

Consultation on proposals for revised curriculum and assessment arrangements for Wales

Consultation response form

Your name: Sue Williams

Organisation (if applicable): Natural Resources Wales

e-mail/telephone number: 0300 065 3000
sue.williams@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

Your address:
Clawddnewydd, Ruthin, Denbighshire. LL15 2NL

Responses should be returned by **17 January 2014** to

Claire Habberfield
Legislation Team
Corporate Services Division
Department for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Freepost NAT 8910
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: CurriculumforWales@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) was formed on 1st April 2013 following the amalgamation of Forestry Commission Wales (FCW), Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency staff in Wales. It is the largest Welsh Government public sponsored body with approximately 2000 staff, an operating budget of £17 million and manages 7% of the land in Wales.

Natural Resources Wales aims:

"..... to play a central role in delivering sustainable development for Wales. This means bringing the management of our natural resources and environment together in a balanced and integrated way, to deliver benefits for the people, environment and economy"

Natural Resources Wales welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation and looks forward to further involvement in phase 2 of the curriculum review. Our aim is to highlight the importance of natural resource management, the need to embed the environment and sustainable development in the widest sense within the curriculum and the importance of out of classroom learning for all key stages.

Question 1 – Do you agree that the new Areas of Learning/programmes of study for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development in the Foundation Phase, and English, Welsh and mathematics in Key Stages 2–4 should be based on year-on-year expectations to complement the LNF?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	x
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------

Supporting comments

No comment

Question 2 – Do you agree that the LNF should be extended to include emergent literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Phase for 3 to 4-year-olds?

Agree	x	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	----------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments

Natural Resources Wales agrees with the proposal assuming that the Welsh Government remains “*absolutely committed to the principles, pedagogy and practice which underpin*” the Foundation Phase. The extension of the LNF to include emergent literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Phase can be supported by learning and play undertaken in the natural environment and the equal access to outdoors and indoors allowable within the Foundation Phase be should not be diminished.

Natural Resources Wales would encourage further training opportunities for Foundation Phase practitioners in the delivery of literacy and numeracy in the outdoors and a review of the Foundation Phase National Training Pack - Module 6 – *Outdoor Learning*, to support this. Natural Resources Wales would be happy to support and facilitate this work. (NRW was involved in the writing of the original pack through the ex Forestry Commission Woodlands for Learning Team).

Question 3 – Do you agree in principle that ‘wider skills’ should become statutory elements of the national curriculum?

Agree	X	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	----------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments

Natural Resources Wales agrees in principle that “wider skills” should become statutory elements of the national curriculum, whilst acknowledging that many good teachers already deliver these skills without the need for statutory status. The wider skills proposed lend themselves to hands on, real life learning experiences which can easily be provided within the local natural environment and through wider out of classroom learning experiences. These can take the form of learning any subject (often through play) in the natural environment at a young age, to learning about specific biological and geographical subjects including natural resource management, leading to career choices later in life.

A review by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Kings College London found substantial evidence that fieldwork and out of classroom learning, providing it was properly conceived, adequately planned, well taught and effectively followed up, not only improves students’ knowledge but also teaches skills that add value to their everyday experiences in the classroom.

Out of classroom and environmental based learning has a significant role in supporting these wider skills which will become increasingly important as Wales develops its approach to natural resource management. Inclusion of these skills in the wider curriculum can help support the sustainable use of Wales’ natural resources in the future

Question 4 – Do you agree that these skills should be critical thinking and problem solving, planning and organisation, creativity and innovation, personal effectiveness and digital literacy?

Agree	X	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	----------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments

Natural Resources Wales welcomes the addition of the wider skills described and can see the benefit of a cross curricular “wider skills framework” in order to develop skills “needed for education, qualifications, for work and for life”. The proposed skill types suggested appear comprehensive, but it should be acknowledged that some are more important and easier to develop at different ages e.g. creativity at an early age by learning through play and planning and organisation at a later age through projects and hands on learning experiences.

The development of these skills can be greatly supported by out of classroom and environmental based learning and the use of the natural environment to both learn in and learn about. As in Q3, these wider skills will become

increasingly important as Wales develops its approach to natural resource management. Use of statistics and data, risk perception, increased opportunities for field work and experimentation can all provide scenarios for the development of these wider skills which can help support the sustainable use of natural resources in the future.

Many of the elements of the current Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESGDC) curriculum can also help develop these wider skills as well as supporting literacy and numeracy development. Support for teachers is vital: further training, opportunities to share best practice and the chance to identify subjects in the existing curriculum which lend themselves to the development of wider skills are paramount. Natural Resources Wales would be pleased to support this area of work, which also links to the Government's ideas expressed in the development of the Future Generations Bill and Environment Bill.

