



Chairs of the National Park Authority

9 May 2022

Term of Government Remit Letter for the National Park Authorities

Our Programme for Government outlines the Government's priorities and its commitments to the people of Wales. I firmly believe our National Park Authorities have a key role to play in helping us deliver for the people of Wales. In particular, you should align your work with key Wellbeing Objectives, including:

- **Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future**
- **Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation**
- **Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do**
- **Celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms**
- **Push forward towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive**
- **Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work**

In particular, I want to see National Parks become exemplars in responding to the climate and nature emergency. You are uniquely placed to engage with the communities within your boundaries to develop solution which deliver benefits for people and the environment.

The National Parks are home to agricultural communities who have worked in and shaped the landscapes around them for millennia. Sustainable farming is an intrinsic part of our landscape and can underpin many of the policy aims set out in this letter. I would like to see you work with Welsh Government as it develops its approaches to sustainable farming to support farmers to take actions that lead to the National Parks being more biodiverse areas, with appropriate afforestation and habitat restoration, alongside food production.

As part of our response to tackling the nature emergency I have committed to achieving the 30x30 target. Landscape scale designations such as National Parks will play an important part in achieving the target, but they are not currently managed effectively for biodiversity as a result of their original designation. I will be holding a deep dive focussing on the effective implementation of the 30x30 target in early 2022-23. I would like the NPAs to participate in this process so we can consider what actions are needed to scale up delivery for biodiversity across these designations. Following the deep dive, I would of course also

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

expect you to work together to deliver on the agreed actions; this can be facilitated by the new collaborative Biodiversity posts I have agreed to support

Tourism is another area where I see National Parks playing a key role. Our ambition is to 'grow tourism for the good of Wales'. People choose to visit Wales to enjoy our superb natural environment, as well as to experience our culture, including the Welsh language. The role of Park Authorities in supporting the management of visitors to ensure communities are able to benefit from tourism, and minimising the negative impacts for people and the environment, is critical.

It has been evident how the demands placed on local infrastructure can harm the experience of visitors and put a strain on the relationship with local communities. NPAs have played an important leadership role during the recent pandemic and I expect this to continue as we emerge from the pandemic. I would like to convey my thanks to you for the important work you have undertaken in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. I also appreciate the collaborative approach NPAs have taken with other bodies and with Welsh Government teams during the pandemic. This is something I would like to see us build upon in the future.

In our Programme for Government we have committed to establishing a new National Park in north-east Wales, and I would like you to support the process as needed.

It is my intention that our relationship will continue to be based on mutual trust and respect, and on open and honest communication. Through an effective working partnership, the Authority can flourish, and we can maximise your impact for people and the environment. Your status as a special purpose Authority gives you considerable operational independence, and, of course, you must at all times be guided by your statutory purposes. I fully expect you to continue to look for ways to reach the very highest standards of governance and we are keen to support you in that where appropriate. In particular I would like to see you implement best practice and any recommendations that emerge from the thematic work being carried out by Audit Wales and do more to promote diversity, making maximum use of the new Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence Strategic lead.

In line with the Framework Document, which underpins the relationship between NPAs and the Welsh Government, you should now review your business plans to set out how you will deliver against the areas outlined in this letter and its appendices. We will, of course, need to monitor progress against these priorities over the course of this government, in a way that is appropriate to your local context. I would like you to work with my officials to identify a small number of appropriate indicators that will effectively monitor progress against these priorities. This data, coupled with a short narrative report, will form the basis of regular discussions through the course of this term of government. Through this we will be able to satisfy ourselves, Audit Wales, and the wider public, that we are truly delivering, and where we do hit difficulties work together to overcome them.

This Term of Government letter is designed to provide you with a clear framework within which to work for the coming years, I have outlined the key deliverables for you in relation to the Programme for Government in Annex A. The strategic context for the NPAs is ambitious and evolving and the key considerations have been captured in Annex B.

