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# Evaluation of Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) Grant: Interim Report

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

## **Evaluation of Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) Grant: Interim Report**

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## Glossary

<b>Acronym/Key word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
CCT	Cross-Cutting Themes
CRF	Community Renewal Fund
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ENRaW	Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being in Wales
EU	European Union
Eoi	Expression of Interest
IB	Intermediary Body
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
NRAP	Nature Recovery Action Plan
NRP	Natural Resources Policy
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RPW	Rural Payments Wales
SoNaRR	State of Natural Resources Report
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMNR	Sustainable Management of our Natural Resources
SMS	Sustainable Management Scheme
SRG	Single Revenue Grant
ToC	Theory of Change
WEFO	Welsh European Funding office
WFG	Well-being of Future Generations

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 OB3 Research, in conjunction with BRO Partnership, were appointed by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) grant.
- 1.2 The aim of the evaluation is to assess if ENRaW funded projects, delivered between April 2019 and March 2023, deliver against scheme aims and objectives. The evaluation is expected to review the effectiveness of the grant scheme as a mechanism for delivering against Welsh Government policies, strategies, and legislative requirements and the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme (RDP). The evaluation will also explore the environmental, social, economic, and cultural outcomes achieved via the collaborative delivery approach.
- 1.3 It is intended that the evaluation reviews:
  - the administration and delivery of the grant scheme by Welsh Government, including application processes, monitoring requirements and grant management with a view to identifying what has worked well and what could be improved in the future
  - the direct impact of grants and whether the grants awarded achieved their original aims and objectives, including achievement of targets and outcomes set out in applications and delivery plans
  - wider and unexpected benefits and achievements, including any wider multiple benefits over and above direct benefits expected.
- 1.4 The evaluation is being undertaken between October 2021 and October 2023. It has already involved the preparation of a Theory of Change (ToC) and Evaluation Framework report (unpublished, January 2022) and this Interim Report (October 2022) which considers the administration and delivery of the grant scheme and provides early findings on the impact of the scheme. It will also involve the preparation of a final evaluation report by October 2023 which will consider the impact and achievements of the scheme in greater detail.
- 1.5 This report is presented in eight chapters as follows:

- chapter one: introduction to the report
- chapter two: an outline of the study methodology
- chapter three: considers the fit of ENRaW within the policy and strategic context and the views of stakeholders about this
- chapter four: provides an overview of the ENRaW scheme and its implementation
- chapter five: considers grant administration arrangements for operating ENRaW
- chapter six: considers the progress made to date and ENRaW grant achievements, including progress against cross cutting objectives
- chapter seven: considers the outcomes achieved to date and the sustainability of funded activities, largely drawing upon Window 1 projects which have been completed
- chapter eight: offers our emerging conclusions and issues to consider for the remaining duration of the scheme and for the future.

#### 1.6 Additional information is set out within annexes:

- Annex A sets out a Theory of Change logic model and a supporting evaluation framework for ENRaW
- Annex B sets out the discussion guides adopted for the fieldwork
- Annex C contains the survey tool distributed to both unsuccessful and successful ENRaW applicants
- Annex D provides detail of the sampling approach.

## 2. Methodology

2.1 This chapter sets out the method adopted for undertaking the interim evaluation.

### Method

2.2 The evaluation activities which were undertaken between October 2021 and September 2022 involved the following elements of work:

- an inception stage, which included an inception meeting with Welsh Government officials and the preparation of a refined methodological approach and project plan
- desk-based research, which involved an analysis of relevant policy and strategic documents including Welsh Government publications and key legislation. It also involved a review of ENRaW scheme documentation, monitoring data, funded project applications and (where available) end of project reports
- preparing a qualitative discussion guide for Welsh Government officials involved in the design and development of the ENRaW scheme (set out at Annex B1) and subsequently interviewing 13 Welsh Government officials to gain their views on the purpose and design of the ENRaW scheme as well as the intended outcomes and impacts expected. These included officials working for Rural Payment Wales (RPW)
- facilitating a ToC workshop with Welsh Government officials, to test the veracity of a draft logic model and developing a ToC logic model for the ENRaW scheme (set out at Annex A) to set out the issues that policymakers expected the scheme to address as well as the outputs and outcomes it hoped to achieve
- preparing discussion guides for interviewing representatives leading and involved with funded projects and unsuccessful applicant organisations (set out at Annex B2 to B5) as well as a bilingual web survey for both successful and unsuccessful applicants (Annex B6)



- deploying the bilingual web survey directly to all ENRaW applicants. The survey was hosted using SNAP survey software and was pre-populated with information about which funding window(s) the applicant had applied for, and whether their application(s) had been successful or not in order to improve the accuracy of responses and to reduce the questions asked of respondents. A database of 134 applicants was made available to the research team. A de-duplication exercise to remove applicants who had applied to ENRaW on more than one occasion reduced this to 103. Of these, 51 applicants had never secured any ENRaW funding. Eight email contacts were undeliverable, and the survey was therefore distributed to 95 contacts. Applicants were invited to complete the web survey in June 2022 and up to three automated reminder messages via SNAP software were issued between June and September 2022 to non-respondents. In addition, all non-respondents were contacted by phone<sup>1</sup> and a personalised email issued by a member of the OB3 research team. Furthermore, all non-respondents were contacted by the Welsh Government on two occasions by e-mail during the survey period to encourage their contribution. A total of 45 survey responses were received, representing a response rate of 47 per cent of those with a working email
- selecting a sample of 30 funded projects to approach for fieldwork. Our approach to developing a sampling framework and selecting projects for inclusion in the fieldwork is set out at Annex C. In four cases, substitute projects were selected due to various issues including lack of response, ill-health, and the lead officer responsible for the project having left the organisation
- undertaking in-depth qualitative interviews with at least one representative from 30 funded projects (out of a possible 57), 20 of which had been funded under Window 1 and 10 within either Window 2 or 3. Most of these in-depth interviews were conducted via Teams,

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<sup>1</sup> Where a phone number could be sourced via publicly available information.

unless the projects had been selected as case studies – in which case face-to-face interviews were held in the majority of cases

- undertaking further fieldwork with eight of the sampled projects. This involved interviewing partner organisations, beneficiaries, or community representatives as well as Welsh Government policy officers who had been involved with these projects
- undertaking a short interview with one unsuccessful applicant to ENRaW who had not secured any funding. Four survey respondents (out of six who completed the survey) indicated that they were prepared to provide further feedback to a member of the research team about their experience of the application process and were approached for interview. However, one of these declined to do so when approached for interview and two did not respond to our requests for an interview.

### Profile of survey responses

2.3 All 45 survey responses were completed in English. Table 2.1 shows that the responses received represented 63 applications submitted to the ENRaW scheme, as eight of those who completed the survey had submitted two applications during different windows and four had submitted at least one application during each of the funding windows. Four responses had submitted more than one application within the same funding window but for the ease of analysis, these have not been counted as separate cases within the survey data.

2.4 Of those that responded, 37 had been successful, and 22 had not been successful with their application whilst a further four were awaiting the outcome.

**Table 2.1: Profile of survey responses**

	Application submitted	Successful	Not successful	Waiting for outcome
Window 1	36	24	12	0
Window 2	11	3	8	0
Window 3	16	10	2	4
Total	63	37	22	4

Source: OB3 Research web survey (45 responses)

2.5 Of the successful Window 1 funded projects surveyed, some two-thirds (16 of 24) stated that their project had been completed.

2.6 The majority of survey responses (37 out of 45) were completed by the project or applicant lead organisation whilst a small proportion (6) were completed by a project or applicant partner. One survey was completed by another type of organisation, identified as a project officer, and one did not provide such details.

### **Profile of interviewed projects**

2.7 A total of 91 individuals contributed to the qualitative fieldwork from across the 30 selected projects. The profile of these were as follows:

- 67 were delivery staff, employed either by the lead organisation or a partner organisation. These delivery staff represented a total of 44 organisations<sup>2</sup>. In all 30 selected projects, the project lead was interviewed. Other delivery staff who were interviewed included senior managers, project co-ordinators and front line delivery staff
- 20 were project beneficiaries, drawn from across four of the selected case study projects. These included volunteers, trainees as well as community group representatives who had been in receipt of project intervention
- four were Welsh Government policy officers who had been involved with four of the selected case study projects.

### **Methodological considerations**

2.8 The following issues need to be considered in relation to the methodology adopted for this study:

- the survey response rate (n=45) was just below the 50 per cent expected response rate despite the efforts adopted by the research team and Welsh Government officers to encourage responses. The response rate is however comparable with that achieved across

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<sup>2</sup> This figure does include some double counting where the same organisation, but different staff e.g. Dŵr Cymru, NRW, would have been involved in more than one ENRaW project

other similar evaluations (e.g. evaluation of the RDP funded Sustainable Management Scheme). The response rate from funded applicants is higher than those not in receipt of funding, 24 out of a potential of 36 Window 1 funded projects responded

- there is a degree of overlap in the views of survey respondents and interviewed respondents, given that 21 of the 30 sampled projects for interview also completed a survey
- as only one unsuccessful applicant was interviewed as part of the evaluation, their views should be treated with caution
- projects funded via Windows 2 and 3 are still ongoing and as such it is too early to gauge the impact which they will have upon their communities. This interim report therefore draws heavily upon the outcomes and impact of completed Window 1 projects, accepting that the final evaluation report will be able to report more evidence of the outcomes achieved for Windows 2 and 3 funded projects.

### 3. Policy and strategic rationale for ENRaW

3.1 This chapter sets out the legislative and policy context for ENRaW.

#### Legislative context

3.2 ENRaW sits firmly within the wider legislative framework now operating in Wales, particularly the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) (Wales) Act 2015, and the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.

#### The Environment (Wales) Act 2016

3.3 Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act sets out a new framework for the Sustainable Management of our Natural Resources (SMNR). It sets out:

- **a definition of SMNR:** which is improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales by taking an ecosystem approach to managing natural resources. Ecosystems, which comprise of plants, animals, air, water, minerals and soils and the interactions that take place between them, provide us with clean air, water, food, fuel, and opportunities for enjoying the outdoors and supporting our well-being
- **Wales' Natural Resources Policy (NRP)**<sup>3</sup> which contains four headline opportunities:
  - supporting successful, sustainable communities
  - promoting green growth and innovation to create sustainable jobs
  - supporting a more resource efficient economy
  - maintaining healthy, active, and connected communities.

