



Ymddiriedolaeth
Genedlaethol
National Trust

**Written Evidence to the Environment and Sustainability Committee-
Natural Resources Wales - Annual Scrutiny 2015
March 2015**

We are glad to have the opportunity to respond to the Committee's call for evidence to support the annual scrutiny of NRW.

Joint Working Partnership

We view ourselves as being a natural partner for NRW and as such applied for funding as a Joint Working Partner in September 2014.

NRW did their utmost to communicate the new funding structure and timescales for applying before the application period began. We also received exemplary support and communication from our NRW Grant Manager which was invaluable in forming our bid. The process was a learning curve for us an organisation, having previously had a longstanding concordat with CCW. Given the new and unfamiliar form the applications for joint partnership funding needed to take the timings of the application process were tight meaning little differentiation between the stages of raising of an Expression of Interest and making a bid for funding. This was further exacerbated by the fact that the process took place in summer when both our staff and our NRW Grant Manager had periods of annual leave.

We are glad to have been able to enter two Joint Working Partnerships with NRW. We see the Joint Working Partnership model as being sensible in terms of allowing organisations to secure funding for a 3 year period allowing certainty in project planning. We also appreciate the all Wales approach taken by NRW which, by coordinating work on a national level, helps to avoid a 'scatter gun' approach to partnership funding. As well as providing a prioritised approach to funding partnerships with large organisations such as our own can reduce the administrative burden which can be imposed by many smaller-scale partnership funding agreements.

Our Joint Working Partnership will see match funding for the following projects;

1. Support from NRW will ensure that the benefits and learning from past and future National Trust investments are maximised on the Ysbyty Estate. The Ysbyty Estate, at 5300ha, provides an unparalleled opportunity to develop exemplar natural

resource management at a catchment scale. The National Trust has been working with partners including NRW, SNPA, Dwr Cymru, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, University of Leeds and RSPB for three years and has already invested over £300,000 in the project. During this time we have worked in the upper catchment on the Migneint to restore the natural hydrology of the peat resource. Work to date has maximised the peats ability to store carbon, we have also seen an increase in water storage which will reduce flooding further down the catchment. We have already taken steps to achieve favourable condition of its precious habitats. Beyond the Migneint there is tremendous scope to work with our tenants to ensure that food, fibre and energy can be produced whilst delivering good water quality, healthy soils and a rich biodiversity across the whole of this crucial part of the Conwy catchment. We also continually seek to improve access to the area to provide experiences through which the public can learn and be inspired.

2. NRW match funding will allow the National Trust to improve conservation performance at our designated sites, embed good practice and communicate this to our tenants and partner organisations. The NT owns 26,500 ha of all the SSSIs in Wales, roughly 10% of the designated sites. With such a significant area of designated sites our work is critical to the delivery of the Habitats Directive and Natura 2000 targets. This project will build on the success and lessons learnt through 5 years of the Special Sites Project that has been funded by CCW/NRW and embrace the whole process and cycle of developing a land management plan, carrying out management, monitoring and reporting back into the planning process at certain sites. It will enable us to deliver good management of the range of ecosystem services in our care and ultimately multiple benefits for both our land and for society. The project will leave a lasting legacy at our sites; at the end of the three years we will have embedded the good practices within NT staff operations, up skilling and empowering our teams to ensure that the work project has a life time well beyond the 3 years. The programme will also have a clear communication plan to ensure that we can effectively share best practice and engage widely with our tenants and partner organisations.

Cwm Ivy

Natural Resources Wales and the National Trust have begun working on an ambitious project to create a saltmarsh at Cwm Ivy, North Gower that will provide a new habitat for wildlife. The project, the first of its kind in Wales, will look at how best to recreate almost 100 acres of intertidal saltmarsh habitat which will provide a sustainable habitat for birds and wildlife.



We have been amazed by the rapidity of the habitat enrichment that the return to saline conditions has seen since the first major inundation last year. Several bird species have

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been spotted using the marsh for the first time, including hen harrier, water rail, little egret, oystercatchers – and otters are now seen far more often on the marsh than they were. We have a unique opportunity to record the changes in the vegetation and we are working with NRW and the community on projects to encourage Ospreys to nest in the area. Public access remains a priority at Cwm Ivy and both organisations are working closely with Swansea City Council and the local community to maintain and enhance access to Cwm Ivy.

This work is not just about biodiversity and access however, it also ties into the National Trust's 'Shifting Shores' initiative. Shifting Shores recognises that reliance on defence as the only strategy for our coastline looks less plausible in light of accelerating sea level rise and increasingly extreme weather patterns. We need to have policies to support adaptation. Our work at Cwm Ivy demonstrates this approach. The breaching of the sea wall will also secure compensatory habitat for future coastal flood defence works across the Carmarthen Bay Special Area of Conservation.

Other Engagement

We have begun to engage with NRW in other forums, a good example being the Hydropower Stakeholder Group which has been formed by NRW to help inform policy on the regulation of hydropower. This group has been well run and provides a good forum for the exchange of views between NRW and those who have expertise in the field. We hope to expand our engagement with NRW in the future especially in the process of Natural Resource Management Planning, where in many cases land owned by the Trust will form part of the catchment area.

For more information please contact;

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