As well as this Term of Government letter setting out our aspirations over the coming years, I will also issue you with a shorter grant letter confirming your annual budget allocation.

There is much to do, but I am convinced that my portfolio can make a positive and lasting difference to people's lives in Wales. I look forward to working with you to achieve this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie James AS/MS
Minister for Climate Change

(cc Chief Executive Officers)

ANNEX A: Priority Objectives and Actions for the Senedd term

My priorities have been grouped according to four themes of action: ***Environment; People and Place; Governance and Planning Excellence***, and ***Collaboration***.

Environment

NRW's State of Natural Resources Report (SoNARR) 2020 together with its Protected Sites Baseline report 2020 present a stark picture. Most habitat types have seen a reduction in diversity over the last 100 years, with the rate of decline increasing from the 1970s onwards. Very few Welsh habitats are reported as being in good condition. Despite the protection designation affords, it is not thought that protected sites within National Parks are in significantly better condition than those outside. That is something we must change. As a government, we are committed to halting and reversing the decline in nature in Wales, contributing positively to the international agenda in this regard.

Our ambition is for the Welsh public sector to be collectively net zero by 2030. You have already made good progress in reducing your emissions as organisations, and I expect this to continue. You must also continue to look beyond your own organisations to the wider environment, communities and visitors. I welcome the commissioning of baseline research to guide you in a more strategic way in your role as drivers of change. There will be a range of interventions – carbon capture through peatland and woodland restoration and creation, decarbonisation of housing, and renewable energy. All should play a part.

I would therefore like you to:

- Actively support Welsh Government's commitment to achieving a zero-carbon economy by working to become carbon neutral by 2030 through your everyday work and a range of decarbonisation interventions
- Support a shift away from private car use to more sustainable transport modes for the majority of journeys amongst staff, visitors and service users in order to meet the target of 45% of journeys being undertaken by sustainable modes by 2040
- Proactively help facilitate carbon sequestration including by supporting delivery of woodland creation where appropriate and our aim to strengthen the protection of ancient woodlands, and increase engagement in the National Forest programme
- Take action to improve the connectivity, condition, scale/extent and diversity of ecosystems, and maintain and enhance resilient ecological networks, embedding delivery in emerging national targets arising from the 30x30 commitment
- Support the National Peatland Action Programme (NPAP) that has been designed to restore, enhance and maintain resilient ecological networks, tackle climate change and manage water. You should work with NRW to address the NPAP themes, including the priority actions and cross-cutting themes.
- Support the PfG commitment to establish a targeted scheme to support restoration of seagrass and saltmarsh habitats along our coastline, help deliver the ambitions of the Marine Protected Area Network Management Framework and contribute to emerging policy on blue carbon.
- the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places Capital Fund, and other WG schemes to deliver on nature and decarbonisation goals

- Engage actively in Local Energy Planning to help bring about the transformation of the energy system needed to reach Net Zero, securing greater benefits for your communities
- Engaging positively in initiatives to promote reuse and repair, to grow the circular economy, and reduce the harm caused to the environment by single use plastics through discouraging their use wherever possible.

People and Place

During the pandemic, green and open spaces have given people respite and opportunities to breathe freely. However it has been evident that the demands placed on local infrastructure can harm the experience of visitors and strain relationships with local communities. I want you to continue seeking to encourage participation in an environmentally, economically and culturally sensitive way, and advocate for sustainable solutions where tensions and issues arise. I welcome the recent work undertaken to enable more strategic sustainable transport solutions and would like you to continue to work with Local Authorities and Transport for Wales for this to be a continued focus for action.

National Parks have some of the most acute housing problems in Wales. Concerns around second homes, temporary and permanent holiday lets, increased prices and lack of affordable stock have all placed great pressure on your communities. It is essential our Parks are home to living, working communities; I believe visitors also wish to see this. We have committed to take forward actions to control the number of second homes, bring more homes into common ownership, and licence holiday lets. NPAs can influence this agenda through their work as Local Planning Authorities and should work with the Housing Authority, local communities and developers to make more affordable houses available.