The NRP also sets out three national priorities to tackle the challenges and realise the opportunities associated with natural resources:

- delivering nature-based solutions
- increasing resource efficiency and renewable energy

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<sup>3</sup> [Welsh Government \(2017\) Natural Resources Policy](#)

- taking a place-based approach
- **a set of principles associated with SMNR:**
  - manage adaptively, by planning, monitoring, reviewing and, where appropriate, changing action
  - consider the appropriate spatial scale for action
  - promote and engage in collaboration and co-operation
  - make appropriate arrangements for public participation in decision-making
  - take account of all relevant evidence and gather evidence in respect of uncertainties
  - take account of the benefits and intrinsic value of natural resources and ecosystems
  - take account of the short-, medium- and long- term consequences of actions
  - take action to prevent significant damage to ecosystems
  - take account of the resilience of ecosystems, in particular the diversity between and within ecosystems; the connections between and within ecosystems; the scale of ecosystems; the condition of ecosystems and the adaptability of ecosystems.
- **State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR)<sup>4,5</sup>:** This was a requirement of the Environment (Wales) Act and two reports have been published by NRW, in 2016 and 2020. Both provide a detailed overview of Wales' natural resources, including animals, plants and other organisms, air quality, water resources, soils, and minerals as well as mountains, grasslands, woodlands, urban, freshwater, and marine environments

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<sup>4</sup> [Natural Resources Wales \(2016\) A summary of the State of Natural Resources Report](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Natural Resources Wales / State of Natural Resources Report \(SoNaRR\) for Wales 2020](#)

- **Area Statements:** these were intended to set out the required action to deliver the NRP at a regional level. The Area Statements were published by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in 2020<sup>6</sup> and provide an initial overview of regional environmental priorities.

3.4 The Environment (Wales) Act also introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the Section 6 duty) which requires that public authorities ‘must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems’. It was expected that ENRaW would provide support for public authorities in their Section 6 biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty through grant funded activity.

### **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

3.5 This Act requires the public sector ‘to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales in accordance with the sustainable development principle’, i.e., ensuring ‘that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’<sup>7</sup>.

3.6 The Act sets out seven well-being goals and five ways of working that all public bodies must strive to adhere to. The seven well-being goals are:

- a globally responsible Wales
- a prosperous Wales
- a resilient Wales
- a healthier Wales
- a more equal Wales
- a Wales of cohesive communities
- a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

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<sup>6</sup> [Natural Resources Wales Area Statements](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Welsh Government Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 The Essentials 2nd Edition May 2015 \(p3; p7\)](#)

3.7 The five ways of working are of relevance to the ENRaW scheme, since they require public bodies to consider:

- long term needs
- preventative approaches
- integration between public bodies
- collaboration and the sharing of resources, and the
- involvement of people.

3.8 ENRaW was one of the first Welsh Government grant schemes to embrace the WFG Act and it is expected to make a direct contribution to the goals and principles of the legislation.

#### **The Planning (Wales) Act 2015**

3.9 The Planning (Wales) Act is also relevant, particularly the recent publication of Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. This sets out a spatial strategy for development within Wales from 2020 to 2040 and includes a strategic framework for biodiversity enhancement and ecosystem resilience. It therefore brings together the requirements of the Environment and Well-being Acts into a spatial context. The outputs and outcomes from ENRaW projects should contribute to the future development of this strategic spatial policy.

#### **Policy context**

3.10 It was intended that the scheme would support the implementation of Welsh Government's cross cutting ambitions as set out in its Programme for Government, as well as its economic and natural resources policies as ENRaW was designed as an integrated approach which would support co-operative action to deliver environmental enhancement, resilience, and well-being objectives.

#### **Programme for Government 2016-2021, Taking Wales Forward**

3.11 The key priorities of relevance to ENRaW as set out in the Welsh Government's five year-plan for 2016-2021, Taking Wales Forward were:



- to develop successful, sustainable rural communities by (amongst others) supporting community-led projects, promoting skills development, job creation, entrepreneurship, and community energy
- to improve and protect the environment by reducing greenhouse emissions, protect and enhance biodiversity and local ecosystems, support renewable energy projects, invest in green economy skills, and invest in flood defence work to better manage water within the environment
- to improve health and well-being for all, by piloting social prescription schemes, developing a cross-government strategy to address loneliness and isolation, and work with others to improve well-being and promote better emotional health
- to improve engagement and connectedness by working with communities to protect local facilities and to help communities take ownership of community assets; and to identify more opportunities for people to volunteer.

### **Programme for Government 2021 to 2026**

3.12 The key priorities of relevance to ENRaW, which is in place until 2023, as set out in the current (refreshed) Welsh Government's five year-plan for 2021 to 2026<sup>8</sup> are:

- to provide effective, high quality and sustainable healthcare by (amongst others) introducing an all-Wales framework to roll out social prescribing to tackle isolation and to prioritise investment in mental health
- to build a stronger, greener economy and make maximum progress towards decarbonisation by creating a new system of farm support that maximises the protective power of nature through farming and acknowledges ecologically sustainable local food production

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<sup>8</sup> [Welsh Government Programme for government: update \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

- to embed the climate and nature emergency response across every aspect of government by expanding arrangements to create and enhance green spaces, develop new remote working hubs in communities, strengthen the promotion of walking and cycling, support innovative social enterprise schemes such as bike maintenance repair cafes and bike recycling schemes, support communities to create new woodlands and connect habitat areas, employer communities to have a greater stake in local regeneration, create more community green space in town centres and repurpose public space for outdoor events, pop-up parks and ‘parklets’
- make cities, towns, and villages even better places in which to live and work by supporting community-led initiatives and community land trusts.

3.13 It was also expected that ENRaW would further embed the new ways of working promoted through the principles of SMNR and a range of relevant policies that sit beneath it such as the Nature Recovery Action Plan, Action Plan for Pollinators, and A Fly-tipping Free Wales.

### **Nature Recovery Action Plan**

3.14 It was expected that the ENRaW scheme would support the implementation of the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP)<sup>9</sup> for Wales in several ways. The NRAP strategy was published in December 2015 and set out an action plan which was later refreshed for 2020-21 to respond to the emerging ecological crisis. The NRAP sets out the Welsh Government’s commitment to reversing the loss of biodiversity in Wales and the 2020-21 action plan contains five themes:

- maintaining and enhancing resilient ecological networks
- increasing knowledge and knowledge transfer
- realising new investment and funding
- upskilling and capacity for delivery

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<sup>9</sup> [Nature recovery action plan | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/nature-recovery-action-plan)

- mainstreaming, governance, and reporting progress.

