

Green Recovery: Priorities for Action Report

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Foreword

Many of us are starting to face up to the fact that all areas of life will be very different after this pandemic. Inevitably there is a range of views on what that change might look like. Meanwhile, the constancy and criticality of the challenges of climate change and the destruction of the natural environment remain.

At a simplistic level there is a clear choice. Huge changes are required from the transformation of macro policy to micro demonstrator projects that show what changes can be made and how quickly.

The Green Recovery Task and Finish Group has sought to focus on what can be done in the near-term using innovation as well as identifying more medium-term changes that should be examined. It is abundantly clear that there is no shortage of radical thinking and possible projects, but at the same time there is frustration around the complexity of the process and procedures to be followed to realise sometimes even the simplest of ideas. Some of this is structural. The challenges we face are complex cutting right across institutions and we must work collaboratively, both within and between organisations, to ensure we deliver effectively on our ambitions.

In selecting a range of proposals to be taken forward with urgency, the Task and Finish Group wants to demonstrate that change can happen at pace and projects and schemes can act as beacons, to show what can be achieved for others to emulate.

Another dimension of this is the power of liberating 'communities of interest', to enable them to take action themselves. Part of our brief was to examine how we can support and nurture our non-governmental organizations (NGOS), particularly those engaged in environmental matters. These organisations can play a pivotal role in taking this important agenda forward. The Task and Finish Group's report contains a series of recommendations which we believe can make a major difference in this regard.

The Task and Finish Group has made the commitment to continue its work focusing on delivery and supported by resources being contributed by partner organisations both around the table and beyond. We believe that this will greatly assist the Welsh Government in taking the green recovery agenda forward.



Sir David Henshaw

Chair of the Green Recovery Task and Finish Group

Executive Summary

The green recovery is a once in a generation opportunity to accelerate development along a more sustainable pathway. Incremental change will not be enough to drive the systemic and transformative changes needed for a socially just and green recovery.

Over the next 12 months, in the run up to COP15 and COP26, Wales must lead the way, working together across organisational and political boundaries to show the difference that we can make to the nature and climate emergencies for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

The Task and Finish Group's mantra has been how to make things happen to deliver improvements on the ground. Whilst recognising that Wales is well placed to meet the challenge of a green recovery, through the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Environment Act and the supporting strategic policy frameworks, the Task and Finish Group believes there is a significant gap in implementation.

Bridging this gap has driven the approach of the Task and Finish Group, as it seeks to make things happen quickly, building momentum by showing what can be achieved by working together and actively seeking innovative approaches that can be tested.

168 proposals were submitted by individuals, groups and organisations from across Wales. The Task and Finish Group thanks all those who have contributed and believes this is a beacon of hope, reflecting the passion, energy and commitment of many people across Wales to act on this moment for change. We must harness this enthusiasm, to inspire others to take action.

Establishment of a Green Recovery Delivery Partnership

To maintain and build momentum, members of the Task and Finish Group have committed to continue working together, forming a Green Recovery Delivery Partnership.

Resources have been committed to support this partnership, with a small programme office hosted by NRW with staff committed by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, the National Trust, Business in the Community, The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission. Other members of the Group will continue to provide their expertise.

By pooling their collective leadership the Group will provide direct support to those who have submitted proposals, to enable them to drive forward implementation.

In February 2021, the Group will lead another call for proposals, enabling others to contribute and will continue to encourage others to engage in the on-going dialogue.

Priority Actions

Nature Based Solutions must be the cornerstone of the green recovery.

The Group recognises that these solutions simultaneously address the climate and nature emergencies and provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits. Investment in Nature Based Solutions will drive opportunities for skills development and employment, not only in the direct delivery of programmes of work, but also upstream opportunities to supply materials and stimulate new businesses. For this reason, they are often cost effective. Actions will focus on a range of ecosystems on land and sea, including:

- Biodiversity, including protected sites improvement
- Peatland restoration
- Woodland and hedgerow restoration and expansion
- Blue carbon¹ in the marine environment
- River and wetland restoration

The Task and Finish Group believes it is critical to move to a long-term funding approach to support investment in Nature Based Solutions. Money needs to be available over multiple years to encourage collaboration and partnership working.

Nature Based Solutions proposals that the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership will support:

The Group has identified 7 Priority One proposals which will be the focus of the Delivery Partnership's initial efforts. Priority One proposals:

Table 1: Nature Based Solutions proposals that the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership will support.

| Organisation | Proposal name |
|-------------------------|--|
| Trees for All | More Trees Now |
| Farm Garden | Orchards for Wales |
| Natural Resources Wales | Advancing i-Tree - supporting urban green infrastructure improvements across Wales |
| Woodland Trust | Tree Towns Teams for Wales |
| WoodKnowledge Wales | Home grown homes 2 |

¹ Includes sea grass and salt-marsh habitats

| Organisation | Proposal name |
|---------------------|--|
| DCWW | Accelerate Biodiversity projects through Dwr Cymru's Independent Environmental Advisory Panel (Made of largely environmental NGO's / NRW representatives) IEAP to support ecological and climate change resilience |
| DCWW | Develop Market based Ecosystem Services (MES) to support diffuse pollution controls, and enhance ecological resilience |

A total of 8 Priority Two Proposals will also receive support to further refine and develop their ideas.

Transforming our socio-economic systems

The Task and Finish Group recognises the significant role that the green recovery can play in transitioning to a net zero, circular economy which supports nature and creates significant opportunities for jobs and skills development. Proposals have been prioritised from eight sectors of the Welsh economy:

- Food
- Marine
- Reimagining our urban areas
- Active travel and sustainable transport
- Circular economy
- Tourism
- Housing
- Health and Well-being

Socio-economic proposals that the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership will support:

The Group has identified 33 Priority One proposals which will be the focus of the Delivery Partnership's initial efforts. Priority One proposals:

Table 2: Socio-economic proposals that the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership will support.

| Organisation | Proposal name |
|------------------------------|---|
| NRW | NRW and low carbon sustainable food systems |
| Deepdock Ltd | Seas of Change: The Collaborative Development of Open Water Shellfish Production and Functional Foods Supply Chain in Wales |
| Sustainable Food Places | Transitioning to a low carbon, sustainable food system through making Wales a nation of local cross-sector food partnerships and a creating a Wales good food movement. |
| Food Sense Wales | Growing our growers to grow |
| Social Farms & Gardens Wales | Urban Agriculture –Food Production where it is most needed |
| Penparcau Community Center | Penparcau Planting Project |

| Organisation | Proposal name |
|--|---|
| Social Farms & Gardens Wales | Pollination Corridors |
| Fields in Trust | Enabling a Permanent Green Recovery for Wales |
| Natural Resources Wales | Greening Social Housing |
| Marine Conservation Society | A reusable start to life! |
| Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Nutrient Recycling - Integrated Biomass Hubs |
| Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Reuse and Repair Trading Network Cymru |
| Keep Wales Tidy | Repair Apprenticeships |
| Halen Mon | Parking changes in Snowdonia linked to transport |
| Halen Mon | Green spine route in Anglesey |
| Natural Resources Wales | Multipurpose cycle and footpath between Borth, Ynyslas and Dyfi NNR linked to health and well-being local opportunities as part of the Dyfi Biosphere. |
| Snowdonia National Park | Design and implement an integrated sustainable transport approach |
| Future Generations Wales | Invest in better ways to connect and move people; by providing incentives to encourage people back onto public transport and investment in active travel infrastructure |
| Keep Wales Tidy | Visitor Levy |
| Community Housing Cymru | Invest in the skills & homes of the future to deliver a green economic recovery. |
| Wales Co-operative Centre | Building Back Better - Supporting SMEs and Social Enterprises to Retrofit Welsh Homes |
| The Future Generations Commissioner Wales Office | Support the decarbonisation of homes, through building low carbon, affordable housing |
| Woodknowledge Wales | Home Grown Homes 2 |
| Ty Pren | Green building revolution |
| The TYF Group | WISH Wales – Wellbeing Innovation for Sustainable Health |
| The TYF Group | Future Generations Practitioners |
| Marine Energy Wales | CSAG science and evidence subgroup |
| Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum | WATO (Wales adventure and tourism organisation) |
| NRW | Restoring marine ecosystems |
| NRW | Deployment of sustainable marine renewable technology |
| NRW | Making the most of our changing coast |
| Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Housing Retrofit - A Cooperative Model for the Private Sector |
| Local Nature Partnerships | Parc Hanes Green Infrastructure Creation, Kinmel Bay |

A total of 35 Priority Two proposals will also receive support to further refine and develop their ideas. 18 proposals will be connected into a programme supported by the Food, Farming & Countryside Commission Cymru to accelerate the shift towards sustainable production of healthy, accessible and affordable food in Wales.

Enablers of the Green Recovery

Maximising the benefits associated with investment in the green recovery is dependent on enabling action in the areas of skills, apprenticeships and procurement. These are the key to unlocking the Government’s ambition for decent jobs with long term prospects.

Proposals have been prioritised for:

- skills, job creation and new markets
- environmental finance and delivery models

Enabling actions that the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership will support:

The Group has identified 9 Priority One proposals which will be the focus of the Delivery Partnership’s initial efforts. Priority One proposals:

Table 3: Enabling actions the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership will support

| Organisation | Proposal name |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Joint submission: WCVA & FFCC | National Nature Service for Wales |
| Groundwork in Wales | Green Skills: Green Jobs: Green Recovery – a green employability program for young people aged 16 to 24 |
| Wildlife Trusts Wales | Natural Resources Jobs Fund |
| Keep Wales Tidy | Repair Apprenticeships |
| Future Generations Wales | A ‘school leavers’ job offer encouraging organisations in every sector to sign up and take on a school leaver as part of a holistic skills programme across Wales, assisted with funding from Jobs Growth Wales. |
| Natural Resources Wales | Skills for a Green Recovery |
| Natural Resources Wales | Fast-tracking NRW's Green Marketplace programme |
| Natural Resources Wales | Using Blended Finance to help deliver the Green Recovery |
| WWF Cymru | Development and Use of New Funding Mechanisms |

A total of 5 Priority Two proposals will also receive support to further refine and develop their ideas.

Building collaborations to drive innovation

The Task and Finish Group is committed to taking forward a number of actions to facilitate delivery of the green recovery priorities. Using their convening power, they will engage with others, including those from the private sector, to stimulate discussion and drive action. The Group is committed to breaking down traditional silos and ways of working, to build on the momentum created through the Covid-19 response, to work collaboratively and creatively to develop new delivery approaches and models to get things done.

Table 4: Other actions the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership will take forward to enable delivery

| Chapter Reference | Other actions the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership will take forward to enable delivery |
|-------------------|--|
| 4 | The Task and Finish Group will convene a co-design conference with those public sector organisations such as the National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships, Local Authorities and NRW who own or manage land and third sector organisations, such as the National Trust and Wildlife Trusts, to build a shared agenda for action for the restoration of nature on the land they directly own and manage |
| 4 | The Task and Finish Group will work with farming groups, those parts of the public sector who own land and third sector organisations to explore alternative funding models to accelerate investment in this area (peatland restoration). |
| 4 | The Group will explore alternative delivery models as it is imperative that we build on and harness this enthusiasm (for tree planting). |
| 4 | The Task and Finish Group believes more work is required to identify the most appropriate mechanism to support delivery (of blue carbon) and is committed to working with the Wales Marine Action Advisory group to achieve this. |
| 4 | The Task and Finish Group believes it is vital that additional support is provided to SMEs and small contractors to enable them to take advantage of the Nature Based Solutions opportunities. The Group will work with organisations such as Wales Co-operative Centre and Business in the Community to identify what type of support programmes can be developed. |
| 4 | The Task and Finish Group will bring together the funding bodies operating in Wales to explore how funding can be targeted to support investment in Nature Based Solutions through fostering a culture of collaboration. |
| 5 | The Task and Finish Group will work with Local Authorities to identify what, if anything, can be done to support the expansion of allotments across Wales |
| 5 | The Group will commission a review to identify more effective ways of transferring publicly owned or managed land to community groups, to include an assessment of the risks and opportunities for both public sector organisations and community groups. |
| 5 | The Task and Finish Group recognises that connecting food growers with local markets, by shortening the supply chain can only work if the right infrastructure is in place locally. Addressing this gap is the key to enabling many farmers and growers across Wales to diversify their business models. The Task and Finish Group, led by the Food, Farming and |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Countryside Commission will convene a workshop to consider how this can best be enabled. |
| 5 | The Task and Finish Group will work with Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (WMAAG) to explore the design and delivery of a 'Blue Growth Coastal Fund' that could support engagement with coastal communities to identify, plan and deliver integrated projects that address local opportunities to deliver multiple benefits. |
| 5 | The Task and Finish Group will draw together designers, landscape architects and town planners operating in Wales to ensure the proposals received inform future investment in urban areas across Wales. |
| 5 | The Task and Finish Group will meet with Transport for Wales to discuss (active travel and sustainable transport) proposals and the opportunities for inclusion within their plans going forward. |
| 5 | Given the significant decline in the price of wool produced by Welsh farmers, there is a real need to create new markets for this product. The Task and Finish Group believes there is real potential in looking at a Challenge Fund mechanism to drive innovation in this area, to create new uses and markets for this staple product of Welsh farming. |
| 5 | The Task and Finish Group has explored alternative funding models for taking forward the development of the Wales Coast Path. The Group is committed to supporting the development of this idea, and will seek to involve Transport for Wales, Local Authorities and National Parks to discuss the potential opportunities. |
| 5 | The Task and Finish Group will work with Visit Wales and the regional tourism groups, to explore the opportunity to develop the nature and heritage tourism offer and how Wales' environment can be enhanced as a central element of our international tourism offer. |
| 6 | Work underway by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales is considering the skills that are needed to meet these future green recovery jobs. The Task and Finish Group will draw on this to inform the development of a green recovery monitoring and evaluation framework. |
| 6 | The Task and Finish Group will work with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to consider what action is required to support skills development particularly in relation to Nature Based Solutions. |
| 6 | The Task and Finish Group believes there is a clear need to stimulate the further education sector to update existing courses and develop new ones to ensure that we have an appropriately skilled workforce for the future. The Task and Finish Group will work with the Skills Councils and Tertiary College Sector to explore opportunities. |
| 6 | The Task and Finish Group is committed to engaging with private businesses and the financial service sector to consider alternative ways of leveraging investment to support the green recovery. |

