainable use and conservation of an area of land or water. It is an integrated strategy to do with both sustainable use and conservation. I do not think that they are that far off the definition, but I think that they could make that conservation element, which is a fundamental part of the approach, more explicit

and clear. In particular, the definition of sustainable management veers away from the positive message that is mentioned here and there about natural resources. The thing that I was really disappointed by was that that discussion about how the new approach is going to work with the existing tools that we have, to make sure that they become effective tools instead of just tools on paper, is not there. If they delivered what they were meant to deliver, we would be a long way towards where we need to be. The problems around implementation and resourcing need to be addressed. Having a new approach—a new integrated agency that delivers lots of these things and has a bigger steer over land management and a broader range of functions—is a brilliant opportunity to get that right. What I was disappointed about was that that opportunity is not discussed. The opportunity for identifying where we can make strategic gains in terms of putting back some of the lost environmental quality, in line with the need to build back up our natural resource base, was, I felt, a bit of a missed opportunity.

[51] **Julie James:** I love these little gizmos, because you can suddenly have the White Paper in front of you instead of having backache from having to lug it around with you. I happen to have it in front of me all of a sudden. It does say,

[52] ‘for managing the maintenance, enhancement and use of natural resources’.

[53] To my mind, it goes out of its way to talk about enhancement, which is a new thing for government in my experience. I take your point about some of the implementation tools, but I think that we have to get the journey started in the right place and then get the rest of it to fit. Let us not have another round of it, but I would be really interested if you would like to write in and say what your definition would be. It seems to me that if we do not start from the right place, we are implementing the wrong thing anyway. Let us not have another cross round of it, but I like that definition very much, so I would be really interested to see where you think it falls short. Perhaps the committee could have a chat at some point about the definitions in the Bill, once we have a suite of responses from people.

[54] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I think that it is very important that we do that before we come to do the Bill.

[55] **Antoinette Sandbach:** We do not have a Bill.

[56] **Julie James:** I know that we do not have a Bill, but the White Paper sets out a set of definitions that it proposes to put into the Bill, so we have a place to start, and we have commentary on what people think is wrong with the fundamental definition. The whole Bill is going to be founded on the fundamental definitions, it seems to me. So, if we are starting from the point that most people are not happy with it, I would be very interested to know that.

[57] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Could you perhaps add to that then, in relation to where there are conflicts? I accept your evidence completely that you can, on some occasions, get environmental, socio and economic gains; I accept that. However, what I do not understand, through these three pieces of legislation, is how decision makers are supposed to approach those decisions if any one of those things is in conflict with another. None of that is clear from the legislation that I have seen, so if you could include that in your commentary, that would be great.

[58] **Julie James:** I have to say that that is a bit wider.

[59] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** That is a question for Government, is it not?

[60] **Antoinette Sandbach:** In theory, so is the definition. This is the key to implementation: how are people who are looking at three different pieces of legislation supposed to balance the different priorities in each of them?

[61] **Ms Smith:** Not to go around it all again, but I will just say that I agree that that is a critical point and another area where the environment White Paper is light in terms of getting the delivery of what is identified. Also, I do not think that we are a million miles apart on the definitions. I have particular thoughts around the sustainable management area, and I will very happily share them.

[62] **Julie James:** I hear those nuances from you; nevertheless, they are important. In terms of the integration of all of the Bills, I think that that is a different piece of work altogether, just to add my two-penn'orth to that. Obviously, we need to look at the integration of the suite of Bills, but currently, we are looking at sustainable land management, to which this definition is very integral, it seems to me.

[63] **Ms Smith:** I think that there is a point within the environment Bill about how the process of setting priorities and coming together around the purposes of integrated management leads to the right actions. That is an area where the proposals are a bit weak.

[64] **Julie James:** Perhaps it would be interesting if the committee had a written submission on that from you.

[65] **Ms Smith:** Sure.

[66] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I believe that you have accepted an invitation that you could not really refuse. I now bring in Joyce Watson.

[67] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. I want to come back to the planning system and the role that it will play in sustainable land management. There is clearly a crossover here, so I want to explore it. In light of everything that has happened very recently, I would think that planning and land management are high on people's agendas. I want to ask you, first of all, for your views on how you think that planning system could better facilitate sustainable land management in rural areas. I will then ask you about urban areas.

[68] **Mr Byrne:** I would say that the planning system could be, if it were to embrace green infrastructure—. There are aspects in TAN 5 and 'Planning Policy Wales' at the minute that speak towards green infrastructure in an urban context, but also in a rural context. So, planning has a big role in achieving sustainable land management and potentially preventing land management that could be counterproductive to sustainable land management, for example, building on flood plains or putting motorways through wetland areas.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. I would like to explore further with you a project that I have seen—that is what I was doing; I was looking it up—in Stebonheath County Primary School in Llanelli, where Welsh Water has retrofitted the containment of water. Surface water is something that I am particularly interested in avoiding. In terms of planning and the use of land, you cannot build anything unless you use land; that is obvious. In terms of sustainability within the planning system, do you feel that the Bill matches, in its current form, the achievements that you would hope to come out of that?

[70] **Mr Byrne:** I was going to say that I have not read any of the planning stuff, but I can put that together for you in a brief note and send it to the committee. So, I will defer to my colleague.

[71] **Ms Smith:** I was also going to say that I am not familiar with the draft planning Bill yet either. However, in terms of the approach that the environment White Paper describes, you would hope that one of the advantages that would come from that area-based process of the partners coming together would be for opportunities like that to be identified, whether it

be for new developments to have the right sort of green infrastructure around them, or whether enhancements could be added to existing infrastructure that would provide various benefits and opportunities. The best outcome of the new process would be that sort of creative discussion around land use in urban and rural areas. There is a big question about how that process—and the issues, priorities and potential actions that it can identify—will link with and influence the planning process. As far as I know, there is a very scant connection between planning proposals and environment proposals; they are separate, but the hope is that they will work together. There is not the clarity on how that will happen within the environment Bill, so far.

[72] **Mr Byrne:** I would add that I am aware of the example that you are referring to. It is part of Welsh Water's RainScape. We are working with Welsh Water to help develop RainScape and take it to other areas. RainScape is effectively a sustainable urban drainage principle. When the committee came to the Pumlumon project, we also went to the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust's Severn Farm Pond. That is sustainable urban drainage that is, as you are aware, in the middle of an industrial estate that also takes water from the Welshpool bypass. It is used as a nature reserve. It is used to soak up water to reduce flooding. It is used as an education resource for local schoolchildren. The trust also works with people with mental and physical disabilities to upskill them for jobs. It has a great programme. It is a brilliant scheme that has multiple benefits. We would like to see sustainable urban drainage systems in urban and rural areas taken up with gusto because of the multiple benefits that they give. There was a paper by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Natural England on adding SUDS and the wider green infrastructure, which showed that green infrastructure is a catalyst for economic development. Not only does it save money by, for example, reducing the effects of flooding, but it also attracts growth. An example in the paper notes that the Glasgow green infrastructure plan cost £15 million, but attracted £30 million of investment. Again, it has multiple benefits in health and wellbeing as well. Green infrastructure, SUDS and building up on that is a great land-management tool. I had something else, but I have completely forgotten.

10:30

[73] **Joyce Watson:** You are right, because the Stebonheath RainScape project teaches the children mathematical calculations. It is all wired up and geared up so that that happens anyway. It is teaching the children in the place that they learn. Food production is also done by the children, and all of that, instead of the water cascading and causing problems elsewhere. So, you are obviously aware of it. I wanted to focus particularly on land use, which, although it is principally about farming, is also about planning, developing and getting ourselves into those other areas of discussion, which I think are equally important.

[74] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** We will go to William Powell, Julie Morgan and then Russell George. Then we have time for a further round. Did you have something in response, James?

[75] **Mr Byrne:** Just one bit. I am currently working with the Welsh European Funding Office to integrate green infrastructure into any potential capital or regeneration projects that come forward, because of the economic catalyst it brings. That has been shown in many papers, but principally the one I was referring to, namely the DEFRA and Natural England paper.

[76] **William Powell:** Picking up that last point, James, earlier this week I had the opportunity to visit the European Investment Bank, and I know that it is working currently with the Welsh Government on a number of projects. One thing that it said during its presentation was that it works extensively with water companies across the UK. You said that you were already in discussion with WEFO; if something of sufficient scale could be worked up, potentially there would be another avenue there that could roll out exactly the kind of

good practice that Joyce has seen and that I have also had the opportunity to see in Llanelli. I think that it is really exciting.

[77] The main point that I wanted to kick off with arises out of questions that were asked earlier by Antoinette Sandbach with regard to the robustness of the data. A number of years ago, on our own farm, I was involved in something called the volunteer and farm alliance, which sounds more like an eastern European political party than an environmental project. *[Laughter.]* That was being promoted by the RSPB. Does that project still exist? It was extremely useful in harnessing the enthusiasm of farmers and other members of the community in identifying species and patterns. I have not heard a great deal about it in the last few years, but it was really useful. I wonder whether you could update the committee on that initiative.

[78] **Mr Williams:** Yes, certainly. You are right. It was a very popular and successful RSPB initiative. It was a LIFE-funded project, so, unfortunately, it was time bound. We could only run the project for so many years, but it was well received by the farming community and it provided a very good means of engaging with the farming community. The V&FA project was a volunteer project and it has now evolved into RSPB's new initiative for engaging with farmers, but on a landscape scale, that is, the farm advisory focus areas, in which volunteers are involved and engaged. They provide an awful lot of the resource that enables us to undertake monitoring within those focus areas. Currently we have two in Wales; we have one based on the Migneint and the Arenig and a second focus area on the Llŷn peninsula. They have been chosen because they are areas that are important for rare and vulnerable or special wildlife within Wales. The aim is to engage with the farming community. It is about testing the concept as much as anything else. There are 20 of these across the UK. So, it is about engaging with the farming community and finding out what is required to facilitate and enable farmers to undertake the type of management that will benefit wildlife. It is helping farmers directly with advice and guidance, it is providing advice and guidance to Natural Resources Wales, or perhaps the National Trust, or some of the key landowners around there, helping to influence or helping to work around some of the barriers to delivery, disseminating information and engaging the community to try to get the community involved, as well. The volunteers, some of whom would have been V&FA volunteers, are important in monitoring the progress of that initiative. We are very conscious of the fact that we had lots of volunteers out there in Wales who were involved, and also lots of farmers who benefitted from this kind of service and this initiative, as well. We are looking at how we can possibly try to replace the advice to farmers, certainly. So, we are looking at developing remote toolkits and means of ensuring that farmers, landowners, and those who are keen to do more, or to continue to retain wildlife on their farms, are able to access the right type of information.

[79] **William Powell:** To what extent do you think that there is scope for that kind of initiative, in the next RDP period, to be built into the work of Farming Connect, which is generally very well received? I wonder whether there is an opportunity to extend it into that to broaden the benefit.

[80] **Mr Williams:** I hope so. It might be the initial means and a remote means of farmers actually accessing advice, and then there could be a signposting towards where they would go and what resource is most appropriate to them to benefit the biodiversity or the other environmental areas of value on their farms. I would hope that there is scope for embedding that and also to embed an element of more specialist advice within the RDP and Farming Connect, possibly, to ensure that, for those areas that require greater understanding and knowledge of the issue, farmers can access that as well. Our experience of working with the farming community is that there are thousands of farmers out there who have participated in RDP schemes in the past. So, the appetite is there to participate, and often the reasons for a shortfall, or a failure to deliver what was required, are not to do with the farming community,

but are either deficiencies in design, delivery or the lack of follow-up advice and guidance, which we believe is critical to success in a lot of these cases.

[81] **William Powell:** I would also ask you to consider the importance of that in relation to supporting farm diversification as well, because we are aware of the extreme challenges that farming faces, particularly in some of the less favoured parts of Wales, and whether that could actually deliver greater economic benefits to keep people on the land.

[82] **Mr Williams:** I think that embedding a greater understanding of the environment and biodiversity within the Farm Advisory Service and Farming Connect would ensure greater join up. You are right, and I think that it was also something that was highlighted in the CLA response, that, for future farmers, there will be much more dependence on multiple funding streams. We are already seeing that. We are already seeing the days of the farmer being a farmer and no other business involvement in the farm—

[83] **William Powell:** Interdependency.

[84] **Mr Williams:** Yes, so I think that having that level of advice, that join up as well, and having quality advice and ongoing advice, is critical.

[85] **Mr Byrne:** I would add to that that, in terms of upland areas, et cetera, there is great potential for payment for ecosystem services projects. I know that that is something that the Welsh Government is looking into and it has a report coming at the end of March or in April. So, there is a place for multiple benefits for farmers to help diversify PES being paid for the storage of water, storage of carbon, et cetera.

[86] Going back to another of your points about the RDP, one issue that we would like to see employed with the RDP is a small grants scheme. I know that that is something that Antoinette has championed as well. The Gwent Wildlife Trust ran a very successful programme on a relative shoestring, called a natural assets programme. That had £70,000 of funding. That was for land that could not get into the likes of Glastir; it might not have been the large-scale farmers, it might have been the small-scale farmer, or just people with a few acres here and there. They were given grants of up to £2,000 to manage their land or to buy equipment, which was shared locally. The advice was given by Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Monmouthshire Meadows Group. That was a real benefit in terms of the landscape of Monmouthshire. There are now fields that are full of rare and beautiful orchids that were perhaps being scrubbed over before. So, a small grant scheme, as Antoinette has proposed, running alongside Glastir with the rural development plan, could make significant benefits to sustainable land management, and have multiple benefits in terms of bringing in tourists and showing them a beautiful countryside, as in Monmouthshire. I think that that could be a very valuable programme.

[87] **William Powell:** That is a good point. Thank you very much.

[88] **Julie Morgan:** Going back to the beginning, I think, Annie, that you started off by saying that there is a lot of protection already, but that the delivery is not so good. In your evidence, you say that the Welsh Government must do more, for example, to protect existing protected sites. Could you expand on that and give us some examples of what you see happening, and of where the Welsh Government should be doing more?

[89] **Ms Smith:** A couple of figures that we included in our evidence reflected that 61% of special areas of conservation designated under the EU habitats directive were in unfavourable condition at the last assessment. The picture for sites of special scientific interest, which is the domestic designation—which also underpin those European sites, although some sites are just designated under the domestic legislation—is similar. We fundamentally see protected sites

as a key opportunity and means of keeping the landscape wildlife-fit. They are the most special places. So, while the broader aspiration of all of this must be about making the broader landscape more favourable to wildlife, actually, those areas of highest quality habitat are crucial in terms of supporting vibrant populations, and enabling populations to shift and adapt as conditions change, perhaps as a result of climate change, et cetera. So, they fundamentally underpin a broader sustainable approach, we would say. There was a review a few years ago that focused on England's protected sites. The Lawton review, with which I am sure that the committee is familiar, basically concluded that sites needed to be bigger, better and joined. So, I think that 'the bigger and better' reflects—. Sites come in for a lot of criticism, because they can be seen as just islands, and, almost by their existence, I think that some people assume that they lead to wider neglect. I do not think that that is the case; I think that they are the places where we have managed to hang onto some semblance of good management, while broader economic policies have driven a move away from that on a broader scale. So, really, that is an outcome: focusing on what is best, how we can build on it, and how we can promote those advantages. Another thing included in our evidence was a study that DEFRA commissioned a few years ago, which reflected, or sought to reflect, the value of ecosystem services derived from SSSIs. The conclusion of the study, which we felt was rather conservative in the way that it estimated the value, was that it was eight times greater than the cost of protecting them and delivering the management that they need. So, those benefits get greater if those sites are managed into a favourable condition.

10:45

[90] **Julie Morgan:** Has there been deterioration in the care of these sites?

[91] **Ms Smith:** I think that resources go into securing the right management—monitoring and enforcing it and dealing with the challenges of maintaining sites when, perhaps, immediately adjacent areas are not favourably managed, which means they become more and more fragmented. All of those things lead to deterioration, and that is part of the wildlife crisis that we are facing.

[92] **Julie Morgan:** I have great concern about protected sites in my own constituency.

[93] **Mr Williams:** To follow that up, it is a bit like stating the obvious, but there is a danger that people consider farming or farm-related activity to be one of the reasons why sites deteriorate, but there are lots of sites now that are deteriorating as there is not enough farming activity as well. There are lots of designated sites and protected sites in Wales within areas that are incredibly important for the environment where there is a real risk now that the management required to maintain them in good quality—the extensive farming systems—are struggling to survive, so the challenge that Wales faces along with lots of other countries in the UK is how to maintain farming systems, such as high nature value farming systems, which are really important for maintaining these really important parts of Wales, many of which are designated for their environmental and wildlife value.

[94] **Russell George:** As a committee, we depend very much on your evidence and your responses to consultations. Following on, perhaps, from what Antoinette was saying earlier, you have great resources available to you as environmental charities. However, with regard to the three Bills that we have coming forward—the environment Bill, the planning Bill and the future generations Bill—one thing that I suspect we all share around this table is that we are concerned that there is so much legislation coming forward in such a short space of time, and we have to scrutinise it. That is an issue for us as Members and for committee clerks. However, what about you as organisations that we rely on for views and responses to consultations? What impact will it have on you having three pieces of legislation coming forward in such a short space of time?

[95] **Ms Smith:** That is a good question. We certainly feel the pressure in terms of the volume of consultation. Alongside, for example, the consultation on the environment White Paper, the planning Bill consultation opened in the same period. There is a consultation on Natural Resources Wales's corporate strategy, which is going to be fairly critical to the overall approach to the environment in the next few years as well. So, there is a lot to do. We greatly value having the opportunity to discuss these issues with the committee and your willingness to hear our evidence. As organisations, we are going to depend a lot on working together and drawing on one another's expertise through that period—not just our two organisations but throughout our networks. Making sure that all three of those pieces of legislation can work together to deliver the right outcomes is an immense challenge for this committee, particularly, but for the whole Assembly.