3.15 ENRaW is highlighted as one scheme which has the potential to contribute towards:

- the spatial evidence base for the distribution and state of biodiversity under the first theme of maintaining and enhancing resilient ecological network theme
- realising and increasing private investment under the third theme of realising new investment and funding
- increasing capacity to deliver action for biodiversity and improving biodiversity capability and skills under the fourth theme of upskilling and capacity for delivery.

### **Action Plan for Pollinators**

3.16 The Welsh Government's Action Plan for Pollinators<sup>10</sup> (2013) set out a series of actions to address the decline in pollinator population and health across Wales which have come about due to land-use intensification, habitat destruction, disease, the use of agri-chemicals and climate change. The Plan sets out a vision where Wales supports healthy populations of wild and managed pollinators in order to benefit the people, economy, and environment of Wales. The plan sets out four key outcomes:

- Wales has joined up policy, governance, and a sound evidence base for action for pollinators
- Wales provides diverse and connected flower rich habitats to support pollinators
- Wales' pollinator populations are healthy
- Wales' citizens are better informed and aware of the importance and management of pollinators.

### **A Fly-tipping Free Wales**

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<sup>10</sup> [Action plan for pollinators | GOV.WALES](#)

3.17 The Welsh Government's strategy for tackling fly-tipping<sup>11</sup> (2015) sets out a vision for Wales that is free from unacceptable social, economic, and environmental harm caused by fly-tipping. The strategy is intended to achieve four key outcomes where:

- all key organisations in Wales commit to eliminating fly-tipping
- fly-tipping is widely understood as being socially unacceptable
- it becomes easier for people to deal with their waste responsibly
- anyone who fly-tips is caught and punished appropriately.

3.18 The strategy also sets out three cross-cutting ways of working which are improving data collection, working in partnership and good communications.

### **Prosperity for all**

3.19 The five-year plan Prosperity for All: A Climate Conscious Wales<sup>12</sup> (2019) sets out the Welsh Government's climate change adaptation plan for Wales for the 2020-2015 period. It sets out a vision for 2030, where 'Wales is a country which has the resources and is prepared, has the knowledge to understand the risk and challenges ahead and has the capacity to adapt to the impact of climate change'<sup>13</sup>. The plan sets out four key objectives, to:

- increase knowledge
- increase capacity
- build resilience
- respond to the risks in Wales.

### **Other similar interventions**

#### **Sustainable Management Scheme**

3.20 Whilst there are similarities with the Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS), ENRaW is different as it was intended to support projects that

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<sup>11</sup> [Welsh Government \(2015\) A Fly-tipping Free Wales - Our strategy for tackling fly-tipping](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Prosperity for all: A Climate conscious Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.7

would make improvements in and around residential areas for the benefit of people, businesses, and their communities. SMS on the other hand, funded via sub-measure 16.5 of the RDP was intended to support landscape scale interventions which would deliver benefits to land managers, businesses, and communities.

3.21 It was expected that some projects could be supported by either SMS or ENRaW. These would primarily be agricultural or common land adjacent to built environments. The guidance states that it would be acceptable for two distinctly funded activities within the same project to be supported by the SMS and ENRaW provided there would be no duplication of funding. Such cases may also lead to larger, more strategic programmes of work.

3.22 Several findings offered by the process evaluation of the SMS<sup>14</sup> are of relevance to ENRaW, including:

- that a landscape scale approach to funding can generate wider community level benefits than funding made available at an individual, farm level
- that the SMS scheme embedded SMNR principles firmly into its operation, and the facilitation support service played a key role in helping projects to understand and embrace these
- that interest and competition for the fund was strong which resulted in many good quality projects not being supported
- decision-making processes were robust and appropriate, but the application process could have been simplified and streamlined and closer involvement with policymakers would have been beneficial
- the Welsh Government would have benefited from greater resources to manage the assessment process given administration capacity issues

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<sup>14</sup> [Sustainable Management Scheme: process evaluation and theory of change report \(summary\) | GOV.WALES](#)

- financial claims reporting issues were numerous and widespread, causing severe issues for several SMS partnerships, particularly smaller third sector organisations and landowner-led partnerships
- SMS was found to have helped strengthen existing collaborations and broadened their impact, but less evidence was available that it had stimulated new, sustainable collaborations
- successful collaborative land management takes time - long-term funding is required to help develop trust between partners
- the flexible nature of the SMS is both a strength and weakness, in that whilst projects have been able to define and set their own targets it is difficult to aggregate scheme level outputs and achievements
- only direct and immediate outputs can be captured and reported for the SMS, as wider, longer-term ecosystem benefits and socio-economic outcomes take several years to fully materialise.

## 4. An overview of the ENRaW grant

- 4.1 This chapter sets out a detailed overview of the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being in Wales (ENRaW) grant scheme, taking into account scheme level documentation including guidance to applicants and projects.

### Introduction

- 4.2 The ENRaW grant scheme is a single environment grant scheme established in April 2018. It is expected to support projects to make improvements in and around residential areas and to deliver benefits for people, businesses, and their communities.
- 4.3 It was established when three grant schemes were merged into one. These three grant schemes were the Environment Core Grant, Local Authority Single Revenue Grant, and a proportion of the capital funding previously allocated under the Green Infrastructure Capital Grant.<sup>15</sup>
- 4.4 The pan-Wales scheme has been operating on an annual basis, providing funding to projects on a three-year basis from spring 2019 onwards. The scheme secured Rural Development Programme (RDP) funding part-way through delivery in 2019, to maximise the resources available.