The long term sustainability of many of our most sensitive landscape areas and their communities is also intertwined with Welsh language and culture; I would like to see you continuing to deliver our commitment to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

I would therefore like you to:

- Contribute to the co-design and implementation of the Sustainable Farming Scheme
- Contribute, where appropriate, to the PfG commitment to establish a Community Food Strategy to encourage the production and supply of locally-sourced food
- Work with Housing Authorities, Community Land Trusts and private developers, to develop innovative solutions to acute housing issues, and contribute to the Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan
- Working with partners such as Local Authorities and Transport for Wales, implement solutions to the pressures of visitors on local infrastructure, including more sustainable transport systems, and communication campaigns to ensure responsible recreation. You must balance that with the importance of tourism to our economy, and the role you play at the heart of this in meeting the needs of visitors. You should be guided in this by the recommendations and findings of the recent work by Audit Wales on sustainable tourism.

- Support the designation of inland bathing waters and deployment of Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Engage with the development of the proposed all-Wales framework for social prescribing
- Collaborate with key partners to deliver against *Priorities for the Historic Environment in Wales* to safeguard and interpret the historic environment and cultural heritage.
- Develop policies that ensure that the Welsh language is able to thrive, delivering against *Cymraeg 2050: Our plan for 2021 to 2026*
- Increase engagement in opportunities for people in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and under-represented communities to benefit from the landscapes you manage
- Increase provision of skills training, apprenticeship and volunteering opportunities.

Excellence in Governance and Planning

I greatly value the contributions made by both Local Authority and Welsh Government appointees to the NPAs. When it works well, the local and community based perspective of LA appointees complements the more national, 'big picture' perspective brought by Ministerial appointees.

NPAs already have a robust scrutiny structure through the work of Audit Wales, internal audit and the ongoing monitoring arrangements with Welsh Government. There are several areas where we can do more work collectively to support NPA members, to ensure they can contribute as effectively as possible. That will include, but not be limited to, improving the support provided by the Welsh Government to the Members we appoint to National Park Authorities.

As Planning Authorities NPAs are unique planning entities with a specific remit to reflect the distinctive characteristics of their areas and have a key role in both discharging statutory responsibilities but also, with the new Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) now established, contributing to shaping strategic decision-making at a regional scale. Active engagement in the preparation of Strategic Development Plans with local authorities and national parks formally working together is the best way for regions to meet the strategic challenges and opportunities they face and provide a strong framework for Local Development Plans; the statutory duty of NPAs should inform the preparation of Strategic Development Plans.

I would therefore like you to:

- Actively participate in WLGA sector-led improvement and support programme
- Contribute to designing a revamped training package for NPA members and develop a co-ordinated approach to NPA training to share best practice
- Proactively promote the new protocol for Local Authorities in appointing NPA members, ahead of, during and after Local elections, emphasising experience and interest above political considerations as far as is possible within the current legislation
- Fully embrace a strengthened annual performance reporting system for WG appointees, and investigate how this be extended to Local Authority appointees

- Strive for excellence in governance including the sharing of best practice between NPAs, maximising use of the new Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence Strategic lead (see below)
- Proactively contribute to setting local and regional planning policy, including through the CJC structure and through regional and national collaboration to implement the policies in Future Wales (with particular reference to Policy 9 and the requirement to secure resilient ecological networks and green infrastructure).

Collaboration

Previous reviews have identified the need for solutions that retain the local focus of National Park Authorities but that can punch above their weight by closer working arrangements. I am convinced that for our designated landscapes to punch above their weight in responding to our priorities we must ramp up our collaborative efforts. I am keen for the NPAs to collectively step up to this challenge and I am pleased to offer additional funding for this purpose.

In our Programme for Government we have committed to establishing a new National Park in north-east Wales, and I would like you to support the process as needed.

I would therefore like you to:

- Support Tirweddau Cymru (the National Designated Landscapes Partnership) to develop its ambition, embed collaborative working at all levels within NPAs and AONBs, help produce a strategic vision for action for 2022-24
- Implement a transformational tripartite agreement between NPAs to host a team of WG-funded Strategic Landscape Co-ordinators to work across our Parks and AONBs, and ensure the objectives and outputs of these posts are included within wider NPA monitoring arrangements and those of Tirweddau Cymru:
 - i. A **Nature Recovery and Carbon Sequestration Strategic Lead**, with a focus on all of the unimproved habitats and woodland and the biodiversity they contain inclusive of invasives, and opportunities for carbon reduction.
 - ii. A **Nature Recovery and Nutrient Management Strategic Lead**, with a focus on working soil management, riparian and marine matters from terrestrial activity, upland lake eutrophication, water /aquatic biosecurity to agricultural run-off issues, and support the development of Nutrient Management Boards.

Both posts would help:

- develop a strategic plan to respond to the nature and climate emergencies;
 - support the development of approaches to enable Designated Landscapes to transition to the new Sustainable Farming Scheme;
 - identify how Designated Landscapes can develop new partnerships and support wider Welsh Government priorities, and identify innovative funding streams.
- iii. An **Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence Strategic lead** to work across all NPAs, hosted by one NPA. A key aspect of their work should also be to take bold steps to drive up diversity and equality– on Boards, your staffing profile, and

your visitors and support NPAs to meet the requirements of the socio-economic duty and increase contributions towards tackling child and rural poverty.

- Share experience and best practice as designation for a new National Park progresses.

ANNEX B: The Strategic Context

As well as meeting your statutory purposes, National Park Authorities have responsibilities within legislation designed specifically for Wales. We are unique in the UK in having legislation that puts sustainable development at the heart of decision making; I attach great importance to our legislative framework. **The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** continues to be an important driver for our wellbeing priorities and shared goals in Wales. The wellbeing objectives set out in the Programme for Government exist to support and enhance the delivery of these goals over this new term of government.

A resilient Wales

The National Assembly for Wales was the first Parliament in the world to declare a **climate emergency**. In March 2021 Senedd Cymru approved a net zero target for 2050. Net zero means balancing the greenhouse gas emissions with the amount of gases removed from the atmosphere. We also have interim targets for 2030 and 2040, and a series of 5-year carbon budgets: see <https://gov.wales/climate-change-targets-and-carbon-budgets>

Maintaining and enhancing resilient ecological networks has a role to play in mitigating the climate emergency and the decline in biodiversity, as set out in the refreshed Nature Recovery Action Plan. National Parks should also work with NRW through Area Statements to ensure plans and actions deliver our Natural Resources Policy.

Welsh Government has set out its commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and has published its All Wales Net Zero plan: [Working Together to Reach Net Zero](#) (2021-2025). Our ambition is that the public sector will be carbon neutral by 2030, leading the way in delivering a Net Zero Wales. To support this work we have published the [Public Sector Net Zero Reporting Guide](#) and the Public Sector Route-map will provide a clear framework for how the sector will achieve net zero by 2030.

As well as reducing emissions we also need to build resilience to the impacts of climate change to ensure we can continue to deliver our key public services. The Climate Change Committee recently published its third Climate Change Risk Assessment for the UK, which highlights a range of risks and opportunities for the environment, communities and businesses resulting from a changing climate. The Welsh Public Sector must demonstrate it has understood and taken account of the risks and opportunities in delivering its services.

In March 2021, Welsh Government published '[Beyond Recycling – a strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality](#)', which outlines our goals to become zero waste by 2050 and for making resource efficiency part of Welsh culture. Moving to a circular economy is essential to the delivery of key environmental actions.