[96] **Mr Byrne:** I would like to thank you for saying that we here on the panel are a great resource. However, we do not have great resources—

[97] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Some of us are members as well; we are getting our money's worth. [*Laughter.*]

[98] **Mr Byrne:** You are, yes, and each of us provides multiple benefits, such as ecosystem services. There is potential for consultation overload. There are a lot of consultations, and it is usually the same individuals who look at them all. There are consultations on the new legislation, the CAP responses that came out recently, the water company consultations, the Natural Resources Wales one and the one on the river basin management plans. There are a lot of consultations. It is difficult, because it is primarily the same people who are looking at them and we have to prioritise. However, the Wales Environment Link network is a very good resource that helps us to exchange information and bring organisations together, and if we do not have the capacity to deal with something, hopefully, another member of the WEL network will be able to pick it up. While individual organisations like RSPB and Wildlife Trusts do not have great resources, I think that we have to rely on each other to help out on consultations.

[99] **Ms Smith:** One additional point is the complexity of some of the stuff coming forward. The environment White Paper, for example, is long and is wanting in terms of clarity on exactly what is proposed, how it is going to be delivered and so on. I think that to go straight from that into a Bill that is put before the Assembly is quite a big leap. I know that when colleagues were talking to you recently, they mentioned that it would be helpful to have a further stage to consider the proposals more specifically, through a draft Bill or whatever.

[100] **Russell George:** Yes, I agree. In one sense, you are saying that there is too much consultation. That is what you are suggesting. What can the Welsh Government do?

[101] **Ms Smith:** I think that we would complain if there was not enough consultation.

[102] **Russell George:** Yes, I know; that is right. However, what can the Welsh Government do differently to mitigate this, given the level of resource that you have to respond to consultations? How can it do things differently?

[103] **Mr Byrne:** It could give us a little bit more money, so that we could appoint more policy officer and people on the ground; that would be nice.

[104] **Ms Smith:** Something that has not been quite ideal is that there is, obviously, a very ambitious legislative programme for this Assembly and because various things have happened with the Government—there have been various reshuffles—the future generations Bill, which we were anticipating would come much earlier and set a context that would help with the understanding of the other Bills, has been quite substantially delayed. I think that that makes

it a bit more difficult for us all in understanding exactly the direction.

[105] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** You will forgive me, but, as someone who campaigned for many years to get Welsh legislation into existence, I am not going to complain about having too much of it, but I do want to ask—have you finished, Russell?

[106] **Russell George:** May I ask a question about planning? Joyce Watson asked you some questions on planning with regard to sustainable land management. I very much want to see less guidance in the planning Bill. Is that a view that you would share?

[107] **Mr Byrne:** It all depends on whether less guidance is better guidance. You can make something simpler but stronger.

[108] **Julie James:** It can also mean less—[*Inaudible.*]

[109] **Mr Byrne:** Yes. I think that, in response to the sustainable development Bill, a while ago, we put in our evidence that, for example, you can make the legislation around SSIs and the planning system simpler by saying, ‘These are very important areas and you should not build on them’. You could do something that fundamental. You could take out a lot of pages of planning guidance with that one statement. So, you can make it simpler but stronger at the same time.

[110] **Russell George:** I could expand on this, but I do not think that—

[111] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Representations have been made strongly to me by colleagues that we should have an occasional break in our proceedings, so I am going to jump in here and thank you all for your contributions and say that we will adjourn for some 10 minutes.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:54 ac 11:13.
The meeting adjourned between 10:54 and 11:13.*

**Rheoli Tir yn Gynaliadwy: Parciau Cenedlaethol Cymru a Chymdeithas
Genedlaethol yr Ardaloedd o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol
Sustainable Land Management: National Parks Wales and the National
Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

[112] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Since you are sitting in the middle, Julian, I shall assume that you are my main target, as it were. [*Laughter.*] I am offering the opportunity, if you would like, representing National Parks Wales and the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to make an opening statement.

[113] A hoffech chi ddweud rhywbeth i gychwyn y drafodaeth, cyn inni droi at gwestiynau? Do you wish to make any opening remarks, before we turn to questions?

Mr Jones: Diolch yn gyntaf am y cyfle i roi tystiolaeth i chi. Mae cwpwl o bethau y byddwn yn dymuno eu pwysleisio heddiw. Gwelwch o’n tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig ein bod yn awyddus iawn fod trafodaeth gall a synhwyrol ar greu consensws rhwng y gwahanol grwpiau o fewn cefn gwlad. Rydym bron â bod mewn rhyw sefyllfa Fenws a Mawrth ar hyn o bryd. Mae’r **Mr Jones:** Thank you first of all for the opportunity to give evidence. There are a couple of things that I wish to emphasise today. You will see from our written evidence that we are very keen to have a sensible and wise discussion on creating consensus between the various groups involved in the countryside. We are almost in a Venus and Mars situation at the moment.

diwydiant amaethyddol yn gweld uchelgais amgylcheddwyr yn anymarferol ac yn anghynaliadwy yn economaidd, ac, ar y llaw arall, mae'r garfan amgylcheddol yn gweld amaethyddiaeth gyfoes yn amgylcheddol anghynaliadwy. Yn yr ystyr hynny, ni allwn symud ymlaen yn gadarnhaol mewn ffordd integredig i greu polisiau a strategaethau ac i weithredu mewn ffordd fydd yn cynnwys y gymdeithas gyfan yng Nghymru. O ran safbwynt y parciau cenedlaethol, ac awdurdodau'r parciau cenedlaethol yn benodol, rydym yn teimlo bod gennym *track record* da o weithredu ar lawr gwlad ym mhob un o'r parciau a hefyd yn y tirweddau dynodedig, yr AONBs. Un o'n cryfderau pennaf yw'n cyfrifoldebau statudol, creiddiol, sef gwarchodaeth, sicrhau cyfleoedd i hamddena a sicrhau buddiannau pobl leol. Mae hynny yn mynd at wraidd defnydd tir cynaliadwy.

The agricultural sector sees the the ambition of environmentalists as impractical and economically unsustainable, while, on the other hand, the environmental lobby views contemporary agriculture as environmentally unsustainable. In that sense, we cannot move forward positively in an integrated way to create policies and strategies and to operate in a way that includes the whole of Welsh society. With regard to the national parks, and the national park authorities specifically, we feel that we have a good track record of operating at the coal face in every one of the parks and also in the designated landscapes, the AONBs. One of the main strengths is the core statutory responsibilities, namely conservation, ensuring that there are leisure opportunities and securing the interests of local people. That goes to the crux of sustainable land use.

11:15

[114] Yr elfen ddiwethaf y byddwn yn dymuno ei phwysleisio yw bod tirweddau dynodedig ac awdurdodau'r parciau mewn sefyllfa i allu helpu eraill, gan gynnwys Llywodraeth Cymru, i weithredu eu polisiau a'u strategaethau.

The final element that I would like to emphasise is that the designated landscapes and the park authorities are in a position to be able to assist others, including the Welsh Government, to operate their policies and strategies.

[115] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr. Julian, would you like to follow on from that?

[116] **Mr Atkins:** The only thing that I would add to that is that the fundamental issue from where I sit in terms of improving sustainable land management is partnerships and how we build common consensus about what is important in delivering improved land management in Wales. A lot of our submission talks about particular aspects of how we could improve that, but, fundamentally, it is about working with others and getting a common dialogue between us as managers of protected landscapes and conservation bodies and farmers and other land managers. That is a big question that we grapple with. We do it through national park management plan work, through the partnerships that we operate to deliver protected landscape improvements. We have evidence and models that can usefully apply beyond national park boundaries and protected landscape boundaries. However, that is the big challenge for all of us.

[117] **Mr Lindley:** I would very much echo my national park colleagues' sentiments. From the national association and the AONB point of view, we feel that adopting integrated land management and the ecosystem approach is more than just about managing the environment as an integrated system. It is about managing the societal and economic drivers as part of that overall system as well. AONB partnerships work together, in the same way as the national park partnerships do, with all of those stakeholders that are involved in societal and economic needs as well as the environmental needs.

[118] **Russell George:** Good morning. Thank you for your evidence. I would like to invite you to expand on your comments that Wales should follow the Scottish example of

developing a high-nature-value farming indicator.

[119] **Mr Jones:** High-nature-value farming is a Europe-wide concept that has much to commend it. However, I feel that solutions need to be regionally and nationally based, and responsive to the needs of individual countries. There are parallels between the Scottish situation and parts of rural Wales, possibly, but, again, there are marked contrasts. Elements of high-nature-value farming are already finding their way into national park management plans, for example. However, I feel that, to take a model from another country and superimpose it in another situation and context could be problematic.

[120] **Russell George:** Could you expand on that?

[121] **Mr Jones:** In what way?

[122] **Russell George:** In relation to the fact that it is problematic. Would you expand on what would be problematic about what the differences would be between a Scottish and a Welsh situation?