### Purpose of the grant scheme

- 4.5 ENRaW was intended to fund pilot and demonstration projects which promoted cooperation and collaborative action to:
- develop, regenerate, and broaden access to sustainable green infrastructure
  - improve the quality of the urban and rural built environment
  - develop resilient ecological networks, areas, and nature-based solutions.

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<sup>15</sup> Capital funding under the Green Infrastructure Capital Grant continued to make a contribution to support projects attracting additional investment into Wales including Welsh EULIFE projects and larger scale Welsh projects submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund.

4.6 Projects funded via ENRaW were expected to achieve outcomes across four key areas, as set out at Figure 4.1:

**Figure 4.1: ENRaW expected outcomes**

**Social benefits**

- Improve access to, and the quality of, local green spaces
- Improve health and well-being in the community
- Involve local community groups, volunteers, and cross sector participation
- Increase social responsibility and sustainable behaviours within the community

**Environmental benefits**

- Create new, or maintain already existing, woodlands, hedges etc
- Improve the quality of the local environment
- Enhance biodiversity and ecological / ecosystem resilience
- Specific action to reduce carbon emissions

**Economic benefits**

- Create income or elements of revenue generation
- Attract investment from other sources (not including match funding)
- Create, secure, or protect existing jobs
- Support new qualifications and / or skills to those involved or to benefit in future

**Cultural benefits**

- Increase community role in shared responsibilities for future longer-term sustainability
- Deliver recreational activities and events to local and wider communities
- Increase knowledge and understanding across communities through training or other engagement
- Tackle local issues such as repairs, restorations etc to protect heritage

**The Rural Development Programme (RDP)**

4.7 ENRaW was expected to contribute to two of the six RDP priorities which set the context for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), namely Priority 5 and 6. Individual funded projects were expected to address at least one of these two priorities. The six priorities



are broken down into 18 focus areas, of which five fall under Priority 5 and three fall under Priority 6:

- **Priority 5:** promote resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilience economy in agriculture, food, and forestry sector; by:
  - i. Focus area 5A: increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture
  - ii. Focus area 5B: increasing efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing
  - iii. Focus area 5C: facilitating the supply and use of renewable sources of energy, of by-products, wastes, residues, and other non-food raw material for purposes of the bioeconomy
  - iv. Focus area 5D: reducing nitrous oxide and methane emissions from agriculture
  - v. Focus area 5E: fostering carbon sequestration in agriculture and forestry
  
- **Priority 6:** promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas with a focus on fostering local development in rural areas; by:
  - i. Focus area 6A: facilitating diversification, creation of small new enterprises and job creation
  - ii. Focus area 6B: fostering local development in rural areas
  - iii. Focus area 6C: enhancing accessibility to, use, and quality of, information and communication technologies in rural areas.

4.8 ENRaW was initially designed to incorporate two RDP sub-measures. These were:

- sub-measure 7.4 which offered 'support for investments in the setting up or expansion of local basic services for the rural

population including leisure, culture and the related infrastructure’,  
and

- sub-measure 16.2 which related to support for pilot projects, and the development of new products, practices, processes, and technologies.

4.9 However, following internal discussions, the RDP elements of ENRaW were funded only under measure 16.2.

4.10 Measure 16.2 of the RDP can provide both revenue and capital funding to support:

- pilot projects, and the
- development of new products, practices, processes, and technologies in the agriculture, food, and forestry sectors.

4.11 The first window of ENRaW funding was not funded via RDP as initially intended (although is still within scope of this evaluation) because a decision was taken, following a Wales Audit Office review of RDP<sup>16</sup>, to exclude all projects agreed for funding in the first round of ENRaW from RDP (despite seven projects previously being earmarked to receive funding through the RDP). This decision was linked to the decision to move away from the originally agreed Intermediate Body (IB) management model used to develop and implement the first round of the scheme, towards a centrally managed RDP approach. The Welsh Government did retrospectively attempt to mirror the RDP application process by asking successful Window 1 applicants to prepare delivery plans (akin to the RDP full application stage).

#### **Initial co-design with stakeholders**

4.12 A strong emphasis was placed by the Welsh Government on co-designing the ENRaW grant scheme on a joint basis with stakeholders. In developing the new scheme, co-design events were held with stakeholders from the third sector and local authorities to raise awareness of a proposed move

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<sup>16</sup> [Ensuring Value for Money from Rural Development Grants Made Without Competition – Draft Report \(audit.wales\)](https://www.audit.wales)

away from existing funding models, to inform them of reduced resources and set out intentions towards a new programme of funding. In addition, individual meetings were held with various stakeholder organisations to gather views and discuss concerns which funded organisations had at the time. Feedback gleaned from stakeholders was used to shape the new grant scheme. Feedback from stakeholders who couldn't attend these events was also secured via a Yammer<sup>17</sup> online platform engagement tool, using an approach which mirrored that used within the events. The platform was also used by stakeholders to share project ideas and to explore potential collaborators.

4.13 A review of delegate responses from two co-design events held during June 2018 found that contributors voiced feedback around five key themes:

- collaboration and support
- definitions, criteria, and guidance
- funding, finance, and wider benefits
- evaluation and outcomes
- timescales and weighting.

4.14 For each theme, the Welsh Government provided a response to the feedback gathered, which then informed the scheme design.

### **The rationale for introducing ENRaW**

4.15 Initial scheme guidance for the ENRaW Domestic Window 1 fund states that the introduction of ENRaW would allow for activity to be more clearly delivered against Welsh Government priorities, to maximise the resources available for investment, and achieve longer term transformational change.