1. Introduction

In May 2020, Lesley Griffiths the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, invited Sir David Henshaw, the Chair of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to lead a Task and Finish Group (the Group) to:

- identify priorities for action for the Welsh Government's Recovery Plan to Covid-19. The Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, the First Minister and the Welsh Government's Cabinet have publicly stated their commitment that the Welsh Recovery Plan must deliver for the environment as well as the economy and have social justice as a guiding principle.
- develop a shared plan to stabilise the environment third sector, highlighting the need to strengthen financial resilience, governance and community engagement.

The Group will report to the Minister's Roundtable, which includes senior representatives from the food, farming and fisheries sectors alongside environment third sector organisations and NRW.

Two reports have been prepared setting out the priorities for action and next steps:

Report one focuses on the green recovery.

The definition of "green recovery" agreed by the Group is set out along with the approach to identifying and prioritising actions. The report identifies a range of prioritised, practical actions, based on a 'call for ideas', that are ready to be taken forward in the short and medium term at the all-Wales, regional and local scales. Although framed within the current strategic policy context, the report focuses on accelerating the pace of delivery on the ground. Incremental improvements will not be enough to meet the scale of the green recovery challenge. Innovating and forging new partnerships that support transformational change is key as reverting back to 'normal' ways of working is not an option. The Task and Finish Group set out their collective commitment to driving delivery in the final chapter.

Report two focuses on the recommendations of research to inform the development of a plan to stabilise the environment third sector.

An independent consultant has undertaken this work, drawing on desk-based literature reviews, a workshop, face-to-face interviews and an online survey. Drawing on these information sources, the report assesses the position of third sector organisations pre Covid-19, through the lockdown response period and a forward look through the autumn to January 2021. The report makes a number of recommendations.

2. Prioritised, practical actions for the Green Recovery

This report focuses on the practical actions prioritised by the Task and Finish Group and is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter 2 sets out the definition of the green recovery agreed by the Task and Finish Group, the strategic objectives and approach to securing and prioritising proposals. Chapter 3 provides a summary of the number of submissions received, broken down into the different components set out in the green recovery definition.

The report then assesses and prioritises proposals in three chapters. Chapter 4 focuses on Nature Based Solutions and the range of practical proposals that deliver for the nature and climate emergencies. The Task and Finish Group recognises that these proposals lie at the heart of the green recovery. Chapter 5 moves onto consider proposals that relate to the socio-economic systems that drive the Welsh economy. The Task and Finish Group recognises that changing these systems is critical to fixing the nature and climate emergencies by accelerating the transition to a more sustainable pathway. Chapter 6 focuses on those enabling actions that are the key to unlocking the wider socio-economic benefits of the green recovery and includes a focus on skills, placements and jobs and the role of alternative financial mechanisms to drive future investment. Chapter 7 sets out the next steps agreed by the Task and Finish Group.

Green Recovery: Defining what we mean

Our collective response to the Covid-19 pandemic represents a once in a generation opportunity to reset our individual and collective values and priorities, realigning them with those required to create a more sustainable future. The consensus across Wales, UK, Europe and beyond is that recovery from Covid-19 must address the underlying nature and climate emergencies. A plethora of papers and blogs (for example, Ellen Macarthur Foundation 2020²; RSPB, 2020³; Woodland Trust 2020⁴; TUC Cymru 2020⁵; EEA 2020⁶; UN 2020⁷) sets out the imperative for individuals, businesses, Governments and global institutions, to refocus and accelerate our response to the pandemic along a pathway which both restores nature and decarbonises our economy. This integrated approach considers nature and climate together as the foundation of economic, social and political renewal and regeneration in Wales.

To reflect this broad perspective, the Task and Finish Group agreed a definition of green recovery relevant to the range of ecosystems on land and sea:

² <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/our-work/activities/covid-19>

³ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/green-recovery/>

⁴ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/06/campaigns-update/>

⁵ <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/job-creation-wales-infrastructure-investment>

⁶ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/new-debate-series-by-eea>

⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/un-urges-countries-%E2%80%98build-back-better%E2%80%99>

Practical, prioritised actions that:

- Reduce carbon emissions and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change;
- Reverse the decline in biodiversity;
- Connect people and nature; and
- Tackle unsustainable levels of production and consumption by keeping resources in use for as long as possible, avoiding all waste and moving to more sustainable alternatives.

In taking forward these actions, target investment to ensure that

- Job creation, skills development and new markets are prioritised; and
- Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest are prioritised to address underlying socio-economic inequalities and inequities.

The recovery plan must deliver on **all six** of these elements together, not just one in isolation. However, the Task and Finish Group recognises that there may be greater emphasis on some elements compared to others and agreed to a principle of ‘do no harm’, for example, action on decarbonisation should not be at the expense of biodiversity. This focus on integration, driving actions that deliver for climate, nature and a circular economy with multiple benefits for communities and the economy, is at the heart of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Strategic objectives

Wales is well placed to meet the challenge of a green recovery. The legislative and strategic policy framework has been reformed over the last 10 years. The Well-being of Future Generations Act and Environment (Wales) Act provide the strategic direction and tools that enshrine sustainable development at the heart of decision making across the public sector. Many strategic policy frameworks have been revised by Government, with the publication for example of the Natural Resources Policy (2018)⁸; Woodlands for Wales Strategy (2018)⁹; Prosperity for all: A low carbon Wales (2019)¹⁰; Welsh National Marine Plan (2019)¹¹; Towards Zero Waste (2019)¹². With our unique legislation and strategic policy context, Wales has the tools available to drive an ambitious green recovery plan. Many Welsh, UK and European organisations have taken the opportunity to define the principles and components of a green recovery plan, reflecting their particular strategic objectives and interests. The Climate Change Committee defined their five tests for a green recovery in June 2020¹³, with The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales identifying five priorities to reset the Welsh economy in response to Covid-19¹⁴ in May. These documents define the strategic ambition and opportunity and are echoed in the

⁸ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/natural-resources-policy.pdf>

⁹ https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-06/woodlands-for-wales-strategy_0.pdf

¹⁰ https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/low-carbon-delivery-plan_1.pdf

¹¹ https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/welsh-national-marine-plan-document_0.pdf

¹² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/towards-zero-waste-our-waste-strategy.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Reducing-UK-emissions-Progress-Report-to-Parliament-Committee-on-Cli..-002-1.pdf>

¹⁴ https://www.futuregenerations.wales/resources_posts/welsh-government-budget-must-signal-a-change-in-direction-to-reset-our-economy/

green recovery principles, priorities and position statements published by many Welsh organisations. The common threads are:

- **Reskilling and retraining programmes**, equipping people with the right skills for future jobs in for example renewable energy, housing retrofit programmes, tree planting, peatland restoration, green infrastructure and access provision.
- **Reinforcing the positive behaviours people adopted through lockdown**, through investment in infrastructure to facilitate for example, remote working, green spaces for cycling and walking and reducing food waste.
- **Reconnecting people and nature**, one of the consistent themes reported in the media during lockdown, was how appreciating, interacting with and being in nature has helped people's well-being and led them to value it more.
- **Nature and wildlife tourism opportunities** linked to increased interest in nature and the environment.
- **Making quality green space more accessible and biodiverse, particularly in deprived urban communities**, because of the significant contribution that being in nature has for individual physical and mental health and well-being.
- **Low carbon retrofitting of housing and public buildings.**
- **Reducing environmental risks through Nature Based Solutions**, such as expanding tree cover, peatland restoration, sea-grass restoration and river restoration as well as a focus on **building the resilience** of biodiversity on the land and at sea.
- **Building the resilience of the Welsh food system and growing food locally.**
- **Development of alternative financial models and instruments to incentivise investment in the green recovery.**

However, moving from the strategic policy framework to delivering meaningful change on the ground is still difficult. Overcoming this 'delivery gap' and accelerating practical action is fundamental to the success of a green recovery in Wales.

Finding ways to 'make things happen', has been the Task and Finish Group's mantra. The Group is united in its ambition to accelerate the pace of delivery for those things we know work, whilst also encouraging and facilitating innovative and creative ideas. The Group recognised the value and importance of creating the space to enable both strategic initiatives at a regional or all-Wales scale, as well as small-scale demonstrators which provide potential for wider implementation.

In line with this common purpose, the group agreed five strategic objectives for its work:

- To drive integrated actions that address the six dimensions of a green recovery, not focussing on individual dimensions in isolation.
- To encourage and facilitate collaborative working at the community, sector, regional or all-Wales scale, with a focus on meaningful involvement, avoiding top-down initiatives.
- To commit the energy and resources to those things that we've learnt through the Covid-19 experience that we want to do more of, stopping other things to create space.
- To apply the current legislative and policy tools to drive change, rather than focussing on wide-scale reform of legislation or policy. Whilst legislative and policy changes may be required to tackle the climate and nature emergencies in a socially-just manner, this was not the Group's priority focus.
- To recognise the agricultural and fisheries policy changes in train as a result of withdrawal from the EU and seek to create opportunities through the green recovery to accelerate and test new ideas to build the resilience of these sectors and the wider food system.

Our approach to securing good ideas and their prioritisation

At the core of the Group's approach was a desire to engage and involve as many different people and organisations as possible within a very short time-frame, seeking their practical ideas or proposals that might enable us as a country to respond effectively to the Covid-19 pandemic and stimulate a green recovery. Effective responses could involve developing existing initiatives or projects as well as initiating new ideas for testing as demonstrators.

The Group initiated a call for ideas, using a letter, elevator pitch and simple proforma (see annex 1) that were shared through the Group's various networks in mid-July. In parallel, through press releases and social media activity, NRW raised awareness of the opportunity more generally, directing people to submit ideas onto the Citizen Space Portal on the NRW website by the end of August.

Other than the steer set out in the 'elevator pitch', the Group did not prescribe specific themes or topics to guide or target submissions, leaving a blank canvas for individuals or groups to set out their ideas.

A total of 168 submissions were received by 1 September, from a cross section of individuals, community groups, social enterprises, housing associations, charities, public bodies, private companies, National Parks and environmental groups. The ideas ranged from micro-projects within a town or village, to initiatives across one or more local authority boundary to proposals at the all-Wales scale.

Proposals were grouped into themes and shared with Group members, informing a discussion that culminated in agreement to a set of broad assessment and prioritisation criteria (see Table 5):

Table 5: Assessment and Prioritisation Criteria

| 1 – Yes - in line with the strategic objectives | 2 – Maybe – further works required | 3 – No |
|---|---|---|
| Feasible Practical Impactful Proposal is strategic or micro/community with potential for growing Delivers against the multiple dimensions of a green recovery Meets the do no harm test Could deliver over next 12-18 months Growing existing initiatives/projects Experimental ideas for testing and discovery | Good ideas to build on, maybe? Elements of proposal we like, but not the whole Gaps in approach related to some dimension of Green recovery definition (social vs biodiversity etc) Meets the do no harm test If in this category, then more time to explore and discuss in the panel and maybe offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joining people together • Providing additional expertise Providing Project Management | Good idea, but the reach/impact is low Not feasible Requires significant changes in WG or UK policy Does not meet the multiple dimensions of the Green recovery definition Does not meet the do no harm principle |

3. What you told us: Good ideas for the Welsh Green Recovery

Overall the breadth of ideas submitted is a source of hope, reflecting the passion, energy and commitment of many people, groups and organisations across Wales to act on the green recovery opportunity. A simple assessment of the primary focus of the 168 submissions against the six dimensions of the green recovery shows:

- 45 contribute to reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change
- 47 contribute to reversing the decline in biodiversity
- 49 connecting people and nature
- 27 contribute to tackling unsustainable levels of production and consumption by keeping resources in use for as long as possible, avoiding all waste and moving to more sustainable alternatives.

The majority of the submissions draw a connection to supporting job creation and skills development.

Some of the submissions draw out how the good idea is the reflection of, and builds on, involvement and engagement with communities or sector groups. Many more set out how they propose to do this moving forward.

There were relatively few proposals developed by communities or groups from within some of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales, especially within more urban areas. These communities, particularly in urban areas, have been hardest hit by Covid-19 and are especially vulnerable to the inequitable impacts of rising unemployment that are likely to be seen over the winter and beyond. This is a significant gap which the Task and Finish Group recognises and will revisit as we move into the delivery stages.

The picture from rural areas, where there is often more community-based activity is different¹⁵. Although there were no submissions from farmers with traditional agricultural businesses, we received a number of proposals from smaller towns/rural areas which will benefit communities where low incomes are prevalent and have many jobs in vulnerable sectors. This greater level of uptake also reflects their access to supportive local networks, and at a practical level, the greater availability of land.

Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change

Many of the proposals are framed with a very narrow focus on decarbonisation, without considering explicitly the wider benefits for nature's recovery, the circular economy or improvements in physical and mental well-being. Nevertheless, with some more work

¹⁵ Building Communities Trust, forthcoming: Mapping Community Assets in Wales

many of the proposals have real value and reflect the well-established actions proposed by the UK Climate Change Committee.

There are a number of strong proposals related to energy efficiency and retrofitting within the social housing sector, which reflect well-tested approaches with strong community involvement offering major opportunities for jobs and skills development. However, potential wider benefits to biodiversity and the circular economy, are generally not considered explicitly or at any length within these proposals.

There are a number of active travel suggestions, extending walking and cycling routes between communities, as well as proposals that extend the Electric Charging network across rural Wales. There are significant opportunities for addressing the transport infrastructure in Snowdonia National Park, which are very welcome.

Nature Based Solutions feature in a number of proposals, with a very strong focus on tree planting and improvements to blue carbon (sea grass and inter-tidal habitats) in the marine environment.

Renewable energy development is clearly a critical element to decarbonising our economy and will impact how we use the land and marine environments around Wales. No proposals were received related to renewable energy development; however, a number of proposals were received related to the extension and/or improvement of existing advice networks and the development of new funding mechanisms and delivery models.

Reverse the decline in biodiversity and connect people and nature

The majority of the proposals focus on connecting people and nature, through green space. Unequal access to green space has been highlighted by the pandemic, with one in every eight households having no access to a garden, while many lack easy access to local parks and green space. Investment in green space is a mechanism to rebuild our communities, support their physical and mental health and well-being and reconnect them with each other and with nature.

There are a range of proposals which relate to transforming neglected green space into food growing areas, community orchards, pollinator gardens and community woodland areas as well as planting hedgerows and wildflower areas.

The importance of access to green space in urban areas is reflected in proposals for developing new parks and allotments as well as improving the quality of existing green space. In (re)designing these spaces the Group believes it is vitally important to consider how these spaces enable and facilitate community interaction and cohesion.

Contribute to tackling unsustainable levels of production and consumption by keeping resources in use for as long as possible, avoiding all waste and moving to more sustainable alternatives

Many proposals make a direct and indirect contribution to this dimension of the green recovery. Within Nature Based Solutions there are proposals to substitute Welsh timber within house building, reducing the use of cement and locking in carbon in timber. There is also a proposal to consider the use of sheep wool as an insulation material in buildings. Within the food system there are proposals to reduce the use of agri-chemical inputs, as well as moving to more localised supply networks to reduce the transport distribution costs. There are a handful of proposals focussed on extending the repair shop concept across Wales including the development of a bespoke apprenticeship scheme. There are also proposals relating to reusable nappies.

Job creation, skills development and new markets are prioritised

There is clear potential to create jobs and develop skills related to the green recovery with many Welsh¹⁶ and UK¹⁷ organisations setting out the opportunity for highly skilled and long-term employment. Many proposals draw out the contribution to jobs and skill development. There are also specific proposals related to the development of a Wales Nature Service and apprenticeship schemes targeting repair services in line with the principles of the circular economy.

It is important that any green recovery jobs or skill development programmes adhere to the commitment to social justice and equality as set out by the Wales TUC¹⁸. In this spirit the Task and Finish Group have identified a number of guiding principles:

- **Good terms and conditions**

Projects should offer good terms and conditions including:

- Workers are paid at least the real Living Wage.
- Workers are offered the option of flexible working.
- Workers have job security.
- Employers recognise and involve trades unions.

- **Accessible opportunities for a range of skills**

Projects should encourage diversity in recruitment by:

- Ensuring that job specifications are the minimum necessary (e.g. do not ask for qualifications or experience if not vital).

¹⁶ TUC, A green recovery and a just transition, 2020

¹⁷ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Reducing-UK-emissions-Progress-Report-to-Parliament-Committee-on-Cli...-002-1.pdf>

¹⁸ TUC, A green recovery and a just transition, 2020

- Adopting best practice in recruitment (including advertising and assessment methods e.g. using aptitude assessment rather than interviews or anonymised applications).
- Creating access pathways for example via partnerships with local learning providers.
- Offering work tasters and trials to widen horizons of possible future recruits.

- **Progression**

Projects should ensure that workers are able to learn and progress into higher level roles. They should ensure that:

- People are provided with training that ideally leads to accredited qualifications.
- People can follow clear progression routes into higher paid roles either in the organisation or elsewhere.
- Opportunities to learn and progress are open to all sections of the workforce.

Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable/have been hit hardest; are prioritised to address the underlying inequalities and deprivation

The First Minister has been clear that the Welsh Government must, and will, put equality and human rights considerations at the centre of the response to the pandemic and recovery¹⁹.

During the pandemic, the chances of dying, losing jobs or falling behind in education have in part been determined by age, race, gender, disability, income and location²⁰. Poverty has been a key determinant in the pandemic, with men, older people, people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, people with existing health conditions, disabled people and people living in areas of economic deprivation reporting higher coronavirus mortality rates. Certain groups of key workers have also been hit financially through the pandemic²¹.

Targeting action to these groups, communities and places through a green recovery that addresses local priorities is critical and requires us to bring together environmental and social justice agendas more strongly than ever before. The Task and Finish Group will consider where proposals are targeted, considering:

- **Location and priorities**

The location of action shapes accessibility and suitability. For example, active travel is not necessarily an appropriate means of transport in rural and semi-rural areas where distances to be covered are not practical.

¹⁹ Ministerial response to the Senedd's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, Sept 2020

²⁰ Senedd Committee Equality, Local Government and Communities, August 2020 "Into sharp relief: inequality and the pandemic".

²¹RSA, All clapped out? Key workers living through lockdown, August 2020

- Balance accessibility against nature recovery (e.g. urban parks are as important as peat bogs, depending on whether the benefits being sought are local green space or locking up carbon).
 - Where possible ensure environments are accessible to all, in line with the “By All Reasonable Means” Guidance²².
 - Engage with local communities to ensure their voices are heard.
 - Include provision for long-term management and aftercare.
- **Cost of access**

The cost of access, including the costs of equipment, can also be a barrier to people engaging with nature. Projects should therefore ensure:

- They include free access and/or low-cost activities.
- Outreach to encourage people who may not have experienced nature activities to try them at no or low-cost.
- Opportunities for entry-level learning about the natural environment

The Task and Finish Group recognises that well informed collaboration and engagement with communities is critical, ensuring people are involved to address the issues of most importance to them locally.

It is imperative that residents of Welsh communities which have been hardest hit by Covid-19’s health and economic impacts feel that the ‘green recovery’ works for them, enhancing both their livelihoods and quality of life. This will mean that opportunities arising from our recommendations are accessible to residents of these communities and that local people are involved in decisions about improvements to their areas.

²² <https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/682681/gn004-by-all-reasonable-means-least-restrictive-access-to-the-outdoors.pdf>

4. Nature Based Solutions: The cornerstone of the Green Recovery

Nature Based Solutions (NBS) are about taking actions that are inspired and rooted in building the resilience of nature. The solutions simultaneously address the climate and nature emergencies and provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits. For this reason, they are often cost effective. Actions focus on a range of ecosystems on land and sea, including:

- Protected sites improvement
- Peatland restoration
- Woodland and hedgerow restoration and expansion
- Blue carbon²³ in the marine environment
- River and wetland restoration

Nature Based Solutions are at the heart of the Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy^{24 25} and NRW's work on Area Statements²⁶. To date, investment has been driven through a series of grant programmes run by Welsh Government through the Enabling Natural Resources & Well-being Fund (ENRaW), Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS) Grant programmes and Glastir Woodland Creation. Latterly, capital funding has been released for one year by Welsh Government for distribution through the National Lottery Heritage Fund and NRW, as well as the bespoke SMS for the Natura 2000 sites programme.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery through Nature Based Solutions

Protected sites

Although no proposals were received specifically related to improvements in the protected sites network in Wales, the Task and Finish Group recognise the critical importance of maintaining these areas crucial to Welsh biodiversity. A network which covers a wide range of habitats on the land, at sea and in rivers are home to some of the rarest species in Wales, the UK and Europe. Nevertheless, SoNaRR^{27 28} and the State of Nature Report²⁹ underline their poor condition. The Task and Finish Group believes that restoring these sites and building their wider ecological resilience must lie at the heart of the Welsh green recovery.

²³ Includes sea grass and salt-marsh habitats

²⁴ Natural Resources Policy, Welsh Government, 2018

²⁵ Implementing the Natural Resources Policy: A snapshot, 2019

²⁶ <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/area-statements/>

²⁷ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/682366/sonarr-summary-september-2016-edited-august-2017.pdf>

²⁸ <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/state-of-natural-resources-interim-report-2019/?lang=en>

²⁹ <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/reports/>

Restoring sites is often complex, requiring co-ordinated action between a number of private individuals and companies, public bodies and third sector organisations who own or manage portions of a site. The Task and Finish Group recognises that the new land management and fisheries schemes will play an important role incentivising action by individuals to restore these sites. Nevertheless, these schemes will not start until 2024.

In the interim period, the Task and Finish Group believes that action must be accelerated through collaboration and partnership building. NRW and Welsh Government are already working with third sector environment groups who own or manage land to develop multi-year programmes for improvement at the sites they own or manage, with the expectation that they look beyond their boundaries to work with neighbours.

To build on this the Task and Finish Group will convene a co-design conference with those public sector organisations such as the National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships, Local Authorities and NRW who own or manage land and third sector organisations, such as the National Trust and Wildlife Trusts, to build a shared agenda for action for the restoration of nature on the land they directly own and manage.

Peatland restoration

Peatlands are a rich and varied suite of habitats and are an important natural resource for carbon capture and storage and the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions. 95% of the carbon held in our environment is in peat soils³⁰. However, peatland environments across Wales are in need of urgent action to reverse habitat loss and declining condition. Peatlands can only deliver the full range of characteristic environmental benefits and services when in good ecological condition, when the structures and functions of healthy peatland systems are in place.

The NRW National Peatland Action Programme sets out a five-year plan to restore targeted peatland ecosystems across Wales and is funded by the Welsh Government.

Although no proposals were submitted related to peatland restoration, the Task and Finish Group believes that accelerating long term investment in peatland restoration must be a central component of the green recovery. The Task and Finish Group will work with farming groups, those parts of the public sector who own land and third sector organisations to explore alternative funding models to accelerate investment in this area.

Woodland and hedgerow restoration and expansion

Increasing tree cover through planting hedges and new woodland areas captures and stores atmospheric carbon. Some studies claim that forests capture about half of the world's carbon emissions from fossil fuels every year³¹. Existing woodland helps to reduce flooding by slowing down and storing water. In order to meet climate change targets, the UK Climate Change Committee has advised an increase in woodland cover for Wales of

³⁰ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/682366/sonarr-summary-september-2016-edited-august-2017.pdf>

³¹ Advice on using nature based interventions to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, Natural Capital Committee, 2020

2,000 ha per annum rising to 4,000 ha per annum as quickly as possible³². However, Wales has a long way to go to meet this ambition.

The right tree in the right place is central to Welsh Government's policy and delivery framework. Woodland restoration and improvement are also critically important, as woodland habitats are important for wildlife, provide a source of timber and creates opportunities for recreation and tourism.

The Welsh Government has well established flagship programmes to support investment in woodland restoration and expansion, with a total of £34 million allocated through the Glastir Programme. The Welsh Government has just launched the 'National Forest for Wales' programme and has a community woodlands grant scheme managed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. NRW also manages an extensive woodland creation programme as well as the Welsh Governments Plant! Programme. There is a great deal of activity in this area, but progress relies on finding suitable areas of land for planting, as well as reliable supplies of planting stock of the right provenance. Capacity within existing tree nurseries may not be sufficient to meet this additional demand.