Question 5 – Do you agree that at the end of each phase/stage of education schools should report progress in Language, Literacy and Communication Skills/Mathematical Development or English, Welsh and mathematics – including literacy and numeracy as defined by the LNF, to learners, parents/carers and the Welsh Government?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	x
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------

Supporting comments

As an environmental body Natural Resources Wales does not wish to comment on whether further reporting should be introduced. However, it would be sensible for any paperwork and reporting mechanisms etc, to be kept to a minimum and if possible incorporated into existing reporting mechanisms so the workload of assessing can be “managed and minimised”

Question 6 – Do you agree that schools should continue to undertake and report an end of phase assessment of Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity?

Agree	X	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	----------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments

Natural Resources Wales acknowledges the importance of Personal and

Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity specific to the Foundation Phase and wishes to highlight the importance of outdoor learning activities and experiences to support Personal and Social Development and Well-Being in particular, including sustainable development and sustainability issues. Outdoor learning during the Foundation Phase has been very successful and the training of many teachers as Forest School Leaders has given them the experience, confidence and ability to assess improvements in PSE and Well-being as well as other subjects in the outdoors. Natural Resources Wales would like to see a similar emphasis on learning in, and about, the natural environment through all key stages. We agree schools should continue to undertake and report end of phase assessment, whilst acknowledging that all existing reporting mechanisms should be “managed and minimised”

Question 7 – Do you agree that rich learning tasks should be included as part of an overall end of Key Stage 2 assessment model?

Agree	X	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	----------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments

Natural Resource Wales fully supports the inclusion of rich learning tasks as part of the overall end of KS2 assessment model. Out of classroom learning can provide many such tasks with “real-world value and use”, encouraging problem solving, flexible thinking and reasoning and connection with the “world beyond the classroom”. Rich learning tasks set in the natural environment can also provide an opportunity for success for those pupils who do not perform as well in a classroom environment, and can help provide a wider range of experiences to aid career choice in later life.

Natural Resources Wales would be pleased to help develop and provide some of these rich learning tasks. There is much potential in tasks based on natural resource management and Natural Resources Wales can offer a wide range of activities across our remit. In addition, rich learning tasks can be delivered via already established literacy and numeracy trails on owned land and other outdoor learning sites, which can provide sessions for pupils and teachers on all curriculum subjects and natural resource management. Equally, support could be provided for the development of tasks on sites local and accessible to schools and settings.

Question 8 – Do you agree with the proposals that at Key Stage 3 we retain the requirement to report to the Welsh Government an end of Key Stage 3 summative assessment of progress in the new English, Welsh and mathematics programmes of study, science and Welsh second language and remove the requirement to report to Welsh Government an end of Key Stage 3 assessment of progress in other statutory foundation subjects?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	x	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	----------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments

Natural Resources Wales supports the reduction and streamlining of reporting processes and is pleased to see that science will be retained, however it is disappointed to note the removal of geography from the core list. Natural Resources Wales would like to see this subject included along with science reflecting the WG development of its natural resource management approach. It is within the current geography syllabus that the majority of links to work on renewable energy and river, coast and flood risk management related learning is delivered, aspects of natural resource management which is becoming increasingly important.

Question 9 – Subject to the outcome of this consultation, do you agree with the proposed timetable for introduction for changes to curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales?

Agree	X	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	----------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments

Natural Resources Wales supports the phased approach and the gradual introduction of any changes to ensure they are fully understood and implemented. We reiterate the importance of appropriate training and CPD for delivery staff and again offer our support in the field of out of classroom and environmental learning.

Question 10 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

1. As mentioned above, there is little reference to training for education professionals, trainee teachers or ESTYN inspectors throughout the document; with any change this is a critical feature for successful transition. Natural Resources Wales (through the Forestry Commission Woodlands for Learning Team) was involved in the roll out and training for Module 6 of the Foundation Phase National Training Pack – Outdoor Learning and would be pleased to support any future training in natural resource management and outdoor learning required at any key stage. The wide remit of Natural Resources Wales would enable a very broad input into programmes.
2. We also feel it is important to ensure that any changes to the curriculum are reflected in initial teacher training courses. Again Natural Resources Wales

would be pleased to work with WG and Higher Education in the necessary development of these programmes.

3. Natural Resources Wales would welcome a discussion with WG about sharing evidence and data in order to spatially target and prioritise support to areas most in need of help to drive up standards and reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

4. Natural Resources Wales is keen to assist in Phase 2 of the curriculum review and particularly to help develop sustainability and natural resource management aspects of the curriculum and embed the environment and learning outside the classroom throughout the curriculum in order to ensure the future sustainable use of our natural resources.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: