

# NATURE BASED CLIMATE ACTION

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING APPENDIX

### WALES

#### Introduction

Wales is one of the nations that make up the United Kingdom, located in the west of Europe and covering an area of just over 8,000 square miles (20,722 km<sup>2</sup>). Around a third of this area is designated as special sites for wildlife, scenic beauty or geological value, including 3 National Parks and 5 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty with iconic landscapes providing a clear sense of place and cultural identity. Around a third of the marine areas of Wales are also protected.

In Wales we recognise that our well being and the well being of future generations are dependent upon the health of our natural resources and ecosystems. Our **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** includes a set of statutory sustainable development goals for Wales. The goals encompass the need to act on the causes and adapt to the consequences of climate change, as well as ensuring that Wales is globally responsible in its actions.

Our **Environment (Wales) Act 2016** ensures that we manage our natural resources sustainably and by doing so maintain and enhance our ecosystems to ensure they are able to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits, including nature based solutions to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

These two pieces of ground breaking legislation put sustainable development at the centre of decision making in Wales and recognise the importance of links and synergies between biodiversity, climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The **Environment (Wales) Act** draws upon the principles of the ecosystem approach adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act** ensures that Wales makes a contribution to the achievement of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Our **Environment (Wales) Act** introduced an overarching target of at least 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050, interim reduction targets and five yearly carbon budgets to set a pathway for decarbonisation.

Wales is a founding signatory of the Subnational Global Climate Leadership Memorandum of Understanding (the 'Under 2 MoU' 2015) committing to cut carbon emissions in order to limit the rise in global temperatures to less than 2°C and a member of the Compact of States and Regions (2014).

#### The current position in Wales:

Population: 3,082,412 (2013 figure)

Gross Domestic Product: £52 billion in 2014 billion (GVA 2013)

GHG emissions (year): 46.40 MtCO<sub>2e</sub> (2014)

## **Specific Actions and Commitments**

### ***Linking ecosystem resilience and climate change adaptation and mitigation***

We recognise the need to maintain and enhance the resilience of our ecosystems to be able to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to ensure the integrity of ecosystems when taking action to address climate change.

Our new legislative framework introduces an iterative framework for the delivery of sustainable management, which helps to identify and deliver opportunities for nature based solutions to climate change. This includes an evidence base - the **State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR)**, policy development – the **Natural Resource Policy** and delivery at an appropriate scale (through the introduction of **area statements**), including at a landscape scale.

This framework enables action on adaptation and mitigation at both the national and local levels. At the national level our **Natural Resource Policy** (published September 2017) will set out our cross-cutting approaches to the sustainable management of natural resources to maintain and enhance ecosystems, including the actions we will take to address climate change and improve biodiversity. **Area statements**, to be taken forward by our environmental body Natural Resources Wales (NRW), will help to identify local opportunities, and provide a platform for local partners and communities to collaborate on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Local delivery will be further supported by a new statutory requirement on public authorities in Wales to prepare forward plans on actions to be taken to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience. These plans will help to integrate ecosystem resilience and related action for climate change into decision-making and delivery.

### ***Natural or 'green' infrastructure solutions***

Wales is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to at least 80% of the 1990 baseline by 2050. We recognise the important role that our ecosystems contribute to helping achieve this commitment through the sustainable management of our natural resources, ensuring that they are capable of delivering sustained multiple benefits.

In developing nature based solutions we will draw upon the evidence published every five years in **SoNaRR**, in particular on the resilience of our ecosystems and their adaptability to the pressures of climate change. This evidence coupled with the evidence provided in **area statements** will help to identify opportunities to develop and implement nature based solutions at the appropriate scale and location in Wales.

Innovative proposals are being developed to harness Wales' natural resources. For example, a proposal to construct a 320 MW tidal lagoon is currently under consideration in the planning system which, if consented, will be capable of powering over 155,000 homes for 120 years.

Working to restore natural stores such as peat bogs in a number of key upland areas in Wales will help to secure carbon storage, promote biodiversity and reduce flooding. Our environment body, NRW, will continue to optimise the management of the 18,092ha of deep peat which is under woodland cover, in order to ensure benefits to our ecosystems.

Our new standards and guidance for sustainable drainage systems support developing resilience to climate change as well as adding social, economic and environmental value by improving the quality of urban design, adding enhanced amenity space and providing new habitats and wildlife corridors.

Our **Nature Recovery Plan for Wales**, which is framed around the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, will help us to meet our global commitments to biodiversity and provide support for our public authorities in delivering their duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems.

Guidance for our wide ranging public authorities to deliver on their biodiversity duty will provide information on the vital role of green infrastructure and raising awareness of the benefits of green infrastructure in our urban environments.

We will continue to draw on our **Woodland for Wales Strategy** to manage our forests to help us respond to climate change and will encourage and incentivise other forest managers to do the same.

### ***Promoting investments***

The implementation of the **Environment (Wales) Act 2016** and the **Natural Resource Policy** is being taken forward through the newly designed **Sustainable Management Schemes** which sits under the **Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme for Wales 2014-2020**. The Scheme provides support to collaborative landscape-scale projects delivering action that improves our natural resources in a way that delivers benefits to farm and rural businesses and rural communities. It will also support and facilitate co-ordination with other schemes to undertake the vital action needed to improve the resilience of farm and rural businesses and rural communities to climate change impacts.

The Scheme encourages community groups, farmers, landowners, environmental organisations, private businesses, regulators and academic institutions to work together on identifying opportunities for investment in their local area or landscape and taking action to improve the ecosystem services they benefit from. Projects benefiting from investment include a wide variety of land management activities to improve ecosystem resilience, such as, heather and bracken management, innovative grazing regimes, upland peat management, soil and fertiliser management, tree planting and grassland management for direct flood risk management. Investment is also being given to support the potential for developing schemes to attract private finance for the delivery of ecosystem services such as improved water quality and quantity, reduced flood risk and carbon capture and also for new innovative approaches to land management and the creation of local jobs and skills.

### ***Role of tools and assessments***

We recognise the importance of improving our understanding of biodiversity and ecosystems to provide vital evidence for assessing their capacity to adapt to and mitigate for climate change.

**SoNaRR** provides us with evidence on the resilience of our ecosystems and their ability to deliver multiple benefits including for climate change adaptation and mitigation. This evidence will help us to develop relevant policies and actions, which help to improve the status of our natural resources and address the impacts of climate change.

To continue to improve the quality of evidence our environment body, NRW will develop better measures to assess levels of risks to ecosystems, and their contribution to well-being as well as developing new approaches to assess resilience at different scales through the use of mapping tools.

Our **Future Trends Report** provides information on likely future trends affecting our environment and wellbeing, and will help us to further plan and join up between our environment, society and our economy to achieve sustainable development.

Our national indicators on (a) emissions of greenhouse gases, (b) emissions of greenhouse gases attributed to the consumption of global goods and services, (c) areas of healthy ecosystems and (d) status of biological diversity help us to assess our ability to deliver on our seven well-being goals.

Working collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders we will share best practice as well as knowledge on nature based solutions to climate change adaptation and mitigation and make use of this knowledge to better inform decision-making.

### ***Global responsibility***

A key part of Wales' commitment to sustainable development has been its work in partnership internationally from being a founding signatory of the Gauteng Declaration in 2002 to signing the global Compact of States and Regions in 2014. Wales' work internationally includes the **Wales for Africa** programme in Mbale, which won the UNFCC Momentum for Change Lighthouse award in 2011 and which has seen the planting of more than one million trees and the launch of an ambitious next phase – 10 million trees. Through the **Size of Wales** project, an area of forest the Size of Wales has been safeguarded in Africa and in Wales, a tree is planted in both Wales and Africa for every child born. As an active member of The Climate Group and Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD), Wales is committed to working in partnership to tackle climate change and more broadly the support development in all regions to be sustainable. This is underpinned by the commitment in the Well-being of Future Generations Act to a globally responsible Wales.