We received over 40 submissions related to tree planting from individual members of the public, community groups and third sector organisations, demonstrating the significant interest and passion in this topic.

Our review of the proposals identified many that have a natural fit with the existing programmes run by Welsh Government and NRW. The Task and Finish Group recognise that some people may already have submitted grant applications to these existing programmes and only by understanding this context can they identify a way forward. Harnessing the energy and enthusiasm for tree planting is vitally important and the Task and Finish Group is committed to working with proposers to provide tailored advice and feedback. In parallel, the Group will explore alternative delivery models as it is imperative that we build on and harness this enthusiasm. Planting trees quickly and/or enabling natural regeneration is the key to Wales achieving the stretching emission reduction targets.

Woodland and hedgerow expansion also provide significant opportunities for contributing to the circular economy. One proposal focuses on opportunities to develop tree nurseries to ensure there is a secure supply of saplings to meet future demand in Wales, while a second explores developing new, higher value markets for timber in house building. The Task and Finish Group sets out their assessment of these proposals in chapter 5.

There are a number of proposals related to drawing people into the proposed National Forest in new and creative ways such as 'End to end walking Wales under tree canopy'. These have a clear vision that could inform the design of the National Forest to ensure that the opportunities for local and regional tourism are fully maximised. The Task and Finish Group will pass these ideas to the Welsh Government team leading the development of the National Forest.

³² https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/low-carbon-delivery-plan_1.pdf

Tree planting within urban settings is a critical part of the themes for housing, reimagining our urban areas and active travel. The Task and Finish Group believes there is real scope to build on the proposals set out in 'Orchards for Wales', 'Tree Town Greening teams' and 'Managing hedges for biodiversity' to develop a clearly targeted and focussed programme to support tree and hedge planting in urban areas across Wales. Wrexham, Bridgend, Swansea and Cardiff Local Authorities, for example, have already used the iTree tool to identify tree cover within the urban area.

As a first step, the Task and Finish Group will support the roll out of a programme of iTree assessments across towns and cities, to provide evidence of urban tree management and inform the preparation of urban tree planting proposals linked to the spatial priorities identified in the Urban Tree Canopy Cover Report³³.

Table 6: Woodland and hedgerow restoration and expansion

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Trees for All | More Trees Now | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Farm Garden | Orchards for Wales | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Advancing i-Tree - supporting urban green infrastructure improvements across Wales | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Woodland Trust | Tree Towns Teams for Wales | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Woodknowledge Wales | Home grown homes 2 | Contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Every town should have its own wood | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | End to end – walking Wales under tree canopy | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Haverfordwest Town Council | The National Forest Nursery and Information Centre | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |

³³ <https://www.google.com/search?q=urban+tree+canopy+cover+wales&ie=&oe=>

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2 | Cwm Arian Renewable Energy/Growing Better Connections | Managing Hedges for Biodiversity | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Cooperative Woodlands Cymru – creating and managing woodlands from the roots up. | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |

Blue carbon in the marine environment

The Group recognises that investment in marine and coastal habitats would not only benefit nature but also provide significant benefits to communities protecting them against flooding from storm surges and high tides. This is increasingly important as we face rising sea-levels and increasing frequency of extreme weather events.

Recent work undertaken by NRW³⁴ indicates that the marine environment already stores significant levels of carbon. Given that many marine and coastal habitats important for storing and sequestering carbon, such as sea grass and salt marsh, have suffered historical loss in extent around Wales, the Task and Finish Group recognises the significant opportunity to increase the blue carbon potential of our seas through restoring these habitats.

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) network covers almost 70% of Welsh seas. Within this network there are significant opportunities for building the resilience of habitats such as seagrass and saltmarsh with several exciting projects underway in Welsh waters³⁵. We have received several proposals that relate to the restoration of the ecological resilience of marine ecosystems, including ‘Restoring marine ecosystems’; ‘Coastal champions’; ‘Making the most of our changing coast’; ‘Protecting marine assets’ and ‘Marine Safe havens’. One proposal relates to the restoration of native oyster reefs, which would build blue carbon but also lead to improvements in water quality. In addition, this proposal has significant opportunities for creating new markets and adding value to local food supply networks.

There is a lot of commonality between these projects and Task and Finish Group members have worked with the Wales Marine Action Advisory Group to consolidate the proposals, recognising that they all have merit in addressing the climate and nature emergencies, growing skills in an emerging area of science. The Task and Finish Group believes more work is required to identify the most appropriate mechanism to support delivery and is committed to working with the Wales Marine Action Advisory group to achieve this. Cross reference to table 9 to view the proposals.

³⁴ Armstrong, S., Hull, S., Pearson, Z., Wilson, R. and Kay, S., 2020. Estimating the Carbon Sink Potential of the Welsh Marine Environment. NRW evidence report 428

³⁵ <https://www.projectseagrass.org/seagrass-ocean-rescue/>

River and wetland restoration

Improving the quality of inland waters as well as managing and improving river flows is critical, creating benefits for biodiversity and for people through access to safe, reliable water for use in the home, on the farm, in business and industry as well as a resource for recreational activity and tourism.

There are extensive programmes of investment planned by water companies³⁶, NRW³⁷ and Welsh Government³⁸ that support different aspects of river and wetland restoration and Natural Flood Management.

Two proposals were received from Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. The first relates to the provision of a grant funding scheme to support improvements in river catchments that align with the company's strategic objectives. The second is a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) type scheme to support improvements in land management in priority catchments. Both these proposals have real merit and are welcomed by the Task and Finish Group. The Group commits to working with the company to align these proposals with the next steps of green recovery implementation.

³⁶ <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/regulated-companies/price-review/2019-price-review/final-determinations/>
<https://corporate.dwrcymru.com/en/about-us/our-plans/water-2020>

³⁷ NRW, River restoration £2.2 mil 2020/21; plus £450k each year

³⁸ <https://gov.wales/more-than-2million-natural-flood-management-schemes-across-wales>

Table 7: River and wetland restoration

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|-------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 1 | DCWW | Accelerate Biodiversity projects through Dŵr Cymru's Independent Environmental Advisory Panel (Made of largely environmental NGOs / NRW representatives) IEAP to support ecological and climate change resilience | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 1 | DCWW | Develop Market based Ecosystem Services (MES) to support diffuse pollution controls, and enhance ecological resilience | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | WWF Cymru | Grey Infrastructure Removal | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Restoring the rivers of Wales | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Developing mains drainage schemes for rural villages in Wales | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute |

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to accelerate Nature Based Solutions

Nature Based Solutions deliver multiple benefits for nature and decarbonisation. Slowing down the flow in our rivers or retaining carbon in our peatlands benefits communities in the direct vicinity of the improvement, as well as those further away. The Task and Finish

Group believes that Nature Based Solutions must be at the heart of the green recovery in Wales.

Undoubtedly, investment in Nature Based Solutions will drive opportunities for skills development and employment, not only in the direct delivery of programmes of work, but also upstream opportunities to supply materials such as fencing and sapling protectors. There are also opportunities to stimulate new businesses such as tree nurseries. The Task and Finish Group believes it is vital that additional support is provided to SMEs and small contractors to enable them to take advantage of these opportunities. The Group will work with organisations such as Wales Co-operative Centre and Business in the Community to identify what type of support programmes can be developed.

To date, investment in Nature Based Solutions has been characterised by short term funding with few mechanisms available to enable and incentivise bottom-up approaches involving farmers and other land managers. Meaningful collaboration requires upfront investment of time and money to develop relationships and build trust with the community and land managers. Short-term funding can be a barrier to building these relationships and partnerships. We have seen some high-profile projects in Wales falter because they have failed to properly involve the community and owners and managers of the land in the design of the proposal.

The Task and Finish Group believes it is critical to move to a long-term funding approach to drive Nature Based Solutions. Money needs to be available over multiple years to encourage collaboration and partnership working³⁹. Building on the recommendations of the report “Green recovery: Supporting the environment sector in Wales”⁴⁰, the Task and Finish Group will bring together the funding bodies operating in Wales to explore how funding can be targeted to support investment in Nature Based Solutions through fostering a culture of collaboration. The use of alternative financial mechanisms and delivery models, including the involvement of private finance is critical and is considered in more detail in Table 17.

The Task and Finish Group recognise the critical role farmers and land managers must play in delivering Nature Based Solutions on the land they own and manage. There are some excellent examples where farmers are already taking action⁴¹, however the Group recognises that the sector is facing an unprecedented period of uncertainty as the UK leaves the European Union and the Welsh Government develops the new Sustainable Land Management Scheme. Building the confidence of farmers to take NBS action now is critical. The Task and Finish Group believes that opportunities should be explored to support farmers and land managers in the transition period to 2024, as well as providing clear signals to the market to start to account for the true cost of food production, helping the market to adjust to valuing Wales’s high quality and healthy food, produced from local and sustainable sources. The principle of social justice and equity should underpin this transition, allowing all farmers to adopt NBS actions on the land they own or manage, and for this not to prejudice their eligibility to access future funding schemes.

³⁹ Funding Centre, 2020, Green recovery: Supporting the environment sector in Wales

⁴⁰ Green Recovery: Supporting the environment sector in Wales, October 2020, The Funding Centre

⁴¹ https://ffcc.co.uk/assets/downloads/FFCC_Wales-Field-Guide-for-Future-Generations_English.pdf

5. Transforming our socio-economic systems

Nature Based Solutions alone will not be enough to drive the green recovery. Action to tackle unsustainable levels of production and consumption are also required to ensure that we reduce the pressures on our natural resources by keeping resources in use for as long as possible, avoiding all waste and moving to more sustainable alternatives. Our way of life, and the systems we use to produce and consume things which support it, need to change. The UN IPBES⁴² highlights the need for transformational, system-wide changes. The Task and Finish Group recognises the significant role that the green recovery can play in transitioning to a more sustainable future. This chapter addresses the opportunities to accelerate the transition of key sectors of the Welsh economy highlighting what can be done, as well as the opportunities to maximise the benefits for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy.

Food

The UK food system is in flux as the UK Government negotiates exit from the EU. Farmers are likely to be subject to new systems of agricultural support as set out in the Welsh Government's developing Sustainable Farming Scheme, while the UK Government's Trade Bill may raise the prospect of imports of products with lower standards of food safety, animal welfare and environmental quality. The fragility and inequalities inherent in the UK food system have been exposed through the pandemic; farmers who are dependent on the wholesale and hospitality sectors have seen the demand for their goods plummet; supermarket customers have stock-piled goods while there has been a significant increase in the number of families using food banks. Food producers from the farmer to the grocer, butcher, café and restaurant owners have found new ways of connecting with consumers, with a shift to localism through on-line selling, distribution of food boxes and home delivery of meals.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in food

EU exit and the restructuring of farm payment schemes that is currently underway means there is significant uncertainty in agricultural markets and prices. The Task and Finish Group believe there is considerable benefit in working with many of the proposals to trial and pilot system-wide changes which may have far reaching benefits for a long-term green recovery.

A number of proposals will be connected into a programme supported by the Food, Farming & Countryside Commission Cymru to accelerate the shift towards sustainable production of healthy, accessible and affordable food in Wales. Proposals for inclusion in this programme are from established large and small third sector organisations as well as harnessing the energy of community farmers and growers. Some of the proposals for inclusion in the programme focus on existing community growing initiatives, such as the Penparcau Planting in Aberystwyth, while others seek to extend community growing within urban areas. Sustainable Food Places and Food Sense Wales have both submitted proposals which have been endorsed by the Task and Finish Group. Both proposals have

⁴² <https://ipbes.net/>

been successful in securing grant funding through other routes to support cross-sector food partnerships and the transition to low carbon food systems. With the availability of grant money to fund pilot schemes, the Task and Finish Group welcomes the opportunity to join these different elements together to co-design an approach that will deliver a more holistic and joined up approach to food growing in Wales.

Access to land for collaborative food production at the community scale is the focus of a number of proposals. The Welsh Government has signalled its continued support in this area with the Welsh Allotment Regeneration Initiative grant announced in the summer. Given the continued interest in allotments and community food growing, the Task and Finish Group will work with local authorities to identify what, if anything, can be done to support the expansion of allotments across Wales.

The Task and Finish Group recognises that a number of proposals are dependent on the transfer of land from public sector organisations for use by community groups. The legal process for going about this can be protracted as there are a number of issues to be considered. The Group will commission a review to identify more effective ways of transferring publicly owned or managed land to community groups, to include an assessment of the risks and opportunities for both public sector organisations and community groups. The Task and Finish Group believes this is the key to unlocking the potential of a number of proposals submitted.