[123] **Mr Jones:** I work for a predominantly lowland coastal national park, much of which is intensively managed. There are challenges in terms of ecological connectivity, for example between habitats to increase resilience, but, again, the situation in Pembrokeshire is very different to that of the Scottish highlands. In practical terms, the principles of high-nature-value farming, ecological connectivity and inclusive resilience are all part and parcel of the challenge that may need to be faced in a different tenure.

[124] **Russell George:** Okay, thank you.

[125] **Mr Atkins:** For the Brecon Beacons, the challenge is slightly different in that, particularly in relation to the uplands and the moorland of our national park, the challenge is keeping land management activity going in the face of economic pressures and demographic factors in the farming industry. The absence of farmers managing the uplands—if they are not there to work with us as partners in the current economic climate, given the pressures that they face—is a real challenge for us in trying to improve the condition and quality of some of those areas that have suffered erosion through visitor pressure and have suffered as a result of the impact of climate change and industrial pollution.

[126] **Mr Jones:** I very much echo Julian's comments and would draw your attention to the current situation with common land in Wales. Common land is an invaluable resource in environmental terms and has traditionally been very important economically to the farming community, but it is under real threat. There are far fewer graziers, the age of graziers is increasing and there is a less subtle and meticulous farming management regime for common land throughout the country and a real threat of abandonment. In a sense, the common land situation encapsulates some of the threats to the wider countryside, particularly in the uplands.

[127] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Sut fyddet yn taclo hynny ar y llawr—ai mater o gyllid, efallai, ydyw i gefnogi deiliaid y tir comin? Beth fyddai'r peth hawsaf i'w wneud i ddelio â'r sefyllfa? Rwy'n cydnabod y darlun, yn amlwg, boed ar y Migneint, yr Arenig neu'r ardaloedd eraill hynny yn y gogledd.

Lord Elis-Thomas: How would you tackle that on the ground—is it a matter of funding, perhaps, to support the owners of the common land? What would be the easiest thing to do to deal with that situation? I recognise the picture, obviously, whether it is on the Migneint, the Arenig or those other areas in north Wales.

[128] **Mr Jones:** Mae tipyn o feirniadaeth wedi bod o Glastir, ond un o lwyddiannau

Mr Jones: There has been quite a lot of criticism of Glastir, but one of the successes

Glastir yw'r elfen sy'n ymwneud â thir comin. Un peth allweddol sydd wedi digwydd yw bod tîm penodol o swyddogion profiadol wedi mynd i siarad â'r porwyr ledled Cymru ac wedi cael llwyddiant mawr. Mae'r gyfradd o ran y rheiny sydd wedi ymuno â Glastir dipyn yn uwch o ran yr elfen tir comin o gymharu ag elfennau eraill yng nghynllun Glastir. Mae gennym ni, fel parciau cenedlaethol, rôl i gefnogi a chynorthwyo Llywodraeth Cymru o ran Glastir, drwy gynnig help ymarferol. Er enghraifft, yn sir Benfro, o heddiw ymlaen, rydym yn ariannu contractwr i dorri llwybrau tân er mwyn diogelu tir comin rhag tanau sydd allan o reolaeth. Mae hyn yn rhywbeth syml ac ymarferol sydd yn galluogi tir comin, a fyddai efallai o dan fygythiad, i barhau i gael ei reoli'n gynaliadwy.

[129] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** A fyddet yn dweud bod y gallu hwn i gynorthwyo'n ymarferol dros dir eang efallai yn un o'r pethau arbennig sydd gan barciau cenedlaethol i'w cynnig yn y dyfodol?

[130] **Mr Jones:** Yn sicr. Fel y dywedais, rwy'n teimlo fod gennym ni *track record* llwyddiannus o ran helpu perchnogion tir yn ymarferol o ran darparu gwybodaeth, o ran yr elfen ariannol mewn rhai amgylchiadau, ac, yn allweddol, o ran dal dwylo a chynnig cymorth a chefnogaeth. Rwy'n credu mai un o'r problemau mawr gyda chynlluniau amaeth-amgylchedd yn ddiweddar yw'r ffaith ein bod yn symud at sefyllfa lle caiff cynllun ei weithredu ar sail y perchennog unigol yn derbyn cyfrifoldeb am gontract a thicio'r bocsys. Mae'n fygythiol ac mae'n creu sefyllfa o ansicrwydd i'r perchennog. Fel parciau, megis cyrff eraill, mae gennym rôl i fod yn gefn ac yn gynorthwy i berchnogion tir er mwyn sicrhau bod y cynllun yn cael ei weithredu yn y modd gorau posibl.

[131] **Julie James:** We have just heard evidence from some of the environmental groups about some of their difficulties with some of the proposed legislation that we have—we were particularly discussing the environment Bill. They have some problems with the definitions that are proposed in the White Papers, for example the definitions of 'managing natural resources', 'natural resources' and 'sustainable land management'. I think I understood them to have said that one of the difficulties was that they felt that there was not enough emphasis on enhancement for what we already have—that is, the replacement of lost biodiversity. I wondered whether you wanted to comment on that from the point of view of the national parks.

of Glastir is the common land element. One crucial thing that has happened is that a designated team of experienced officers has gone to speak to the graziers throughout Wales and has really succeeded. The rate in terms of those who have joined Glastir in terms of the common land element is quite a bit higher compared with other elements of the Glastir scheme. We, as national parks, have a role to support and assist the Welsh Government in terms of Glastir, by offering practical help. For example, in Pembrokeshire we are, from today, funding a contractor to create fire paths in order to protect common land from out-of-control fires. This is a simple and practical thing that will enable common land, which might be under threat, to continue to be managed sustainably.

Lord Elis-Thomas: Would you say that this ability to assist on a practical level over an expanse of land is possibly one of the special things that national parks can offer in the future?

Mr Jones: Most definitely. As I said, I feel that we have a successful track record in assisting landowners in a practical way in terms of providing information, in terms of the financial element in some circumstances, and, critically, in terms of hand-holding and offering help and support. I think that one of the big problems with agri-environment schemes recently is the fact that we are moving to a position where the scheme is implemented on the basis of the individual landowner accepting responsibility for a contract and for ticking the boxes. It is threatening, and it creates a situation of uncertainty for the landowner. As parks, we have a role, as do other organisations, in supporting and assisting landowners to ensure that the scheme is implemented to its optimal potential.

[132] **Mr Atkins:** Any definition in terms of natural resources needs to be balanced in order to be sustainable. I think that we would want to see ecosystems services included in that definition, and the conservation of the Welsh natural environment. As long as it is a balanced definition, we would be comfortable with it. It is something that would sit very much with our special purposes and statutory duties as national parks. They perhaps had a concern in relation to a social or economic emphasis to the definition, and the use of resources. In terms of conserving ecosystems, part of the problem is not so much about enhancing; it is conserving what we have got, and trying to restore some of the damage that has been done. In parts of our national parks—certainly the uplands, where we have erosion from previous fire damage—the challenge is trying to prevent it getting any worse in the first instance, before we start to focus a lot of effort on enhancement.

[133] **Julie James:** I do not want to try to argue somebody else's point of view, but I formed the view that they were saying that they wanted something a little more ambitious than just preserving what we have got. They actually want the Government to actively seek to put back what has been lost rather than just to stop it from getting any worse.

[134] **Mr Jones:** I think the remaining semi-natural resource is the key reservoir that provides the backbone of any future management. The question that has to be asked in terms of opportunities on intensively managed agricultural land, particularly, is where you want to get to, and at what cost, and to what effect, really. There certainly are opportunities for increasing the resilience of the remaining semi-natural resource through developing additional habitats, where opportunities present themselves on the improved agricultural land. However, those opportunities have to be weighed and measured very carefully, because there could be a real danger of throwing money at something ultimately to no significant effect. The process by which you expand the remaining semi-natural resource has to be assessed and managed very carefully, I would submit.

[135] **Mr Lindley:** I just want to add to that. The national association very much welcomes the inclusion in the definition of the word 'landscape'. Speaking of protected landscapes, the explanation in the White Paper about what landscapes are, and the fact that it is not just the scenic and biodiversity elements, but also the history behind those landscapes and the historical land use of those landscapes that forms part of that definition and that was very much welcomed.

11:30

[136] **Mr Atkins:** Just as a supplementary point on that, I think that there are things that we could look at beyond any changes or consideration in relation to the definition, particularly around the existing duties under the Environment Act 1995 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 in terms of having regard to biodiversity. We have submitted in our evidence that that could be strengthened so that those bodies to which that duty applies would have a stronger obligation towards biodiversity; I think that would certainly help. It is those nitty-gritty things, underneath a broad definition, where you are likely to have more impact in terms of delivery and changes of approach.