4.16 The guidance argues that the introduction of a single grant would help to consolidate previous grants into one scheme and therefore achieve a clearer focus on delivering against Programme for Government objectives and the Natural Resources Policy.

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<sup>17</sup> A social networking service

4.17 The documentation also emphasises the co-operative and collaborative nature of projects it expected ENRaW to fund. Funding would only be made available to support collaborative activities involving the third sector, statutory sector, and other organisations such as local community groups, private sector, and national organisations. To aid this, one element of the grant funding was made available to develop ‘strategic, cross-sector delivery co-operations or collaborations.’ This consisted of revenue funding of up to a maximum of £40,000 over a 12-month period. It was introduced at the request of stakeholders who made the case for seed corn funding to support the development of new partnerships, similar to that made available via the National Lottery Community Fund Create Your Space programme<sup>18</sup>. In terms of defining a collaborative project, the Window 1 guidance stated:

- a partnership must consist of at least two organisations from different sectors
- the expectation would be that multiple partners spanning a range of interests, service delivery types and sectors would be involved in projects
- that, as a requirement of RDP funding, at least one member must be an SME.

4.18 Whilst the Window 1 guidance does not rule out funding existing partnerships and collaborations, it does state that as a requirement of RDP funding conditions ‘any existing partnership or collaboration applying for future funding through this scheme will need to demonstrate a new element to the work proposed for example, involving new partners, new processes/methods of delivery or practices, or new products.’

4.19 The nature of activities which ENRaW expected to fund were very broad, with individual projects expected to set their own outcomes and indicators across the four key areas of economic, social, cultural, and environmental

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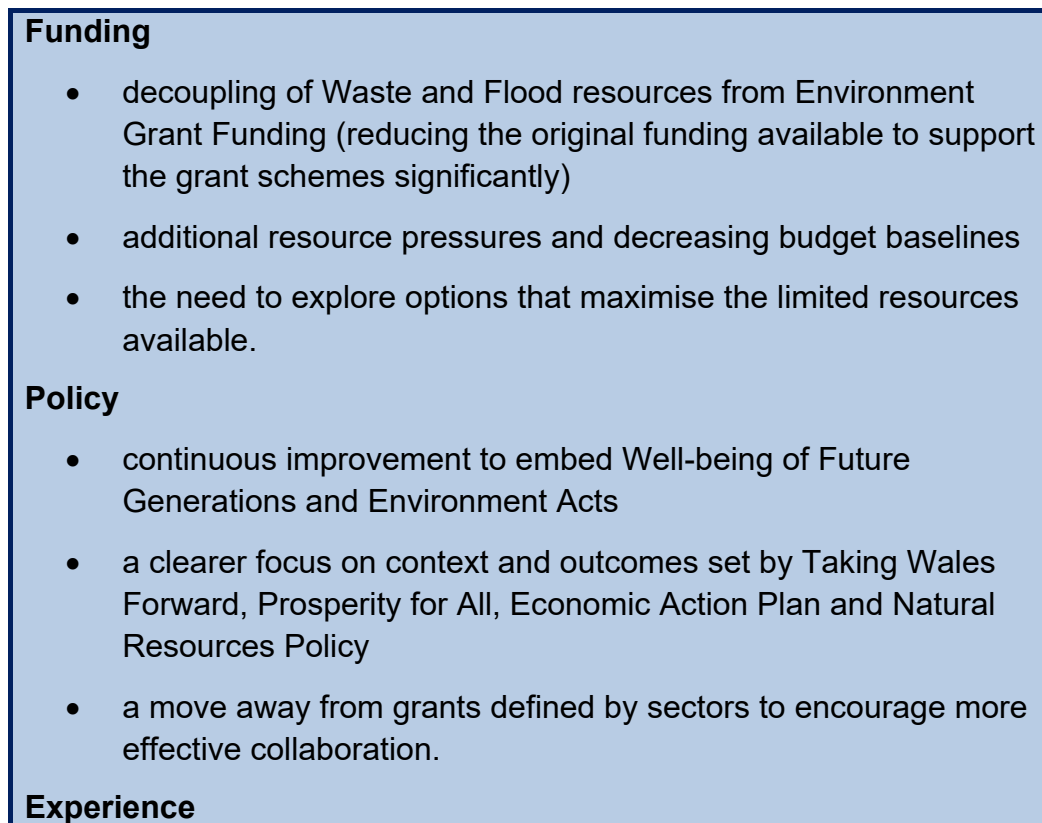
<sup>18</sup> [About - Create Your Space](#)

impacts utilising a broad set of potential measures contained in guidance from Welsh Government.

### **Lessons from previous schemes**

- 4.20 A review of two environment Grant schemes (the Environment Single Revenue Grant for Local Authorities and the Single Environment Core Grant for Third Sector organisations) was undertaken during 2015. In addition, the Green Infrastructure Capital Grant was established in 2017/18. A business case<sup>19</sup> was developed setting out the case for a new single grant scheme which would be more closely aligned to and capable of delivering the Welsh Government’s policy agenda.
- 4.21 The business case summarised the main drivers for change under three key themes of funding, policy, and experience. These are set out at Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.2: Key drivers for establishing ENRaW**



<sup>19</sup> Welsh Government Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being in Wales Grant 2018 – 2023 Business Case (July 2018) unpublished

- feedback from Wales Audit Office WFG Pilot Audit of the Single Revenue Grant (SRG)
- initial feedback from evaluation on the current Third Sector Core funding
- feedback and lessons learnt from Welsh Government policy and grants teams.

Source: ENRaW Business Case document

4.22 Two key lessons from previous grant schemes were taken on board within the ENRaW scheme. These were the need for:

- improved identification and reporting of results and outcomes – addressed via ENRaW by providing funding to deliver outcomes identified in Welsh Government policies
- greater focus on and strengthening collaborative activity across sectors to address environmental issues to move away from an environment silo approach – addressed via ENRaW's funding criteria.

4.23 In adopting a new model, it was recognised that funding would be made available in a competitive manner, which would not necessarily be welcomed by the third sector and local authorities given that they had, to date, been able to access ring fenced funding for their sector.

### **Revenue and capital funding**

4.24 An internal Welsh Government business case document sets out capital and revenue budgets for ENRaW up until March 2023.

4.25 It was anticipated that three streams of funding would be made available via the scheme to support:

- small scale revenue projects via sub measure 16.2 of the RDP which would make available funding of up to £40,000 for a period of 12 months to support the development of new partnerships
- small scale capital projects via sub measure 7.4 of the RDP delivered over a period of up to three years

- larger capital and/or revenue projects under sub measure 16.2 of the RDP delivered over a period of up to three years.

4.26 The following funding breakdown for capital project costs was anticipated:

**Table 4.1: Proposed ENRaW capital funding**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Total</b>
Welsh Government Green Infrastructure	1,451,034	4,601,100	3,500,000	3,500,000	<b>13,052,134</b>
Potential RDP Contribution	1,636,272	5,188,474	3,946,809	3,946,809	<b>14,718,363</b>
Applicant contribution (20% of project costs)	617,461	1,957,915	1,489,362	1,489,362	<b>5,554,100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,704,767</b>	<b>11,747,489</b>	<b>8,936,171</b>	<b>8,936,171</b>	<b>33,324,598</b>

Source: ENRaW Business Case document

4.27 The Welsh Government investment above in each financial year is based on committing approximately 70 per cent of the budget to the RDP element. The remaining 30 per cent would be used to support proposed grant activity outside of RDP areas and provide a co-financing contribution for future applications that were being developed to draw additional funding into Wales (e.g., EU LIFE<sup>20</sup> and National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) applications from Wales).

4.28 The proposed revenue funding for ENRaW is set out below:

**Table 4.2: Proposed ENRaW revenue funding**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Total</b>
Domestic Funds <sup>21</sup>	3,418,800	3,418,800	3,418,800	3,418,800	13,675,200
RDP Contribution	3,855,243	3,855,243	3,855,243	3,855,243	15,420,970
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,274,043</b>	<b>7,274,043</b>	<b>7,274,043</b>	<b>7,274,043</b>	<b>29,096,170</b>

<sup>20</sup> The Funding Instrument for Environment and Climate action programme

<sup>21</sup> The domestic funding identified draws upon a range of contributing policy budgets within Welsh Government to support the current and future grant schemes delivered through the Environment Grants Team, consolidated into one budget.

Source: ENRaW Business Case document

4.29 The domestic budget above is based on committing 80 per cent of the current budget to RDP areas, with the remaining 20 per cent being retained to support both wider activities requiring revenue support and non-RDP activity.

### **Administration of funding rounds**

4.30 Three competitive funding windows have been administered by the Welsh Government for the ENRaW scheme. It is not expected that any further funding rounds will be administered.

### **Window 1 applications**

4.31 The first window was administered by the Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch in September 2018 using Welsh Government funding only. Proposals were submitted by December 2018, allowing 12 weeks for preparation and submission.

4.32 A detailed guidance pack for Welsh Government staff was prepared (titled ENRaW Domestic Grant Desk Instructions Round 1) setting out procedures and included guidance for assessing applications. Grant applications were reviewed by three assessors, including a member of the Programme Management and Delivery Branch, a specific policy officer and a further cross cutting policy officer. Moderation panels were held to review and rank applications and were attended by policy officers as well as members of the Programme Management and Delivery Branch.

4.33 Following the assessment process, due diligence and state aid checks, applicants were notified of the funding outcome during February – March 2019 and projects commenced from spring 2019 onwards.

4.34 Window 1 made available three types of grant funding:

- revenue funding to support the development of new strategic, cross-sector delivery co-operations/collaborations (up to £40,000 over a maximum 12-month period)



- capital for small scale infrastructure with a focus on environmental and green infrastructure (providing up to £128,000 max which is 80 per cent of the total project costs of £160,000 over three years) and
- combined revenue and capital funding to support pilot and demonstration projects at the right scale (average project costs of £750,000-£1 million over three years).

4.35 The guidance stated that the grant should support:

- the creation of new co-operative arrangements for delivering activity, environmental infrastructure, or projects
- projects at scale that can draw together several smaller scale or locally led activities across an area or region in a strategic way
- the further development of co-operations, collaborations, or partnerships, including involving new partners outside of the traditional environment sector (e.g., health organisations, tourism, businesses/private sector etc.)
- achieving multiple benefits spanning economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being
- implementing new processes/methods of delivery or practices (e.g., strengthening the SMNR focus of delivery or the new section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty); and
- developing and delivering new products.

4.36 Successful large scale Window 1 projects were required to complete a delivery plan template, which built upon their original application, and which would form the basis of progress meetings with Welsh Government officials. Annex A of the delivery plan template also offers a long list of the types of outputs, outcomes, and metrics which projects could adopt.