There are undoubtedly some areas that fall within the remit of Government to unlock potential. Direct infrastructure investment in local food processing facilities such as abattoirs, processing and packing facilities for meat and vegetables is critical to building the resilience of the Welsh farming sector. This gap has been recognised in a number of reports by the Welsh Government and the farming unions in the run up to exit from the EU.⁴³ The Task and Finish Group recognises that connecting food growers with local markets, by shortening the supply chain can only work if the right infrastructure is in place locally. Addressing this gap is the key to enabling many farmers and growers across Wales to diversify their business models. The Task and Finish Group, led by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission will convene a workshop to consider how this can best be enabled.

A number of proposals relate to building the capacity of horticulture by improving available infrastructure. The Task and Finish Group recognises the merit of these proposals and will provide support to develop business cases. The Group believes there is a real opportunity for Welsh Government to develop a targeted investment programme to support the expansion of the horticulture sector in Wales, with opportunities for skill development. In addition, there is merit in reviewing the planning rules to remove the 5-hectare size criteria included in the definition of a “proper business” for permitted horticultural development rights.

⁴³ https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/eu-exit-scenario-planning-workshops-summary_0.pdf

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

Food is commonly recognised as a major cross-cutting opportunity in many of the proposals. Changes to the way we produce our food potentially provide a host of benefits including reducing emissions, restoring biodiversity, resource efficiency, improving skills, creating jobs, better nutrition and health, reducing child poverty, connecting people to their landscape, cultural identity and reducing inequalities.

Food is a key opportunity to lock in some of the positive behaviours during the lockdown. Consumers are more aware of their food waste and many food and drink retailers/businesses have benefitted from people looking for local supplies.

In thinking about circular economy opportunities in the food system, it is important to think beyond the production of produce, to consider the up and downstream opportunities. For example, there may be opportunities to use alternative, low carbon packaging materials or substitute the use of some materials to those with a lower impact.

Farmers and land managers play a pivotal role in delivering Nature Based Solutions on the land they own and manage, with wider benefits for the circular economy and community health and nutrition. They are facing an unprecedented period of uncertainty as the UK leaves the European Union and the Welsh Government develops the new Sustainable Land Management Scheme. The Task and Finish Group believes that in the period between now and 2024, support mechanisms should be established to enable farmers to start taking action on NBS now. The principle of social justice and equity should underpin this transition period, allowing all farmers to adopt NBS actions on the land they own or manage, and for this not to prejudice their eligibility to access future funding schemes.

Table 8: Food

| Score | Organisation / Programme | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Circular economy | Reversing decline in biodiversity | Groups, communities and places most vulnerable / hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|--------------------------|---|--|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | NRW and low carbon sustainable food systems | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Deepdock Ltd | Seas of Change: The Collaborative Development of Open Water Shellfish Production and Functional | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |

| Score | Organisation / Programme | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Circular economy | Reversing decline in biodiversity | Groups, communities and places most vulnerable / hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|-------------------------------|---|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| | | Foods Supply Chain in Wales | | | | | |
| 1 | Sustainable Food Places | Transitioning to a low carbon, sustainable food system through making Wales a nation of local cross-sector food partnerships and a creating a Wales good food movement. | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Food Sense Wales | Growing our growers to grow | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Social Farms & Gardens Wales | Urban Agriculture – Food Production where it is most needed | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 1 | Penparcau Community Centre | Penparcau Planting Project | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | The Green Valleys (Wales) CIC | A Local Food Production Subsidy - The "Feeding Tariff" | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | The Green Valleys (Wales) CIC | Community Land Stewardship - Skyline | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | One Planet Council | Promote Welsh One Planet Development | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Woodland Trust | Farm Plan Habitat Assessments for all Farms in Wales | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |

| Score | Organisation / Programme | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Circular economy | Reversing decline in biodiversity | Groups, communities and places most vulnerable / hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|---------------------------------------|--|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| 2 | Woodland Trust | Tree Friendly Future Farming | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Agro Bio Wales | Agro Bio Wales | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Renew Wales | Local food plans for citizen engagement | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Our Food | Land entrepreneurs | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Resilience Network Pembrokeshire | Community produce land Pembrokeshire | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Being Somewhere | Proactive support for climate wise and ecologically sound small-scale food production. | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership | Restorative Agriculture Demonstrators | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | The Landworkers Alliance Cymru | Capital grants for edible horticulture & short supply chain infrastructure | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | The Landworkers Alliance Cymru | A National Community Resilience Fund & National Food Service | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Community Land Advisory Service Cymru | Unlocking Land | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Social Farms & Gardens Wales | Pollination Corridors | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Y Dref Werdd | Development of community land and safeguarding habitats | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |

| Score | Organisation / Programme | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Circular economy | Reversing decline in biodiversity | Groups, communities and places most vulnerable / hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|----------------------------------|--|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| 2 | WWF Cymru | Small Scale Community Land Management | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Cooperative Woodlands Cymru – creating and managing woodlands from the roots up. | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Using Surplus Food & Preventing food waste | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Better Food labelling to empower consumers to choose healthy and sustainable diets | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | WWF Cymru | Fixing Wales' Food System to Enable Green Jobs | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Being Somewhere | Proactive support for climate wise and ecologically sound small-scale food production. | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |

Marine

Wales is a coastal nation and our marine environment offers a range of opportunities to support a green recovery. These range from Nature Based Solutions to the significant economic opportunities in terms of fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, marine renewables, and supporting well-being through access to the marine and coastal environment.

Coastal communities in Wales are facing immediate economic impacts of both Covid-19 and Brexit, in many cases alongside a longer-term challenge of economic decline and coastal erosion and flooding as a result of climate change.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for a Green Recovery in Marine

A relatively small number of proposals were submitted related to marine and coastal issues. Task and Finish Group members worked with the Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (WMAAG) to consider the proposals and highlighted the significant overlaps between them. Working with the WMAAG the Task and Finish Group consolidated the proposals to focus on working with marine and coastal communities to harness the opportunities offered by our coasts and seas. Submissions emphasised a significant opportunity to deliver a programme of work that raises awareness and enables coastal communities to drive forwards a blue recovery.

The programme would address:

- The need to raise awareness and build capacity within coastal communities to identify and deliver on local opportunities for a blue recovery.
- The challenge of climate change coastal adaptation with rising sea levels, and the need to engage coastal communities in forward planning for a changing coastline, exploring the importance of nature-based solutions and economic and social opportunities (such as coastal tourism; well-being through access to blue space).
- The specific economic opportunities offered in the marine environment in terms of fisheries and aquaculture, coastal tourism, and renewable energy.
- The potential of marine renewable energy to contribute to the decarbonisation agenda. Specifically, there is an urgent need to address marine renewable evidence priorities that can inform decision-making on sustainable deployment of these technologies.

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

The Task and Finish Group recognise that further work is needed to further refine these proposals, and welcome the commitment of WMAAG to scale up work of the existing Consenting Strategic Advisory Group to more rapidly address identified marine renewable evidence priorities to support decision-making around the sustainable deployment of marine renewable technologies in Welsh waters.

The Task and Finish Group will work with WMAAG to explore the design and delivery of a 'Blue Growth Coastal Fund' that could support engagement with coastal communities to identify, plan and deliver integrated projects that address local opportunities to deliver multiple benefits. Developing such a long-term fund could include identifying sustainable finance mechanisms or could build on existing narrower funding mechanisms such as WG's Coastal Communities Fund.

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to impacts of climate change | Reversing decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places most vulnerable / hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|-----------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Marine Energy Wales | CSAG science and evidence subgroup | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum | WATO Wales adventure and tourism organisation | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Restoring marine ecosystems | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Deployment of sustainable marine renewable technology | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Making the most of our changing coast | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Wales Wildlife trust | A sustainable marine energy sector | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Severn Estuary Partnership | Wales: A Coastal Community | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum | A Blue Welsh Recovery | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Marine Conservation Society | Protecting marine assets for future generations | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Marine Conservation Society | Marine Safe Havens | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | James Wilson | Increased water shellfish production | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | RSPB | Welsh seabird resilience project | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Marine Energy Wales | Marine renewable | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | energy coastal community energy pilot | | | | | |
| 2 | Canoe Wales | Increasing blue space opportunity | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | RSPB | Coastal Champions | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |

Reimagining our urban areas with nature and green spaces at the heart

Lockdown dramatically changed the way we work. In a matter of days, many of us switched to home working and schooling. For some people, this was a seamless change, but for many, particularly in rural areas, poor broadband coverage became a barrier to home schooling, working and accessing public services on-line.

Surveys have indicated that many people want to continue home working after the pandemic has passed, identifying the significant benefits for their work/life balance and well-being, reducing commuting and contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions. The Welsh Government has committed to 30% of the workforce regularly working from home in the future.

Equal access to fast broadband across Wales is the key to meeting this target and unlocking Wales' ambition to a socially and economically just recovery. Although we did not receive any specific proposals relating to digital infrastructure, the Task and Finish Group believes that accelerating investment in digital infrastructure is critical to realising our collective commitment to place making and enabling all communities across Wales to flourish.

With more people working from home, there is a real opportunity to reconnect people with their community and town centres. The Task and Finish Group welcomes the Placemaking Wales Charter Pledge⁴⁴ and the 20-minute neighbourhood proposal of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales⁴⁵. The Task and Finish Group recognises that the Welsh Government has already committed to step up investment in local town centres, including the provision of better access to open spaces and the creation of remote working hubs⁴⁶.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in reimagining our urban areas

We have received a significant number of proposals that relate to the restoration of nature and green spaces in urban areas across Wales. Access to local parks played a significant role supporting the physical and mental well-being of many people through the Covid-19 lockdown, providing them with a space to enjoy the outdoors and reconnect with nature.

⁴⁴ Welsh Government & Welsh Design Council, Placemaking Charter, 23 September 2020

⁴⁵ <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/news/climate-week-how-20-minute-neighbourhoods-can-help-us-fight-the-climate-emergency-and-save-our-towns-and-cities/>

⁴⁶ Welsh Government, Covid-19 Reconstruction: Challenges and Opportunities October 7, 2020

However, access to green space is very uneven across Wales, with the Green Space Index 2020⁴⁷ demonstrating that close to a quarter of a million people in Wales live more than a 10-minute walk from a park or green space.

Overcoming the gap in green space provision is recognised in a proposal from Fields in Trust, which focuses on the establishment of three new parks within deprived areas of Cardiff, Newport and Neath-Port Talbot. The Task and Finish Group believes this proposal has real merit and will use its convening power to bring together the relevant local authorities, community groups and Public Service Boards to discuss in more detail. If there is an appetite for taking this forward within the local community, the Task and Finish Group will support the development of the business case.

Increasing the availability of green space in deprived areas only addresses part of the issue. The Task and Finish Group recognises that existing green spaces are often under-used as the areas are not seen as safe or of good quality. There are some excellent examples where communities have been involved in improving green space across their housing estate such as Cartrefi Conwy at the Parc Peulwys and Tre Cwm estates. A proposal from NRW highlights how the approach from Cartrefi Conwy be extended to other social housing areas across Wales. The Task and Finish Group supports this proposal and will work to target this activity to those communities and areas most impacted by Covid-19.

A number of proposals show a real commitment to restoring neglected green spaces on communities' doorsteps, transforming them into food growing areas, community orchards, pollinator gardens and community woodland areas. The Task and Finish Group recognise the importance of restoring and enhancing 'nature on your doorstep' as an important contribution to not only reversing nature's decline but also connecting people with nature and the benefits this drives for individual physical and mental well-being. The Task and Finish Group supports these proposals and will consider if they fit within the existing Local Places for Nature Programme funded by Welsh Government. If not, the Group will provide support to develop business cases for submission to other funders in the coming months. The Group believes that long term funding is critical to ensuring that biodiverse green spaces continue to be created and nurtured within our communities.

Green infrastructure, particularly trees, play an important role in our towns and cities providing shade, cleaning our air, capturing carbon and supporting biodiversity⁴⁸. Tree cover in deprived areas of Wales tends to be lower and relatively less 'rich'. A number of submissions identified in Table 6 will support the planting of trees in our urban areas and for this reason are supported by the Task and Finish Group.

The Group also received proposals that involved digging up existing pedestrian areas and replacing them with wildflower meadows and trees. Although there will be accessibility issues to consider, integrating these more radical ideas into broader proposals that include, for example sustainable urban drainage schemes, will deliver multiple benefits for nature and communities.

⁴⁷ <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/green-space-index>

⁴⁸ Trees for Cities: 10 reasons we need to plant more, January 2020

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

Building space for nature back into our urban landscape brings significant benefits for individual and community health and well-being, decarbonisation and climate adaptation as well as the circular economy as recognised by Planning Policy Wales 10's approach⁴⁹.

The design of any new schemes will require careful thought to maximise the benefits for people and nature as well as building the resilience of the community to future floods and heatwaves by designing in options such as SUDs or tree planting that provides shade. There are also many circular economy opportunities, particularly when looking at the materials and resources that are needed to deliver the improvements. To accelerate the pace of change, the Task and Finish Group will draw together designers, landscape architects and town planners operating in Wales to ensure the proposals we've received inform future investment in urban areas across Wales.