[137] **Julie James:** I saw that in your evidence—a point well made. The committee has also had some private sessions with a number of professors on climate change and their proposals for various radical rethinks in Wales. One of them was Professor Gareth Wyn Jones at Bangor, who is very outspoken on some subjects, including the historic land use that Wales has and what is meant by the word 'historic', i.e. how far back do you go for it to be historic. He has written several public papers, as well as some private stuff for the committee, about the need to reforest some of the commons when grazing is no longer economically viable and so on. I wonder whether you have given any thought to some of those more radical carbon-

sink-type solutions.

[138] **Mr Jones:** For us in Pembrokeshire, yes, we see opportunities for reforestation, but the greater sequestration opportunity we would see is through the management and creation of permanent species-rich grassland. As a sequestrator, as we understand it, it can impact far more quickly than afforestation, but I think the two go hand in hand. Again, it requires that local consensus, if you like, based on nationally agreed principles and looking for opportunities for the most appropriate land management. So, yes to afforestation, but, in terms of our commons, reforestation of our commons would be very problematic, not least because, potentially, reforestation of commons could have a detrimental effect on European species and European designations such as special areas of conservation, sites of special scientific interest and what have you. So—

[139] **Julie James:** I accept that entirely. Professor Wyn Jones's paper talks about very specific places in Wales where that would be appropriate and, in terms of the socioeconomic decline of the 'commoners' and the graziers, whether something slightly more radical could be looked at as a solution for that rather than just attempting to replace the graziers with younger ones, basically.

[140] **Mr Jones:** There is the socioeconomic dimension to consider as well. Commons associations and uplands farming are the lifeblood of rural communities, with particular reference also to conserving the Welsh language and culture. So, I think, on that basis, to try to assist and safeguard existing land management groups, if you like, would be more in keeping with our statutory remit.

[141] **Mr Lindley:** Geraint raised a point there that was I was going to mention, but also, in relation to the commons, I think there is a question around what happens if the graziers go; the responsibility of the management then falls to the landowner. I know that that is an issue for big landowners such as the National Trust, where, on a lot of the commons in Pembrokeshire, there are no active commoners and there is a large cost associated with the management of those commons that now falls on the National Trust, whereas, in having active commoners exercising their rights, there is the potential there for an economic return and for maintaining the biodiversity interest or the historic landscape interest of those commons.

[142] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** How would you deal with that situation, though, because clearly that is an economic imperative in terms of the change in the business that is viable on the land? How would you tackle that? You are looking for an intervention for environmental or sustainability reasons, without an economic driver to it, are you not?

[143] **Mr Lindley:** That is what we need to look for, I think: what economic drivers can we find.

[144] **Mr Jones:** I think, Chair, it would be worth drawing attention to the National Trust's heathland beef initiative, based on the north-west Pembrokeshire commons, where any beef animal that has spent any time on a common, providing environmental benefits to that area, can be marketed under the Pembrokeshire heathland beef brand. That has had a degree of success locally, which is very encouraging. It shows the sort of entrepreneurial approach, running in tandem with support from organisations such as ourselves, that can provide that economic impetus to renewed management.

[145] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Diolch. **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Thank you. I am asking Rwy'n gofyn gormod o gwestiynau fy hun. too many questions myself. I have too much Mae gen i ormod o ddiddordeb yn y pethau interest in these matters. We will turn to Llyr hyn. Trown at Llyr Gruffydd. Gruffydd.

[146] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Elfen arall nad ydym wedi cyffwrdd arni gymaint ag y byddwn wedi rhagweld yw'r angen i gynhyrchu bwyd, fel rydych wedi sôn amdano, a'r angen cynyddol i gynhyrchu mwy o fwyd. Mae'r agenda *sustainable intensification* wedi cael ei ddatblygu o gwmpas hynny. Nid wyf yn gwybod os glywsoch chi dystiolaeth yr RSPB yn gynharach y bore yma, ond roedd yn *sceptical* iawn ynglŷn â'r cysyniad o *sustainable intensification* a'r potensial sydd yn hynny o beth. Byddwn i'n falch o glywed os oes gennych chi unrhyw farn neu unrhyw sylwadau ynglŷn â'r cysyniad hwnnw.

[147] **Mr Jones:** Mae ein ffocws ni, yn bennaf, wedi bod ar sicrhau bod y cynefinoedd naturiol sy'n weddill yn cael eu rheoli mewn ffordd sy'n eu diogelu at y dyfodol, ac edrych yn ogystal ar gyfleoedd i ymestyn a chryfhau'r cynefinoedd hynny. O safbwynt y sector llaeth yn sir Benfro, mae enghreifftiau o ffermydd mawrion iawn yn godro unrhyw beth hyd at 1,000 neu 2,000 o wartheg. O siarad gyda pherchennog un o'r ffermydd hynny, mae e'n gwbl argyhoeddedig bod y ffordd y mae e'n amaethu yn hollol effeithiol ac yn cynnig ffordd ymlaen. Nid wyf yn siŵr ein bod ni fel awdurdodau parciau cenedlaethol wedi dod i delerau â'r realiti hynny, sydd yn digwydd beth bynnag. Rwy'n credu bod her i ni i'r dyfodol i weld beth yw goblygiadau amaethu cynyddol ddwys o safbwynt ei effeithlonrwydd ac o safbwynt y goblygiadau amgylcheddol a chymdeithasol. Mae'n ddiddorol bod rhai o'r ffermydd hyn yn gweithredu fel rhyw fath o *hub* i nifer o ffermydd eraill sydd efallai wedi mynd mas o'r diwydiant llaeth ond sy'n derbyn y gwrtaith oddi wrth y ffermydd mawrion, yn magu stoc ar eu rhan, yn cadw da bach ar eu rhan ac yn rhoi porthiant iddynt. Mae'n creu rhyw fath o economi amaethyddol amgen a phatrwm newydd, mewn ffordd. Ar y tiroedd eraill hynny, efallai bod mwy o gyfleoedd amgylcheddol yn amlygu eu hunain. Fodd bynnag, nid wyf yn credu ein bod ni fel parciau wedi dod i delerau llawn gyda'r datblygiad cymharol ddiweddar hwnnw. Efallai ei fod yn rhywbeth y dylem fod yn edrych arno ar fyrder.

Llyr Gruffydd: Another element that we have not touched upon as much as I would have anticipated is the need to produce food, as you have mentioned, and the need to produce increasing amounts of food. The agenda of sustainable intensification has developed around that. I do not know whether you heard the RSPB's evidence earlier, but it was very sceptical about this idea of sustainable intensification and the potential in that agenda. I would like to hear whether you have any opinions or comments on that concept.

Mr Jones: Our focus, primarily, has been on ensuring that the remaining natural habitats are managed in a way that safeguards them for the future, and looking in addition at opportunities to extend and strengthen those habitats. From the point of view of the dairy sector in Pembrokeshire, there are examples of very large farms milking anything from between 1,000 and 2,000 head of cattle. In speaking to the owner of one of those farms, he is completely convinced that the way in which he farms is completely effective and offers a way forward. I am not certain that we as national park authorities have come to terms with the reality of things that are happening already. I think it is a challenge for us for the future to see what the implications of increasingly intensive farming will be from the point of view of its efficiency and the environmental and social implications. It is interesting that some of these farms are acting as a kind of a hub for a number of other farms that have perhaps come out of the dairy industry but get fertiliser from these huge farms, rear stock for them, and provide them with feed. It creates an alternative agricultural economy and a new pattern of farming, in a way. On that other land, perhaps there are more environmental opportunities becoming increasingly evident. However, I do not believe that we as parks have come to terms fully with this comparatively new development. It is perhaps something that we should be looking at urgently.

[148] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I was very interested in what you were saying, Chris, about sustainability including economic and social drivers when looking at these environmental aspects of sustainable land management. In terms of the legislation coming forward, in any of the draft Bills—although we have not really seen draft Bills—there is no indication of how you are going to balance economic, social and environmental factors when they are in conflict. Obviously, if you can get a win, that is fantastic. That is what everyone wants. However, the issue, it seems to me, with the environment White Paper and the questions around sustainable land management, and, indeed, the future generations Bill, is what should be the approach when one or the other of those factors is in conflict with the criteria. Do any of you have any examples of how that is being managed, either in AONBs or the national parks? How should we look at that for the future, particularly given the problems in the commons and elsewhere, where, if people feel that it is too difficult and the living that they are getting is too marginal, they will just say, ‘Sorry, we’re off to do something else’?

[149] **Mr Atkins:** Not so much an example around sustainable land management, although it touches on it, is our whole obligation in relation to visitor management. We have been working in the Brecon Beacons on a visitor management plan to try to identify those parts of the park where you could promote wider recreation, and those parts of the park where it is more sensitive. We are developing a model there, based on landscape character areas, to have very simple, high-level guidance on what is appropriate and what is not in a location. That is as a basis for having a discussion with other stakeholders and land managers about whether the balance and how we manage visitors is appropriate or not. I think something along those lines could be applied in terms of sustainable land management.

[150] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I know that the others probably want to come in, but I want to ask: if you are anticipating, therefore, that there will be greater visitor numbers to a particular area of the park, or you are trying to encourage visitors to go to a particular area in order to avoid impacting on other areas, are you directing resources to the area that will have the higher numbers? In that context, what are your views about possible open access, where anyone can potentially go anywhere?

[151] **Mr Atkins:** It would require us putting resources into managing the infrastructure associated with that additional pressure. Interestingly, we had an access seminar in our national park with farmers yesterday. There is a divergence of opinion around the access review. The Green Paper has not been published yet, but it is partly about trying to have a dialogue about what is and what is not appropriate. It goes back to my point at the outset about consensus building. We are not necessarily dealing with land that is in our direct control. We are working with partners, and communities have an interest in it, particularly in terms of maintaining local resilience and community vitality. So, we need a framework around which we can have that discussion to arrive at what is appropriate in terms of sustainable land management.

[152] **Mr Jones:** The only thing I would add, in terms of reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable, is that the national parks’ statutory remit has been refined through the Sandford principle. For example, the first and second purposes have clarity. There is a prioritisation principle there that perhaps shows the way more widely into the future.

[153] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I appreciate that, but I also know that there are big issues around planning in national parks. The planning Bill may look at that and, potentially—we do not know—it may take away some of the discretion for national parks. Perhaps the AONBs have more experience, because they are not a national park but have that flexibility within their areas without the statutory constraints that there are in the national parks.

[154] **Mr Lindley:** What I would say is that the general point with regard to a lot of these comments is around how important the area, and the spatial consideration of integrated land

management, planning and all the rest of it, is. I think that is very much going to be important in how you reconcile those issues. The environment might be of a precedential nature in some more sensitive areas and in others less so. It is very much going to be about getting those areas right.

[155] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, really, what you are talking about is spatial planning, understanding the complexities and the impacts on local communities?

[156] **Mr Atkins:** Landscape-scale planning, certainly, and that is really what the national park management plans and the AONB management plans are seeking to deliver. Supported by the state of the park reports, or the state of the AONB reports, there is a model there, which is not a million miles away from what is being talked about in terms of sustainable land management and the environment Bill, and I think that there are useful lessons to be learnt from that.

11:45

[157] On the subject of planning, I would point to the ARUP report on ‘Valuing Wales’ National Parks’ and the Land Use Consultants report on the role of planning within national parks. From where I sit, having the ability to oversee development control alongside our land management functions and our other obligations in terms of delivering our purposes and duty, provides an integrated approach, which is beneficial.

[158] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Speaking of an integrated approach, Natural Resources Wales would be interested to know how much land it has within the national parks and the AONBs. Are you seeing, or are you aware of, any experimental powers or approaches that are needed for you to work with NRW on the management of Welsh Government property within the national parks or the AONBs? Do you think that your existing powers are sufficient to allow that? It is really about that consensus building that you are talking about.

[159] **Mr Jones:** We have certainly worked very successfully over the years with the predecessor organisations to NRW and, on the ground, we continue to do so. NRW is now responsible for managing all of our SSIs and SAC national nature reserves, and we have a meaningful and positive input into that process. I am sure that I speak for all the other designated areas, as well.

[160] **Mr Lindley:** I would be keen to point out that NRW staff are very important representatives on our AONB partnerships. I do not just mean in terms of the financial assistance that they give through grant aid, but also in terms of the advice and the direction that they give around AONB management and policy.

[161] **Julie Morgan:** I think that it is a question of information, really. At the moment, how would you determine which are the parts of the national parks to which you are discouraging people from going, and how do you go about that?

[162] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** He is not going to tell you, is he? *[Laughter.]* I speak as a resident outside Betws-y-Coed, so I am well aware that there are too many people in national parks.

[163] **Mr Atkins:** It is through the visitor management planning process that I referred to earlier and trying to identify, against landscape character areas—of which there are about 15 within our national park that we have identified—those broad principles that guide how we promote the area for tourism and how we work with communities in developing circular walks and other tourism opportunities, against the biodiversity and land management sensitivities. So, it is an emerging process, but it is giving us a tool to manage the park in a

more structured and evidenced way, where, hopefully, we will have consensus around what those limits of access are.

[164] **Julie Morgan:** So, it is something that you are working at now, rather than you having a sort of—

[165] **Mr Atkins:** Yes. We have a draft plan for the whole park, but the next step is to translate that down to a more local level, with which people can more meaningfully engage.

[166] **Julie Morgan:** Right. The previous witnesses told us that the Welsh Government ought to be doing a lot more to protect existing protected sites. Do you have any comment on that in the national parks?

[167] **Mr Jones:** Certainly, we identify the remaining semi-natural habitats, and the remaining semi-natural resource has been worthy of the greatest protection that we can afford it, because that, as I have said, is the reservoir that is almost a springboard into increasing resilience and connectivity and a whole range of measures that will make the countryside a better place. So, we are certainly identifying measures that will protect that which is remaining and, as far as Pembrokeshire is concerned, we think that it is about a third. Something like 49% of our land area is intensively managed grassland, 11% is arable land, and 5% is for roads and houses—the built environment—and the remaining third is that key from which we can conserve and increase our efforts for the future.

[168] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I will now call on William Powell and then Joyce Watson. We will then have a little swapsie within your team.

[169] **William Powell:** Diolch, Gadeirydd. Good morning, all. As you will be aware, there was considerable disappointment expressed in some quarters, particularly among the farming community, at the Minister's decision to transfer 15% of the resource available from pillar 1 to pillar 2 in the forthcoming CAP period. Given that that decision has now been made, and as it is a commitment that will not be reversed, could you expand a little on your evidence as to how the forthcoming period of the rural development plan can really assist and support the development of sustainable land management in the interests of all?

[170] **Mr Jones:** I would say that, from our perspective, the principles are the key thing. Localism and the principles of adaptive management will be absolutely key to ensuring that those resources find their way into the rural community in the most effective way. Inflexible, national, one-size-fits-all types of schemes will not deliver for the Welsh Government and certainly will not deliver for Wales's rural communities. However, as I say, those principles of local flexibility with adaptive management can and will need to make a real difference as funding goes from one to the other.

[171] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I now turn to Chris.

[172] **Mr Lindley:** I would add that some of the AONB partnerships are very much involved with the local action groups through the rural development plan process. I think that we would be looking to make even better use of the initiatives that come out from the local action groups in that regard.

[173] **Mr Atkins:** If I could add to that, Chair, I think that an element of that funding available for the RDP can be geared towards supporting ecosystem services management, sustainable land management, or landscape-scale type of approaches. That is something that we would be keen to see in terms of some of the challenges that we have in managing larger blocks of land in concert with grazers associations and other groups, in particular.

[174] **William Powell:** Julian, you mentioned earlier the absolutely central role of the national park management plan. In these times, when there is so much budgetary pressure and the reality of needing to lose some staff members, how are national park authorities best placed to actually engage—and Geraint spoke of localism and the importance of local action—with local communities, encouraging volunteering and so on, to actually build up a more resilient sort of human resource to enable some of this management to happen? I think that there is a danger that, otherwise, a management plan could be on the shelf and be less and less influential in terms of day-to-day activity.

[175] **Mr Atkins:** The point about skills and workforce capacity is a good one. We are working on a Heritage Lottery Fund bid to build rural skills and deliver trainee placements within our national park at the moment. I think that the way that the protected landscapes can work and assist the Welsh Government is through our contacts and our local networks on the ground, working with communities, grazers associations, and other stakeholders to engage around that common consensus locally. In the Brecon Beacons, we have more volunteers volunteering for us than we have staff. That is the direction that we definitely need to go in and build on more. We are close to the ground and we have those contacts where we can develop that engagement and dialogue around delivering improved land management. I do not know whether my colleagues would like to add anything to that.

[176] **Mr Jones:** I would endorse everything that Julian said. Partnership is the key. There is no way that the national park authority itself can deliver its national park management plan. It has to be done in partnership with others. Again, locally, I would cite the excellent work done by our local leader group, PLANED—the Pembrokeshire sustainable agriculture network. That forms the basis for the Pembrokeshire wildfire group, which we have just started. It also forms the basis for a whole range of participative community land management initiatives, where all parties sit down on a quarterly basis with a totally open agenda with the intention of forging these local partnerships, which will increasingly be required to deliver.

[177] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Joyce Watson is next.

[178] **Joyce Watson:** I am glad to hear that Pembrokeshire has partnerships going. However, I am more interested at the moment in a comment that you let hang in the air. I am aiming it at Pembrokeshire; I live in Pembrokeshire. You talked about intensive farming and the environmental opportunities that could be explored. Could you tell me what you thought they were?

[179] **Mr Jones:** As I discussed with Llyr, the reality is that the production end of the agriculture industry is becoming more and more intensive, particularly in the dairy sector—

[180] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, it is in Pembrokeshire.

[181] **Mr Jones:** Yes, and more widely in the lowlands generally. Potentially, there are environmental disbenefits from that sort of development, but, equally, we need to be thinking more widely about how the structure of that particular sector is changing and, rather than looking at individual farms, if you like, taking that landscape approach and looking at the wider opportunities of, perhaps, one farm being managed more intensively and others being part of the system but managed slightly less intensively and, potentially, offering more environmental opportunities. It is not something that, hitherto, we have actively explored.

[182] **Joyce Watson:** Okay, thank you. I want to ask the question of all of you now whether you think that there are areas that are not included in the Bill that you might have expected to have been included.

[183] **Mr Atkins:** There are not any things that were in the Bill that I was expecting to see

that I did not see. The detail and what shape it takes in the final Bill will be something that we will be interested to see. It sort of pre-judges the discussion that we are about to have.

[184] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, it does.

[185] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Yes, I think we should move on. Shall we make our substitution now, as they do in sport? Thank you, Geraint, we will tap you off. Paul is behind you, so tap him on.

[186] **Diolch yn fawr iawn i ti. Roedd** Thank you very much to you. That was very hynny'n ddiddorol iawn; y sgwrs i barhau, interesting; to be continued, I believe. rwy'n credu.

11:59

**Papur Gwyn Bil yr Amgylchedd: Parciau Cenedlaethol Cymru a Chymdeithas
Genedlaethol yr Ardaloedd o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol
Environment Bill White Paper: National Parks Wales and the National
Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

[187] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Thank you very much for joining us. We are now taking further a piece of work that we began before our Christmas break, looking at the environment Bill White Paper. In fact, the consultation ends today, so this is, in a sense, timely. Would you like to make a general statement about your response to what the Government is saying before we start? Would that be helpful? Thank you, Paul.

12:00

[188] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Thank you and good morning. Please forgive me if I start to cry in my right eye or sneeze; I am just nursing a bit of a cold, and I cannot hear particularly well this morning either, I am afraid. Generally, the national park authorities, at least—and I am sure that it is true for the AONB partnerships as well—welcome the general intent to have a strong focus on the environment through the environment Bill. We did feel that the Bill itself is high on concept and not necessarily detailed enough for us to be confident that it is a true White Paper that gives us a true sense of direction, because there are still a lot of questions to be answered in there and a lot of new concepts for us to grapple with, for example, natural resource management plans and the area-based approach. We feel that, when all is said and done, we are still going to be dealing with the management of habitats and species, and that we will still be dealing with that management at the same scale, namely at the farm-based scale and the landscape scale, potentially. It is still the same operations that you are going to be doing, whatever the overall concept.

[189] It is a very ambitious Bill, because we can only assume that, in order to meet it, you are going to require more people doing this work and a bigger skill base. We are very conscious, within the biodiversity conservation industry, that one of the biggest risks in the skill base is having people who have those basic fieldcraft skills of being able to go out and identify things. That has always been the fundamental building block of conservation in Britain and in Wales, and we have a very proud tradition of it. We need to be sure that, going forward, we find a way to recruit people with those skills. Whether we have a big enough workforce within the public and the NGO sector to meet the demand is a question that perhaps we also need to examine.

[190] **Mr Lindley:** On behalf of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, overall, we very much support the intention to frame economic, environmental and

social decision making within the wider context of achieving a more sustainable way of living. We are very pleased to see the clear link made between the environment Bill White Paper and other initiatives around the future generations and planning reform Bills. However, we will be seeking greater clarification on how these pieces of legislation will interact with each other. I have mentioned previously that we welcome the inclusion of landscape, in terms of natural resources, within the White Paper. We have some concerns around the possible proposal suggesting a duty to co-operate. From the AONB partnerships' point of view, all parties need to recognise the value of co-operation to benefit from it. So, to impose a duty to collaborate may detract from the overall focus of the collaboration.

[191] **Llyr Gruffydd:** You touched, Chris, on the need for more clarity on the relationship between the environment Bill and the planning Bill, in particular. I would be interested in hearing some of your initial views about the proposals—particularly the national parks as planning authorities—in the planning Bill for a national development framework, strategic or regional development plans and then local development plans, and how they interact with or overlay the proposed national natural resource plan and the local area-based plans.

[192] **Mr Atkins:** I think that it is an issue, because there is a danger of having high degrees of overlap between those plans, and the LDP process was an attempt to simplify the process. Having a natural resources plan on the whole needs to focus on some of the discussions that I think we were talking about in the last session, in terms of sustainable land management. It probably makes sense that that sits alongside a planning framework, but that there are linkages across to keep it reasonably light touch at a high level, because a lot of the devil in the detail will be at a local level. We see that with national park management plans, in terms of setting a broad strategic framework, but, as ever, it is down to what Paul was saying in his earlier comments—the detail is around delivering on the ground, and doing the kinds of conservation activities and biodiversity activities that we have traditionally done.

[193] **Llyr Gruffydd:** How important do you think it is that the national development framework and the natural resource plans should be developed in tandem? Is it chicken and egg, or should one come before the other?

[194] **Mr Atkins:** I think that they should be developed in tandem. It is whether it should be one before the other or the other before the one. That is something that we need to give further consideration to in consultation with NRW and planning colleagues. I do not know if Paul might wish to comment.

[195] **Mr Sinnadurai:** There is useful crossover in the environment Bill because the Bill refers to the management of natural resources. I would contest that we do not manage natural resources—we tend to exploit them, and biodiversity tends to suffer most of the time through that exploitation. That suffering, if you like, is usually as a consequence of development or intensification of one activity or another, usually agriculture or atmospheric pollution, or all of those things. So, if there is going to be a mutual relationship, then perhaps it could be—I am thinking off the cuff here—setting limits of acceptable change within the natural environment, and setting those up in such a way that you say, 'Okay, development has gone so far, and if we push it any further, we are going to start to lose our natural resource'. That begins to take you into the ecosystem approach then, because you are setting up the ecosystem approach in a way that development can understand: thus far and no further. Development always likes to have hard lines on maps, for example. Biology does not lend itself to hard lines on maps very often, but that might be a way forward.

[196] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I call Antoinette Sandbach.

[197] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I am going back to NRW, I am afraid. There is a proposal in the White Paper that NRW, in effect, will be given a blank cheque in terms of powers, so that

it will have experimental powers, and powers to enter into management agreements, and things like that, which are not powers available under the current legislation. I asked you earlier about NRW-managed land within the national parks and the AONBs, and I do not think that I got information about how much of your land area includes Welsh Government-owned land. Are you seeing any kind of difference in approach within your national park or your AONB in the way in which NRW is managing its land, and the way in which it is operating in relation to other landowners, bearing in mind that it is both a landowner and a consenting body, effectively?

[198] **Mr Atkins:** I am not seeing substantial signs of change. At the moment, particularly around the forestry estate in our national park, that estate is being managed in a way that is very similar to how it was before, and the regulatory elements within NRW are continuing in a similar vein. The one area that we have seen some change on is that there is more willingness to have a dialogue with us. We have had one or two meetings already around how we could work with our landholdings alongside NRW with its landholdings. To answer the earlier question, in the Brecon Beacons National Park, I think that the NRW estate is approximately 10% or 11% of the land area, predominantly forestry. We own about 13% or 14%, predominantly upland, and there are areas where those land blocks sit alongside each other. The discussions at the moment are around whether we can work together more effectively to manage that estate, or the way in which we manage that estate, more efficiently. Certainly, we are in discussions with it over depot spaces and things like that. That may lead to a greater dialogue and engagement around practical land management delivery. It has always struck me as being slightly odd in the conservation field that local authorities are out there with our wardens and our vehicles managing land, as are NRW, the Wildlife Trusts and other conservation bodies. It would make a lot more sense to see where we can join forces and deliver a similar level of benefit for Wales at a reduced cost.

[199] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I appreciate that the other two witnesses might have comments to make, but there is no legislation that stops that from happening. It is just that you have not got together to do it. There is no legislative block on that happening. I am sorry; I know that Chris Lindley wanted to come in on that point.

[200] **Mr Lindley:** Unlike my colleague, I do not have the figures to hand.

[201] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Could you give a rough idea?

[202] **Mr Lindley:** It would be less than 10%, as far as Gower is concerned. However, that tends to be not so much the forestry estate of the Welsh Government, but the national nature reserves. Once again, we have not seen any changes to the way in which land is being managed. What is now starting to happen is that further information is coming through from the people that we deal with—the representatives of NRW with whom we deal. That is slowly evolving.

[203] You mentioned management agreements. My understanding is that NRW in its previous guises already had powers for making management agreements. My experience in that is that it has utilised them to very good effect.

[204] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Generally, we certainly welcome the fact that Natural Resources Wales will have this power. As Chris has said, its predecessors already had the power under the 1949 Act and under the 1968 Act to enter into management agreements on sites of special scientific interest. That was CCW's operating process when designating a new SSSI. It was usually followed up with a management agreement and a brief management plan. That modus operandi continues. We would suggest that, if it is going to have that innovative power, we still have a 2020 biodiversity conservation target to meet, in line with EU targets. So, if the money could be pushed towards helping Wales to meet that target, that might be a priority in

the short term, rather than taking a scattergun approach and trying to do loads of other things. There is going to be a limited amount of money, so maybe we should focus that limited amount of money in a particular area.

[205] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I am sorry; I am unclear on why you feel that its existing powers—because it has powers from all of the legacy bodies—are not sufficient.

[206] **Mr Sinnadurai:** I am just judging from what we saw second-hand, effectively. There was never enough cash.

[207] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, it is not the power; it is the money.

[208] **Mr Sinnadurai:** Yes.

[209] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Thank you.

[210] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** As far as I understand it, you are referring to the innovative ways of working powers. According to what the Government has told us in the White Paper, these are to do with catchment trading schemes and technical approaches to allow technological innovation and testing the regulatory impact of distinctive new Welsh approaches.

[211] **Antoinette Sandbach:** However, we have not seen the Bill, Dafydd, so we do not know how they will be defined. The evidence from our previous session was that there was a lot of concern that there were no checks and balances. Until we see the draft Bill, we do not know what checks and balances there will be and where those powers are considered to be deficient.

[212] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I call on William Powell.

[213] **William Powell:** I will move on to a couple of specific proposals in the paper. First, the single-use carrier bag charge is generally held to have been a major success in Wales, and it has been replicated elsewhere. What are your views on the proposals to extend the powers of Welsh Ministers to extend that to other forms of carrier bags? Do you feel that that is a welcome step?

12:15

[214] **Mr Atkins:** It is not something that we have specifically commented on in our submission from the national parks of Wales' point of view. It has been a successful initiative. We still have problems with litter in the countryside, and our concern from a national parks perspective is not so much the detail around carrier bag charging, but the more general point about some of the considerations around waste, as to whether that would perversely create an unforeseen problem in relation to fly-tipping. When disposal charges for tyres came in, we saw an increase in tyres being dumped within the national park, for example.

[215] **William Powell:** Do you have a view as to whether it is appropriate that the range of causes that any levy contributes towards should be changed? There is an option in the proposals to move away from explicitly environmental causes to other good causes. Is that something that you would express a view on at this stage?

[216] **Mr Sinnadurai:** That is something that the Welsh Government would have to weigh up. If it is spread too widely, the accusation might be that it is just becoming a general form of disguised tax on the population, so why not just tax people more? However, it would still make sense to hypothecate it in some way, to incentivise people and make them feel good about the fact that they are being asked to pay this money in a visible way.

[217] I would also say that an awful lot more needs to be done about education on litter disposal. It may just be a sign of me getting older, but it seems to be getting worse. When I visit other parts of Europe, there is nothing like the problem that we in Britain seem to have with litter. There is a careless disregard for litter across all sectors—you cannot point to one socioeconomic sector; I see all sorts of people dropping litter routinely. So, maybe some of the money could be thrown into a much better public awareness-raising or education programme, and sustained—just to keep it going—not for a couple of years, but make it a way of life.

[218] **William Powell:** Moving from the land-based environment to issues around marine, do you have any comments on the proposals to allow NRW to levy charges in respect of the marine licensing process, and to extend its capacity to do that?

[219] **Mr Atkins:** We have not commented on that element of the proposal. Presumably, that is more directly relevant to Pembrokeshire, as a coastal national park. Chris may wish to comment.

[220] **Mr Lindley:** I do not have any specific comments about the way it is set up, but the current regime is fairly set. My experience of it is that it does not necessarily reflect the real cost of making an application or pursuing a licence. As for other licensing schemes, it would be good to align it to those where there is more evidence around what it actually costs to assess an application and prepare a licence, and to have a realistic cost associated with that.

[221] **William Powell:** Presumably, that would also enable some of that resource to be ploughed back in to expanding the service as well.

[222] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** We have had some discussions about overlapping strategies and plans in relation to the planning regime. Have you any views about the links between marine spatial plans and the proposed area-based natural resource management plans? Are these sufficiently clear from what you have gleaned from the White Paper?

[223] **Mr Sinnadurai:** If you would allow me to limit myself to the area-based plans, because in the Brecon Beacons we only have expertise on the geological marine environment, rather than marine expertise, the area-based plans are a good concept. As national park authorities and as an AONB board, we would recommend to you the national park management plan process as an existing area management plan process. Again, it is all about the devil in the detail and what area you define, and that could change. If you define it based around freshwater management, that will geographically define itself in one way, but if you define it around broadleaf woodland management, it might define itself differently. If you define it around migratory bird corridors, again it would define itself differently. It is going to be a difficult thing to bottom out. What we do not want is something that does not satisfy anyone and we just end up squabbling about it for years. However, it is clearly a good concept. The most important thing is to establish a good working partnership and to be very clear about what the outcomes are and what it is that you want to achieve—do you want achieve everything or do you want to achieve something specific?

[224] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** You have a bit of coastline. [*Laughter.*]

[225] **Mr Lindley:** Yes; I have to own up to that one. Certainly, we have heard recent announcements about marine spatial planning starting up, which is very much something that the coastal AONBs want to participate in, because of the strong interactions between the special qualities of the AONBs and what happens in the marine environment. So, we will be taking an active part in the marine spatial planning process.

[226] **Mr Sinnadurai:** I have found my notes now, so I will add a little bit more. Management guidelines for national parks and category 5 protected landscapes are a very good working model, if you like, for how to manage across an area. They are all about taking the views of the people who live and work in the area of concern and developing mutually supportive and mutually agreed partnership plans and objectives. That is going to be another test for Natural Resources Wales, if you like, as the arbiter of area-based plans. How engaged can it get in local partnerships? What we tend to find with anything to do with natural resource management or biodiversity conservation is that the management is pretty straightforward—it is not usually very complicated stuff that you are handling—but the most difficult part is getting people to agree to do it. Most of the time in Britain, we are talking about private land ownership, so you have to find a way of achieving across-the-board agreement with a wider range of partners across an entire area in order for that area-based partnership to work. There is an awful lot of work to be put in just in achieving that.

[227] **Lord Elis Thomas:** Thank you. I do not believe that we have any further questions, but clearly, as the responses to the Government consultations appear, and as we move further towards consideration of the form of the Bill—if not a draft Bill—I am sure that we will need to rely on your advice again. Diolch yn fawr.

12:23

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[228] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Y papurau i'w nodi yw cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 12 Rhagfyr y llynedd, llythyr arall gan y Gweinidog Adnoddau Naturiol a Bwyd ynglŷn â'r polisi amaethyddol cyffredin a throsglwyddo rhwng pileri, a llythyr gan Weinidog yr Economi, Gwyddoniaeth a Thrafnidiaeth ynglŷn â chynigion ar yr M4 a'r ymchwiliad hwnnw.

Lord Elis-Thomas: The papers to note are the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December last year, another letter from the Minister for Natural Resources and Food on the common agricultural policy and transferring of budgets between pillars, and a letter from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport on proposals for the M4 and that inquiry.

[229] **Mick Antoniw:** Very quickly on that letter from the Minister, I am really not happy with it, in the sense that it throws basically a whole series of documents out; it gives answers, but it does not actually engage with the points that we were raising. We need some further technical advice. Bearing in mind that a lot of it relates to points that were made by Professor Cole, I wonder whether he would be prepared to consider some further written evidence on this point. At the beginning of the next meeting, I would certainly appreciate some further discussion on some of the evidence, because there is still an important gap in the factual evidence that has been considered on the way in which the M4 proposal is developing.

[230] **Julie James:** May I add to that? Is it possible to ask Professor Cole to comment on what the Minister is saying? I agree with Mick entirely; I think that we have just been told the same thing as we were told in the first place, rather than given a response. Some technical advice on whether that is actually the case or whether it is just a perception from lay people would be most welcome.

[231] **Mr Davidson:** I am more than happy to take that forward, and to schedule some time next week.

[232] **Julie James:** Would it be possible to see this route?

[233] **Mr Davidson:** Professor Cole has made an offer to the committee. If you were interested, we could look into trying to organise that.

[234] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** We would need a big bus.

[235] **Mick Antoniw:** Before we do that, we need a clear analysis of what those data are. A number of assertions have been made that justify what may be one of the major spending projects of this Government, and it is based on two or three very narrowly defined points. It is about evidence on those—traffic flow percentage reductions and their application to other alternatives. Unless we understand that clearly, everything else that we do becomes largely irrelevant.

[236] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Do we need other sources of advice? I am sure that there are transportation people—

[237] **Antoinette Sandbach:** We need someone independent to look at what we were told by Professor Cole and what the Minister is saying, to access the data and to give us an independent view on that. I agree with you, Mick, that this just refers us to a series of documents with data, and I have no idea about the validity or otherwise of those data.

[238] **Mr Davidson:** I am happy to come back with some suggestions on how you might tackle that, if you like.

[239] **William Powell:** Do we have a business organisation coming in on this issue? We could ask the CBI and, potentially, other groups—

[240] **Mr Davidson:** The CBI and the Institute of Directors have both been invited to give evidence. We have not heard from the Institute of Directors, and we are still in discussion with the CBI about finding a suitable date.

[241] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Diolch **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Thank you very much. yn fawr iawn.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12:27.
The meeting ended at 12:27.*