Biodiversity underpins and drives the functioning of ecosystems and so, importantly, the Environment (Wales) Act includes the enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty which NPAs are subject to. **'30x30'** is one of the targets proposed for the post-2020 **biodiversity framework**. It is shorthand for a target to protect 30% of the world's land and 30% of the world's ocean by 2030. All administrations across the UK, have publically committed to supporting the 30x30 target.

The **National Forest for Wales** will comprise a nationwide network of publically accessible woodlands and forests under high quality management. It will involve improving management standards of existing woodlands and planting trees in previously unwooded areas, contributing to Welsh Government's target of planting 43,000 hectares of trees by 2030 and 180,000 hectares by 2050 to combat climate change. This project will take place over many decades and will be a lasting legacy for future generations. NPAs should work proactively with stakeholders at a national and local level; to support the National Forest and seek appropriate opportunities for woodland planting, informed by the Woodland Opportunity Map.

The new **Sustainable Farming Scheme** will maximise the protective power of nature through farming and will be key in protecting the environment for this generation and those to come. Future farm support will reward farmers who take action to meet the challenges of responding to the climate emergency and reversing the decline of biodiversity. We will work closely with Protected Landscapes bodies on how the scheme can support farmers to make improvements to the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access on their land.

A more equal Wales

The Programme for Government shows how we intend to eliminate inequality in all its forms. During this term of Government we will publish a new Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) for Wales, and an action plan for advancing LGBTQ+ equality in Wales. These action plans should be read alongside our Strategic Equality Plan, Gender Equality Plan and Framework for Action on Disability. They are designed to achieve sustained change in the short, medium and long term, and you should demonstrate a clear and pro-active response to achieving the goals set out in these plans. We are committed to reaching out to and engaging with Wales' vulnerable groups, ensuring Wales is an age-friendly nation, and that poverty, social disadvantage, ill health and disability should not be a barrier to participation.

The new Socio-economic Duty came into force on the 31 March 2021 and requires public bodies, including NPAs, to consider how their strategic actions can deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. Under Part 1 of the [Children and Families \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#) you are also required to publish child poverty objectives.

A Healthier Wales

I would like to see all bodies engaging with new and diverse stakeholders, working with under-represented audiences and communities, and actively expressing the link between their work and the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales.

A Prosperous Wales

Wales' stunning landscapes feature prominently within marketing work aligned to the Cymru Wales tourism brand and Visit Wales, in its Tourism Strategy for Wales 2020-25, recognises their importance and fragility. That strategy advocates activity to address challenges around seasonality, encourage increased spend per head and improve the spread of benefits to areas that have capacity.

Our Economic Action Plan is based on the principle of public investment with a social purpose. Central to the Plan is the Economic Contract that requires those receiving investment from the Welsh Government to demonstrate inclusive growth, fair work, promotion of health (with a special emphasis on mental health), skills and learning in the workplace, and progress in reducing carbon footprint. Our commitment to fair work and

sustainability and the industries and services of the future includes delivering the young person's guarantee and a promise of creating 125,000 all age apprenticeships. You should seek opportunities to contribute to the Young Person's Guarantee and this ambitious target.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language

The [Cymraeg 2050 strategy](#) continues to be an area of focus in our efforts to achieve the wellbeing goal of a thriving Welsh language, and of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050. I expect the Welsh language to be thoroughly embedded in all that you do, celebrating bilingualism and enabling the people of Wales to use the language as part of their everyday lives. The results of the 2021 Census will be known during this term of Government, and we will update the Cymraeg 2050 work programme for the strategy, but the three main themes will remain – increasing the number of Welsh speakers and use of the Welsh language, and creating favourable conditions in which the language can thrive.

During this term of Government we will create and publish a new **cultural strategy** for Wales which will define our cultural priorities for the years ahead. NPAs are custodians of the historic environment and the built and cultural heritage within the Parks.