The Task and Finish Group welcomes Welsh Governments commitment to establishing remote working hubs. The Group believes there is a real opportunity to demonstrate how action to re-fit and re-purpose buildings maximises the contribution to the green recovery by building in space for nature, retrofitting energy and water efficiency technologies and using recycled materials and re-manufactured furniture that we produce here in Wales.

Table 10: Reimagining our urban areas with nature and green spaces at the heart

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Social Farms & Gardens Wales | Pollination Corridors | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Fields in Trust | Enabling a Permanent Green Recovery for Wales | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Greening Social Housing | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Local Nature Partnerships | Parc Hanes Green Infrastructure | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |

⁴⁹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/building-better-places-the-planning-system-delivering-resilient-and-brighter-futures.pdf>

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| | | Creation, Kinmel Bay | | | | | |
| 2 | Halen Mon | Green Recovery by Creating Flowering Streets | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Wildlife Trusts Wales | Green Infrastructure - Grow Back Better | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |

Active travel and sustainable transport

Encouraging people out of their cars to use public transport, cycle and walk is a central tenet of the Welsh Government's decarbonisation agenda. The Welsh Government has provided a legislative framework and committed significant investment to active travel. Additional money has been committed since the onset of lockdown, with a further £38million made available in July 2020 to support local authorities to provide safe walking and cycling infrastructure. There has also been significant investment to improve public transport, with Transport for Wales leading much of that ambitious agenda, although the pandemic presents considerable challenges to public transport use in the immediate term.

In line with the Active Travel Act guidance, local authorities have spent considerable time focussing on the development of networks of walking and cycling routes linking our communities to places of work, learning, shops and health care provision. Through lockdown, many people have reconnected with nature and their local area and there is a real opportunity to build on this momentum to develop walking and cycling routes that connect people with the nature on their doorsteps. The Group recognises that taking such an approach goes beyond the current definition of active travel set out in the guidance⁵⁰, but believe there are significant benefits for individual and community health and well-being by taking a broader definition of active travel that fits within the framing of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Task and Finish Group believes that all new and upgraded active travel routes should adhere to Guidance⁵¹ on equity of access.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in the active travel and sustainable transport

We have received a number of active travel proposals, which the Task and Finish Group recognises could already sit within existing local authority integrated network maps or could complement these plans. The Task and Finish Group will work with the relevant local authorities to explore the best way of taking forward these proposals.

Two proposals from North West and Mid Wales focus on the creation of new active travel routes. The first, in Anglesey, would connect national nature reserves, other historic sites and the Wales Coast Path into multi-use circular routes, connecting communities across the island. The second proposal connects the Dyfi Biosphere with local towns and villages

⁵⁰ https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2020-02/active-travel-guidance_1.pdf

⁵¹ <https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/682681/gn004-by-all-reasonable-means-least-restrictive-access-to-the-outdoors.pdf>

in that area. These proposals will not only enhance the physical and mental well-being of the local community but also act as a catalyst for growth beyond the honeypot sites of the coast path and Dyfi Biosphere. The Task and Finish Group strongly supports the further development of these proposals into robust business cases, including explicit consideration of on-going maintenance costs.

The Welsh Government and local authorities are already developing a range of initiatives for electric vehicle expansion across Wales. A number of submissions relate to the development of electric vehicle charging, with a focus on rural areas. The Task and Finish Group recognises there are some interesting proposals for locating charging points at churches/chapels and other landmark buildings across our communities in Wales, ensuring this additional infrastructure becomes part of, and integrated with, local communities. Members of the Task and Finish Group have already started working with local authorities to see if these proposals fit within existing plans and programmes to ensure any proposals are taken forward in a co-ordinated way.

Some proposals relate to transport management, with suggestions for more local park and ride schemes around the Menai Bridges as well as measures to improve the use of public transport through, for example, improvement in railway station facilities and financial incentives to use public transport – such as free travel for young people. The Task and Finish Group will meet with Transport for Wales to discuss these proposals and the opportunities for inclusion within their plans going forward.

Congestion and parking problems in our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty was in evidence before and after lockdown restrictions were in place. The influx of visitors created significant pressure on local infrastructure with car parks overwhelmed and illegal parking restricting road access for the local community. This pattern continued throughout the summer with the National Parks, Local Authorities and Police having to devote significant resources to raise public awareness of the restrictions and stricter enforcement of parking laws. In addition, this model of tourism contributes relatively little to the local economy. The Task and Finish Group recognises the vital importance of finding better ways of managing the influx of visitors, so that it is sustainable and adds value to local communities.

Snowdonia National Park has submitted a proposal that sets out an integrated transport plan for the Park. Work is underway between the National Park and Gwynedd Council to identify and develop more sustainable models, drawing on good practice from other countries such as Austria. The Task and Finish Group believes this proposal has real merit and should be an immediate priority for investment. The approach being developed in Snowdonia is likely to have much wider applicability in other locations across Wales.

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

The Task and Finish Group believes that as far as practicable, all active travel routes should become pathways for nature, especially pollinators. At the design and planning stage the Task and Finish Group believes there needs to be careful consideration of the opportunities to include Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), tree, hedge and wildflower

planting along the routes which will maximise the opportunities for pollinators. It will also be important to consider the opportunities for substituting lower carbon materials in the actual construction of these routes. Looking at the routes across a town or city will also be important to build the connectivity between green spaces and the link to the wider countryside, contributing to improvements in air quality with the multiple benefits of access to the outdoors for physical health and mental well-being.

Table 11: Active travel and sustainable transport

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|--------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Halen Mon | Parking changes in Snowdonia linked to transport | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Halen Mon | Green spine route in Anglesey | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Multipurpose cycle and footpath between Borth, Ynyslas and Dyfi NNR linked to health and well-being local opportunities as part of the Dyfi Biosphere. | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Snowdonia National Park | Design and implement an integrated sustainable transport approach | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Future Generations Wales | Invest in better ways to connect and move people; by providing incentives to encourage people back | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | onto public transport and investment in active travel infrastructure | | | | | |
| 2 | Individual | Electric Connections | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Individual | Green Charge Co-op | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Denbighshire Cycle & Walking Paths | Cycle and Walking Paths | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Electric Vehicle Car Clubs (linked to Charge Points) | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Halen Mon | Extending Park & Ride near the Menai Bridges in Anglesey | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Cardi Bach – Whitland to Cardigan Cycleway | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | End to end – walking Wales under tree canopy | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Transforming redundant railway route into walking trails and cycle paths | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Investing in our railway stations | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Off Grid Electric Bike Charging | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |

Circular economy

Building on Wales' world class performance on recycling, the Welsh Government launched the consultation 'Beyond Recycling: a strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality' in December 2019. The consultation recognises that keeping materials in circulation for as long as possible and avoiding waste is important to increasing economic resilience and making Wales net zero carbon by 2050. A total of £39.7 million in Grant funding has been made available by the Welsh Government to facilitate change with

£6.5m in the business stream, £20m to publicly funded bodies and £13.2m to town and community centre repair and reuse.⁵²

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in the Circular Economy

Many proposals submitted to the Task and Finish Group address the underlying issues of unsustainable levels of production and consumption by keeping resources in use for as long as possible, avoiding waste and moving to more sustainable alternatives. This is particularly strong in the proposals related to food, housing and skills development. In our assessment of all proposals, we have drawn out the opportunities to sharpen the focus and tackle unsustainable levels of production and consumption in the design and implementation of all proposals.

Three proposals relate to the extension of repair/ reuse activities, which could complement existing local authority initiatives or programmes run by organisations such as the Ministry of Furniture in Baglan. The Task and Finish Group will look at the synergies and either signpost to existing Welsh Government funding programmes or provide support to potentially consolidate into one programme of work.

There are significant opportunities to add-value to Welsh timber, to expand or create new markets. The Task and Finish Group welcomes two proposals related to the use of timber in building construction, through expansion of the timber frame market. This reflects a significant opportunity for the Welsh forestry sector, creating new markets for high value wood products as well as providing a means to lock-in carbon, reducing the use of other high carbon materials in construction such as cement. The Task and Finish Group recognises the significant potential in these proposals and will provide support to develop the business cases to accelerate progress.

Also, in the forestry sector, we have received one proposal that relates to investment in the development of a tree nursery. The Task and Finish Group recognises the importance of growing this market in Wales, as a reliable supply of saplings will be key to the expansion of tree planting. The Task and Finish Group sees the value of this proposal but recognises that additional permissions need to be secured. To move to the next stage, the Task and Finish group will contact the proposer to consider if additional support to develop a business case is still required.

The use of wool as an insulation material in construction is the focus of one proposal. This is an established idea which has so far failed to move beyond a niche product. Given the significant decline in the price of wool produced by Welsh farmers, there is a real need to create new markets for this product. The Task and Finish Group believes there is real potential in looking at a Challenge Fund mechanism to drive innovation in this area, to create new uses and markets for this staple product of Welsh farming.

⁵² <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-reconstruction-challenges-and-priorities-html#content>

Table 12: Circular economy

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|----------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Marine Conservation Society | A reusable start to life! | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Nutrient Recycling - Integrated Biomass Hubs | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 1 | Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Reuse and Repair Trading Network Cymru | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 1 | Keep Wales Tidy | Repair Apprenticeships | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |

Tourism

Tourism is an important part of the economy of Wales, with 9%⁵³ of the workforce employed in the sector. The natural environment of Wales - our countryside and coast, mountains and inland waters - provide outstanding environments for outdoor activities and are a central reason why many people choose to holiday in Wales.

Through the summer and autumn of 2020, many holiday makers chose to stay in the UK. Wales benefited from this with tourists flocking to Welsh beaches and mountain landscapes, with many B&B's and campsites fully booked through the summer and autumn months. Accommodating this influx created pressure in some communities, with services overwhelmed and an increase in fly camping and anti-social behaviour.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in tourism

Wales was the first in the UK to develop a path around its coastline. The Task and Finish Group believes there is real potential to develop the brand of the Wales Coast Path as central to Wales' tourism offer across the globe. The Group believes that Wales' needs to build on its investment in the coast path by strengthening its connection with the hinterland, with the path a catalyst for growth and development. There is also potential to diversify the use of the path to make it accessible to a wider range of users in much the same way as the Scottish 500 trail and the iconic trails in the South Island of New Zealand. The Task and Finish Group has explored alternative funding models for taking forward the development of the Wales Coast Path. Initial discussions with the Wales Cooperative

⁵³ Welcome to Wales: Priorities for the Visitor Economy 2020 to 2025, Welsh Government

Centre suggest there is a real opportunity to develop a social enterprise model that would enable organisations, businesses and individuals to be directly involved. The Task and Finish Group is committed to supporting the development of this idea, and will seek to involve Transport for Wales, Local Authorities and National Parks to discuss the potential opportunities.

“Active travel and sustainable transport” sets out the Task and Finish Groups commitment to developing new active travel routes in Anglesey and Mid Wales. The Group believes this approach could be extended to other areas across Wales to create an exciting nature and heritage tourism offer in Wales delivered by a range of organisations who own or manage sites working in partnership including for example NRW, the environment third sector, CADW, the Church in Wales and National Churches Trust. The Task and Finish Group will work with Visit Wales and the regional tourism groups, to explore this opportunity and how Wales’ environment can be enhanced as a central element of our international tourism offer.

The impact of tourism on local amenities and services is recognised in a proposal for a visitor levy. Finding alternative ways to enable reinvestment in the social and environmental infrastructure that supports tourism across Wales is critical. The Task and Finish Group will provide support so this proposal can be developed and tested in more detail. There are also opportunities to develop new camping and caravanning facilities, with one proposal suggesting the development of French style Aires for motorhomes. The Group will explore this proposal with Visit Wales and Local Authorities.

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

The Task and Finish Group recognises that the economic benefits of tourism do not fully reflect the wider social, cultural and environmental impacts, particularly in some of our iconic landscapes and tourism destinations across Wales. Resolving some of the pressures on our communities and environment requires a more collaborative and joined up approach working across organisational boundaries to address and maximise the social, cultural and environmental benefits of tourism for both the tourists and the host communities. The Task and Finish Group believes that a more integrated approach is needed to consider tourism planning at a more strategic, regional scale and encourages Visit Wales to develop a more spatially co-ordinated tourism approach that reflects local issues and priorities.

Table 13: Tourism

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Circular economy | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|-------------------------|--|--|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Keep Wales Tidy | Visitor Levy | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Welcoming visitor infrastructure away from honeypots | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |

Housing

Jobs will be created by building new houses and especially by improving the existing housing stock⁵⁴. A green recovery seeks to link training, skills development, local employment and supply chains with decarbonisation, the circular economy and enhancing nature. There is a unique opportunity to bring these six dimensions of the green recovery together in the way in which Wales organises investment in housing going forward.

Welsh Government’s decarbonisation plan sets out its commitment to seeing social housing becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Retrofitting energy efficiency measures is a central component of this plan.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in housing

We have received five proposals related to retrofitting of social housing from third sector and social housing organisations. The proposals all have merit, recognising that retrofitting not only reduces energy consumption it contributes to the health and wellbeing of the occupants and is a significant anti-poverty measure as energy bills go down. The Task and Finish Group will support the further development of these proposals into full business cases and in parallel will explore funding routes to fast track implementation.

In taking forward retrofitting of social housing, local authorities and other Registered Social Landlords could play an essential role in organising the retrofitting of their own stock as well as coordinating with local training, supply chains and employment initiatives to ensure that there is maximum benefit to local economies. An alternative model for delivery and co-ordination involving SMEs and social enterprises has been proposed. The Task and Finish

⁵⁴ A UK investment strategy: Building back a resilient and sustainable economy, June 2020 Vivid Economics Report

Group believes this proposal is worthy of further exploration and will support the development of the business case.

Financing retrofitting of privately-owned housing is more complex because of the age of the stock and for those properties that are rented the low income of many occupants. Two submissions suggest new ways of achieving retrofit in the private rental sector. The first involves a top-up grant paid back through Council Tax whilst the second relates to the acquisition of vacant properties, which are rented in a cooperative after the work has been done. The Task and Finish Group supports further work to explore and test these ideas as they potentially incentivise private landlords to take action.

The role of house building in driving the decarbonisation agenda is recognised across the community housing sector, including by Housing for all Cymru, Shelter Cymru, Chartered Institute of Housing and many others. A proposal from Community Housing Cymru sets out the case for investment in new homes to drive the decarbonisation agenda in Wales, making the link that investment in new homes is at the heart of the foundational economy as it will create jobs, is a social justice measure and addresses the needs of the thousands who are on waiting lists across Wales. The Task and Finish Group strongly endorses this proposal, underlining the need and priority for affordable new homes in both rural and urban areas of Wales.

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

There are very significant opportunities in how retrofitting and new house building is taken forward to delivery to create wider benefits for nature and communities. Involving communities and drawing in other experts such as landscape architects and garden designers will maximise opportunities to improve green spaces by planting trees, creating wild flower meadows, creating space for sitting, allotments and play areas that will not only benefit nature but have significant benefit for the physical and mental well-being of the community.

There are also significant opportunities to stimulate new markets in building materials with three proposals considered in Table 14.

Table 14: Housing

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Community Housing Cymru | Invest in the skills & homes of the future to deliver a green economic recovery | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Wales Co-operative Centre | Building Back Better - Supporting SMEs and Social Enterprises to Retrofit Welsh Homes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | The Future Generations Commissioner Wales Office | Support the decarbonisation of homes, through building low carbon, affordable housing | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Woodknowledge Wales | Home Grown Homes 2 | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Ty Pren | Green building revolution | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Going Green for a Living CLT Ltd | Housing Retrofit - A Cooperative Model for the Private Sector | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Community Energy Wales | Energy housing retrofit booster | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Making more use of wool as an insulation material | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute |
| 2 | Individual | Make houses fit for the 21st century | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Llais y Goedwig | Tô Gwyrdd/Ecological Housing | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |

Health & Well-being

Aside from its significant social and economic consequences, Covid-19 is ultimately a public health crisis.

Emerging evidence suggests there's a greater incidence of Covid-19 amongst vulnerable groups and communities⁵⁵, reflecting underlying socio-economic and health inequalities.

This should not come as a surprise as low-income areas suffer not only from issues associated with poor housing, lower educational attainment and poor diet, but also less access to good quality green space, all of which contribute to poor health. The longer people live in stressful environmental, economic and social circumstances, the greater the physiological and psychological effects they suffer, and the less likely they are to enjoy a healthy old age⁵⁶. These disadvantages tend to concentrate among the same people, and the effects on health are cumulative. Health inequalities are estimated to cost the Welsh economy £1.8-£1.9 billion in productivity losses and £1.1 - £1.8 billion in welfare costs per year⁵⁷.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in Health & Well-being

Many of the proposals submitted to the Task and Finish Group address the underlying issues of health inequality with the focus on food, skills development and job creation, poor housing condition, access to good quality green space in our towns and cities and the development of active travel routes. These proposals, with careful spatial targeting, will make an important contribution to addressing the underlying problems which drive poor health.

Two proposals relate specifically to building the capacity of the health sector to make the linkages between health prevention and the nature and climate emergencies. One proposal targets young people through a training programme that will give future health care sector professionals the knowledge, insight and skills to make the connections between the health of nature, food and soils and individual health and well-being. Demonstrating the linkages and benefits of other areas of policy intervention, such as active travel, connecting with nature and volunteering for physical and mental well-being is also important. The Task and Finish Group recognises that this is a well-defined proposal that is ready for testing with health professionals. The second proposal focusses on current health professionals and how they can take steps towards green prescribing. The Task and Finish Group recognises this is a well-developed proposal with agreements in place to test with two Health Boards. The Group look forward to seeing the outcome of this testing phase and the proposed next steps.

The link between nature and health is clearly recognised in two proposals related to a preventative 'Natural' Health Service in Wales, which builds on the importance of encouraging people into nature to improve their individual physical and mental health and well-being. The Task and Finish Group recognises the value of these proposals and believe that, drawing on the successful Outdoor Learning Training Network suite of units,

⁵⁵ <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-reconstruction-challenges-and-priorities-html#content>

⁵⁶ NRW, 2020.

<https://cyfoethnaturiolcymru.sharepoint.com/teams/are/hw/hia/HIA%20Repository/Env&Health%20Covid%20HIA/FINAL%20version-24-09-2020/Env&COVID%20HIA-Executive%20Summary-24-09-2020.pdf>

⁵⁷ NHS Wales 2020

there is a way to build a more integrated approach. The Task and Finish Group will bring together these proposals to develop the approach and business case.

Through Covid-19 we have seen the creation of a new market for PPE as members of the public are expected to wear face masks in all indoor public places. Although some people are wearing re-useable masks, many more use single use plastic masks which are increasingly found as litter on our streets. There is a real opportunity for innovation in this area to develop re-useable alternatives or, for those things that by necessity need to be single use, are constructed from recycled material. The Task and Finish Group believe that a Challenge Fund mechanism could drive innovation in this area.

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

Prior to the pandemic, Welsh Government, NHS officials and Public Health Wales Health and Sustainability Hub staff were working together to identify the specific actions Health Boards across Wales might take in response to the climate and nature emergencies and the drive towards the circular economy. There are undoubtedly a wide range of actions that can be taken across the Health Boards’ estate, such as energy and water efficiency, improving green space with planting of trees and wildflowers and increasing patients’ access to these spaces through careful planning. These changes will not only reduce the emissions from the estate and increase space for biodiversity, they will also potentially lead to improved patient outcomes through directly improving accessibility to nature and green space. The Task and Finish Group recognises that the pace of change is entirely dependent on the response to and recovery from the pandemic.

Table 15: Health and Well-being

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|-----------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 1 | The TYF Group | WISH Wales – Wellbeing Innovation for Sustainable Health | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | The TYF Group | Future Generations Practitioners | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Keep Wales Tidy | Green Health | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | RSPB Cymru | A Natural Health Service for Wales | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute |

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|--------------|-------------------------|---|---|--|-------------------------|--|---|
| 2 | Natural Resources Wales | Come Outside! Reinvigorating the model and way of working | Contributes | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute |

6. Enablers of the Green Recovery

Skills, apprenticeships and job creation

Covid-19 is having an impact on jobs and services across Wales. Companies are announcing redundancies and the pace of this is likely to accelerate over the winter months. Analysis shows that the young are hardest hit, with reduced availability of new entrant level jobs for those age 16 and 18 along with recent graduates. The number of apprenticeships has also dropped. The Welsh Government has stated that reducing unemployment is one of its top eight priorities for reconstruction, giving everyone the best chance to find and keep decent work with long term prospects.⁵⁸

There are real opportunities to support the development of apprenticeships and new jobs through the green recovery, with many submissions highlighting skills development and new jobs in areas such as retrofit of social housing, Nature Based Solutions and reuse and repair apprenticeships. The Wales TUC⁵⁹ project that circa 60,000 jobs could be created as a result of £6bn investment in infrastructure. Some of these jobs relate to Nature Based Solutions, decarbonisation and the circular economy.

Work underway by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales is considering the skills that are needed to meet these future green jobs. The Task and Finish Group will draw on this to inform the development of a green recovery monitoring and evaluation framework.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in skills development, apprenticeships and job creation

Five proposals related specifically to skills development through formal work experience and volunteering were submitted, including a 'Welsh Nature Service' proposal submitted jointly by the Welsh Council for Voluntary Associations (WCVA) and Food Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC). This idea aligns very closely with the 'Conservation Corps' suggestion by Ffenics to the Economic Recovery Strategy, reporting to Ken Skates Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales.

In the period since early September, members of the Task and Finish Group, led by the FFCC, convened those who submitted proposals in this area to develop one consolidated approach with a further meeting planned in November. The Task and Finish Group recognises that this proposal will require some time and energy to develop, and the final name will emerge from the co-design process.

In the interim, organisations like NRW and WCVA are establishing placement schemes targeting 16-24 year olds who are at risk of long-term unemployment. The Task and Finish Group believe that resources need to be committed to ensuring these placement schemes

⁵⁸ Covid-19 Reconstruction: Challenges and Opportunities, Welsh Government, October 2020

⁵⁹ <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/job-creation-wales-infrastructure-investment>

are a success in Wales and offer meaningful experiences for the individuals, leading to jobs and long-term career paths.

The Task and Finish Group believes that in Wales, we should commit to the living wage of £9.30 for green recovery placement schemes, reflecting our commitment to social justice, with the differential in wages met by Welsh Government, rather than the host organisation.

Apprenticeships

There are many long-established apprenticeship schemes in Wales. We know there are emerging markets that will require a skilled workforce in a number of areas such as retrofitting social housing, renewable energy, active travel programmes, Nature Based Solution programmes and the circular economy. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales is working in partnership with the consultancy NEF and the TUC to analyse the leap that is needed to get people skilled up and ready to take on these new job opportunities. The Task and Finish Group welcomes this work and will commit to working with the Commissioner to consider what action is required to support skills development particularly in relation to Nature Based Solutions.

The Task and Finish Group received two proposals relating to the development of new higher education colleges in mid Wales, both of which require significant investment and would take time to implement. These proposals have not been endorsed by the Group as we believe they need to be considered as part of a wider review by Government of tertiary education provision.

There are clear opportunities to develop new jobs related to the green economy and apprenticeship schemes must be part of the mix. We have received a proposal for a national repair apprenticeship scheme that the Task and Finish Group will support to develop into a full business case. There is also a proposal from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to encourage organisations across the public, private and third sector in Wales to take on a school leavers as part of a holistic skills programme, underpinned by funding from Jobs Growth Wales. The Task and Finish Group will provide support to take this proposal forward.

To support the development of placement schemes, we have received a proposal from NRW that relates to the provision of specific learning and development material to support understanding of nature and sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR). The proposal builds on the courses designed and delivered to all NRW staff to embed its purpose to pursue SMNR, which includes the ways of working set out in the WFG Act. The Task and Finish Group welcomes this proposal as something that can be quickly rolled out to all who are interested, with minimal additional costs. The Task and Finish Group will work with NRW to make the course readily available for potential students and interested organisations.

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

Maximising the benefits associated with investment in all areas of the green recovery is dependent on enabling action in the areas of skills, apprenticeships and procurement. These are the key to unlocking the Government’s ambition for decent jobs with long term prospects.

The Group recognises that developing apprenticeship frameworks to support a green recovery cannot be left solely to the market. The Task and Finish Group believes there is a clear need to stimulate the further education sector to update existing courses and develop new ones to ensure that we have an appropriately skilled workforce for the future. The Task and Finish Group will work with the Skills Councils and Tertiary College Sector to explore opportunities.

The Welsh Government has already committed significant investment to support the recovery from the pandemic⁶⁰. There is a real opportunity to maximise the leverage of this investment by using the procurement process to stipulate that all new investment programmes led by the Welsh Government, public bodies, third sector organisations and social housing providers support a defined number of work experience and apprenticeship opportunities. For example, retrofitting in social housing requires trades such as electricians, plumbers, surveyors and builders. To maximise the skills development and new job creation opportunities, the Task and Finish Group believes that all contracts for retrofitting in social housing should include a condition that the company is required to take on apprenticeships in each of the relevant trades. This will provide real life experience in areas such as renewable energy, retrofitting, energy and water efficient technologies and building techniques using non-traditional materials such as timber.

Table 16: Skills, apprenticeships and job creation

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|-------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Joint submission: WCVA & FFCC | National Nature Service for Wales | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Groundwork in Wales | Green Skills: Green Jobs: Green Recovery – a green | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |

⁶⁰ Covid-19 Reconstruction: Challenges and Opportunities, Welsh Government, October 2020

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|-------|--------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| | | employability program for young people aged 16 to 24 | | | | | |
| 1 | Wildlife Trusts Wales | Natural Resources Jobs Fund | Contributes | Contributes | - | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Keep Wales Tidy | Repair Apprenticeships | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 1 | Future Generations Wales | A 'school leavers' job offer encouraging organisations in every sector to sign up and take on a school leaver as part of a holistic skills programme across Wales, assisted with funding from Jobs Growth Wales. | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Skills for a Green Recovery | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Does not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | Future Generations Wales | Ensure Welsh Government's Economic Contract is a robust lever for change, meeting the ambition that supported businesses are committing to delivery of a greener, more prosperous and equal Wales | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Does not contribute | Contributes |

Environmental finance and delivery models

Pre Covid-19, there was growing acceptance that reliance on public money alone would not be enough to meet the scale of investment required to address the climate and nature emergencies⁶¹. The Task and Finish Group recognises that Covid-19 is likely to have a significant and long-lasting impact on public finances, hence developing and testing alternative financial tools and delivery models must be accelerated as part of the green recovery.

What needs to happen: Opportunities for the Green Recovery in environmental finance and delivery models

A significant number of proposals related to food, marine, water, biodiversity, sustainable travel, tourism and housing identify alternative delivery models or financial incentive mechanisms and have been picked up in the earlier sections.

In addition to these sector specific proposals, we have received three proposals that relate to strategic approaches to green financing. The Group recognise that these could play a critical role in supporting delivery of Nature Based Solutions across Wales. One proposal sets out the strategic case for developing and testing alternative financial approaches/mechanisms, while two linked proposals from NRW relate to the development of a 'green marketplace'. A green marketplace would involve developing an on-line portal to enable those with well-developed plans for investment in Nature Based Solutions, to be linked up with private investors. Alongside this sits a blended financial proposal to explore different ways of leveraging investment for natural capital through a focus on corporate social responsibility. These proposals are welcomed by the Task and Finish Group, who will support the development of detailed business cases.

How this work is taken forward: Opportunities to maximise the contribution for nature, decarbonisation and the circular economy

Through the pandemic in Wales, the public, private and third sectors have forged new relationships and devised new ways of working that have driven innovation and built a new spirit of collaboration. This approach must be built on through the green recovery, using our collective leadership to avoid stepping back into the old siloed ways of working.

Building collaborations and driving innovation will be the key to the green recovery and the Task and Finish Group are committed to engaging with private businesses and the financial service sector to consider alternative ways of leveraging investment to support the green recovery.

The Task and Finish Group fully expects that many of the proposals will not work out as planned, but the learning will be a rich source of information to move the next proposals forward. When forging new delivery approaches or financial tools the Task and Finish Group recognises that their success is dependent on accepting a higher tolerance of risk.

⁶¹ Scottish Wildlife Trust and SEPA, May 2020 Route towards £1 billion investment for nature conservation <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/news/route-map-to-1-billion-for-nature-conservation-published/>

The Task and Finish Group will accept this risk and are committed to visibly supporting proposals, testing new models and sharing the learning.

Table 17: Environmental finance and delivery models

| Score | Organisation | Proposal name | Reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change | Reversing the decline in biodiversity | Circular economy | Groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable / have been hit hardest by Covid-19 | Job creation, skills development and new markets |
|--------------|----------------------------|--|---|--|-------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Fast-tracking NRW's Green Marketplace programme | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Did not contribute | Contributes |
| 1 | Natural Resources Wales | Using Blended Finance to help deliver the Green Recovery | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Did not contribute | Contributes |
| 1 | WWF Cymru | Development and Use of New Funding Mechanisms | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Did not contribute | Contributes |
| 2 | VocalEyes | Participatory wales - Coordinated Collective Climate Action Across Wales | Did not contribute | Did not contribute | Did not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Renew Wales | Renew Wales 2.0 | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Cynnal Cymru-Sustain Wales | A national cross-sector support service for community-led environmental projects | Contributes | Did not contribute | Did not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |
| 2 | Electoral Reform | Involving citizens in the green recovery in Blaenau Gwent | Contributes | Did not contribute | Did not contribute | Contributes | Contributes |

7. Next steps: Establishing a Green Recovery Delivery Partnership

The Green Recovery is a once in a generation opportunity to accelerate development along a more sustainable pathway. The Group believes that incremental change will not be enough to drive the systemic and transformative changes needed for a socially just and green recovery.

The Task and Finish Group's mantra throughout their time working together has been how to make things happen to deliver improvements on the ground. Whilst recognising that much of the strategic and policy framework is in place, through the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Environment Act, the Task and Finish Group believes there is a clear implementation gap.

Bridging this gap has driven the approach of the Task and Finish Group, as it seeks to make things happen quickly, building momentum by showing what can be achieved by working together and actively seeking innovative approaches that can be tested.

The Task and Finish Group members have committed to forming a Green Recovery Delivery Partnership. By pooling their collective leadership, the Group will drive forward implementation of proposals, using their networks and resources to make things happen.

The members of the Task and Finish Group will provide the executive oversight and strategic steer. Welsh Government officials have also agreed to be on the Group to ensure appropriate coordination and cross government working as part of the wider Covid-19 response.

Over the next 12 months, the Group will focus on supporting and developing proposals that support the Government's green recovery ambitions and stimulating activity across the networks covered by the Group's membership. In particular, it will:

- Direct identified proposals to existing sources of support and funding.
- Manage the development and delivery of proposals where the support or funding fall directly within the remit of Group members.
- Develop, through engagement with their networks and beyond, further proposals with the aim of generating a pipeline of projects that support green recovery ambitions.
- Develop options for enhancing community-led recovery initiatives, with a specific focus on more disadvantaged communities
- Develop spatial tools to enable initiatives to be targeted to areas and communities hit hardest by Covid-19

- Identify any further mechanisms needed, or barriers removed, to support a green recovery.
- Ensure its work is framed by the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Environment Act, the collective ways of working, the Government's social justice agenda and a commitment to equality and diversity.

Clearly this will require a resource commitment and in recognition of the huge pressures on government the Group has agreed to establish an interim green recovery delivery partnership office hosted by NRW. This does not mean it is an NRW entity, it will retain its independence but will have access to the office infrastructure.

Staff resources have been committed by NRW, Welsh Water, the National Trust, Business in the Community, The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and the Food Farming and Countryside Commission. Other members of the Group, where able, will provide their expertise when appropriate to support proposals.

Appendices

Appendix. 1:

Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group – Blue/Green Recovery

The Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (WMAAG) is clear that the Green Recovery stimulus should include an integrated Blue Recovery package that focuses on marine and coastal communities. WMAAG has previously had input from the New Economics Foundation on the Blue New Deal⁶² which provides inspiration and guidance for blue recovery focus.

Recovery Panel received a range of submissions focused on marine and coastal recovery which can form the basis for an integrated package. WMAAG members undertook an initial assessment of the submissions received against criteria being applied by the Green Recovery Panel (attached and referred to below). Members felt it was not appropriate to back individual submissions as all required further work, should be subject to the appropriate processes via the established structures and be able to demonstrate stakeholder communities' involvement.

WMAAG members did commit to support the design and delivery of an integrated stimulus package for a blue recovery and recognised there was significant overlap in many of the proposals, reflecting some specific areas of focus in terms of delivering a blue recovery, which are set out below.

The key points being:

- We are a coastal nation and our marine environment more than doubles the size of Wales. This provides varied opportunities for blue recovery, however this will require a review of current budget allocations, to ensure green recovery is embedded within fiscal incentives and not token gestures (129 and 56 - cross cutting across all proposals)
- Coastal communities in Wales are facing immediate economic impacts of both Covid-19 and Brexit (24,106,49), in many cases alongside a longer-term challenge of coastal change as a result of climate change.
- There is a significant opportunity now for coastal communities to lead on a blue recovery - delivering meaningful improvements to well-being through an integrated approach that recognises the relationships between healthy coasts and seas and local economies. Such a programme could address:
 - The significant role of the marine and coastal environment, in delivering wider benefits, including storing and sequestering Blue Carbon⁶³, supporting coastal tourism and mental and physical health and wellbeing. The

⁶² <https://neweconomics.org/campaigns/blue-new-deal>

⁶³ https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/692035/nrw-evidence-report-428_blue-carbon_v11-002.pdf

opportunity for recovery and enhancement of marine ecosystems to deliver important wider benefits such as these. (P 24, 106, 130, 22, 129,130)

- The challenge of climate change coastal adaptation with rising sea levels, the importance of nature-based solutions and their potential for multiple benefits, both to the ecosystem and people.
- The nature crisis and the need to restore marine ecosystems for their intrinsic value, as recognised in the principles of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources.
- The focus on green recovery economic potential of the natural asset of the marine environment - for aquaculture (P.47), tourism (P.49, 75), circular economy (P.53)
- The potential of marine renewable energy (P.92,131,132,) to contribute to the decarbonisation agenda whilst ensuring nature recovery. Emphasis on the evidence needed to support a sustainable approach, and the importance of investing in a co-production approach for all marine elements, which engages local communities (P.24,106,49,).

There is work to be done in shaping an integrated blue recovery package, linking ideas in different submissions and looking at including innovative funding models. An initial response suggests the following as key elements:

For any of the proposals to work, early community engagement and involvement in development is essential

As shown in the ‘Getting Below the Surface report’ , which concludes that public understanding of the ocean’s role in supporting life and sustaining and regulating planetary systems is extremely thin, and that there are a series of holes in public thinking about ocean and marine conservation that affect people’s willingness to engage with marine issues and undermine their support for specific solutions. Several of the submissions received propose building ocean literacy and community capacity to strengthen existing structures to enable the delivery of these solutions - *“integrated funding programme that supports coastal communities that need to adapt in the face of coastal change, in a way that makes them more resilient in terms of local economies, ecosystems and well-being.”*

Restoring marine ecosystems

Several submissions have put forward proposals to address the priority of restoring marine ecosystems through strengthening and resourcing the management of the marine protected areas, including delivering actions to improve the condition of MPAs and the identification of opportunities to restore certain marine and coastal habitats such as native oyster reef, seagrass and saltmarsh.

The NRW “Blue Carbon” report highlights the value of such investment in carbon sequestration, while improvements in the health of marine ecosystems will deliver economic value through the fishing and tourism sectors.

Significant value could be achieved through targeted funding that addressed actions to improve the condition and management of the existing Marine Protected Area network, stimulating nature recovery, with associated economic benefits.

Green / Youth Employability Programme (or National Nature Service)

The Green Recovery Panel has received proposals for a Welsh National Nature Service Scheme. This should recognise the opportunity for marine placements. The aim will be to build local capacity linking coastal communities with their marine environment and the multiple opportunities to support well-being provided by local coast and sea. These placements would have a key role in supporting the proposed **Blue Growth Coastal Fund** and be based within coastal partnerships involving local councils, communities, NGOs and the private sector. This programme would also draw on the experience of the Cornwall Marine Network and encourage the development of a maritime cluster to support collaboration, cooperation and internship and apprenticeship roles for young people in coastal communities.

Blue Growth Coastal Fund

The purpose will be to improve Sustainable Management of Natural Resources through projects that will support the recovery of marine ecosystems and create multiple economic and social benefits.

The fund would include direct funding of such coastal partnerships to enable consultation and inclusion of coastal communities in developing understanding of coastal change, opportunities for nature-based solutions, marine ecosystem recovery and associated economic opportunities, involving key users and guardians of the marine environment.

There is significant potential to explore sustainable financing for such a fund would be set up by Government but also supported by industries that rely on the marine environment but importantly following CBD principle and key eNGO involvement to ensure the scheme is not seen as a biodiversity off-set process. It would be administered through an independent governance structure to ensure the independence of advice.

Evidence for marine renewables

There is an urgent need to increase the evidence and monitoring of marine renewable deployment in Welsh waters to facilitate a streamlined consenting process that enables sustainable deployment of technologies. This should be achieved through support for **the Consenting Strategic Advisory Group** with a dedicated resource to increase data gathering, capture the knowledge and provide an overview of marine potential

Reducing marine pollution through a circular economy

Pollution in our seas is increasing (see [MCS GBBC 2019 results](#)). The Wales Clean Seas Partnership was established by WMAAG to address this issue but more action is needed around the circular economy to reduce litter items at source and affect behaviour change.

Other land-based submissions received by the Green Recovery Panel are of critical importance for the marine environment. Tackling pollution in the sea also means greater action to clean up our river systems, where significant investment in improvement in quality is required, in particular addressing issues of diffuse agricultural pollution.

In conclusion WMAAG members stress that no aspect of a wider recovery stimulus should damage or diminish marine assets.