## **Window 1 claims and reporting**

- 4.37 Projects funded under Window 1 submitted quarterly claims and reports to the Programme Management and Delivery Branch, setting out achievements (outputs and outcomes) as well as an updated risk register and case studies (where appropriate). Completed Window 1 projects also submitted end of project reports using a standard template.
- 4.38 Window 1 projects were assigned a Programme Management and Delivery Branch lead officer and a policy lead officer. Projects met with both Welsh Government officials on a joint, regular basis to discuss progress and issues under a 'dual key management approach'. Project visits had been planned were but were cancelled due to pandemic restrictions.
- 4.39 Responsibility for Window 1 projects was initially split between two Programme Management and Delivery Branch grant officers before a single officer took this responsibility from mid November 2019 onwards. These officers maintained a scheme level spreadsheet setting out details such as project status, payments made, underspend and overall risk rating. Officers also maintained an overall review of ENRaW's financial position.

## **Windows 2 and 3 applications**

- 4.40 Windows 2 and 3 funds are operated through RDP under measure 16.2. The application process was two-fold with applicants being required to submit an expression of interest (Eol) and a second full application:
- the Eol stage was a competitive process. Eols were assessed by the Programme Management and Delivery Branch and one policy officer against published criteria and project proposals were ranked in order of merit by the score achieved. It was expected that Eols would be appraised within 60 days of the Eol window closing
  - those successful at Eol stage were invited to a second stage and submit a full application, via the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) Online portal. Second stage full applications were expected to be submitted within 12 months of the notification to submit a full application. These applications were appraised and subjected to full

due diligence and a value for money assessment by Rural Payments Wales (RPW). Full applications expected to be appraised within 90 working days of receipt of the full application although complex applications could take longer.

- 4.41 Funding across Windows 2 and 3 has been restricted to large, combined revenue and capital funded projects, to satisfy the requirements of RDP 16.2. Funding of between £500,000 and £10 million was made available to successful projects<sup>22</sup>.
- 4.42 Window 2 closed for submissions in November 2019 and EoIs were assessed in December 2019. Window 3 closed in March 2020. It was intended that EoIs would be assessed in April 2020, but this was delayed to June/July 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.43 The Welsh Government provided guidance to applicants applying for ENRaW funding under the RDP during Windows 2 and 3<sup>23</sup>. The RDP Guidance Notes states that funding could be used to support:
- pilot projects<sup>24</sup> and the development of new products, practices, processes, and technologies in the agriculture, food, and forestry sectors
  - projects which demonstrate at least a minimum of three entities, one of which should be an SME
  - projects which involve a range of cross sector organisations including those from health, tourism, private sector, and education
  - the delivery of activities such as:
    - improving and enhancing local environment quality
    - active sustainable management of natural resources

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<sup>22</sup> [Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020: Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being \(ENRaW\) Scheme Guidance Notes](#)

<sup>23</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>24</sup> Defined as test projects which could form part of a large development process and not limited to any particular sector

- developing and improving access to sustainable green infrastructure, and
  - improving ecosystem resilience
  - opportunities to support green (social) prescribing, nature-based solutions, clear links between natural resources and well-being, volunteering, training and education, and behaviour change.
- 4.44 The guidance stipulated that funding could not be used to support stand-alone research but that eligible activities included demonstration of new techniques, running costs of the project (e.g., salary costs); mapping and gap analysis; costs of project and promotion activities.
- 4.45 Ineligible costs include the purchase of land exceeding 10 per cent of the total project value, purchase of vehicles, work carried out before the project start date and maintenance costs for buildings, plant, or equipment.
- 4.46 Projects were also expected to integrate the Cross-Cutting Themes (CCTs) of Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming and Sustainable Development.
- 4.47 There was no definition of the term ‘residential’ for the ENRaW grant – the Welsh Government did not want to be too prescriptive and wished to allow some flexibility in interpretation of the term. However, it was not intended to be limited to urban areas alone.

### **Windows 2 and 3 claims and reporting**

- 4.48 Funded projects were expected to make their first claim no later than six months from the date of their approval letter. Windows 2 and 3 funded projects are also required to submit regular financial claims to RPW. Projects can decide if they wish to claim on a quarterly or six-monthly basis. Funded projects can issue interim claims during their period of funding and a final claim is expected by no later than the end of June 2023.
- 4.49 Funded projects are expected to provide regular updates on progress and three months after completion, a final report on its performance. Projects

are expected to use the RPW Progress Report template<sup>25</sup> as the basis of their final report. Windows 2 and 3 projects are required to engage with RPW via their online portal, submitting claims and progress reports via this portal.

### **Programme management**

- 4.50 It was originally envisaged that the Programme Management and Delivery Branch within Environment and Communities Division within Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group of the Welsh Government would manage the scheme. The team would be responsible for the administration of the grant application and award process as well as monitoring progress, communications with projects and disseminating good practice. This was the case for Window 1 only.
- 4.51 A steering group was established to oversee the scheme. It is chaired by the Head of the Intermediary Body and meets on a quarterly basis.
- 4.52 A grants assurance panel was established by the Grants Centre of Excellence to provide advice and practical recommendations and ensure that the scheme would be delivered in a way which was consistent with wider Welsh Government policy on grants.
- 4.53 An online Yammer platform for sharing project ideas and seeking partners was established by the Welsh Government. This was also used as an engagement platform during the design of the scheme.
- 4.54 The guidance also stated that for Window 1 the Welsh Government would explore 'wider support mechanisms as part of the programme ... to make best use of the skills, experience and expertise that exist across the sectors'
- 4.55 It was expected that the cost for administering the scheme would be borne by Welsh Government using existing staff resources.

### **ENRaW funding awarded**

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<sup>25</sup> [Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 RPW Progress Report Template](#)

4.56 Table 4.3 sets out the number of applications and projects approved as of January 2022 across all three funding windows. In total 134 applications were submitted across Windows 1, 2 and 3 and a total of 60 projects have progressed.

**Table 4.3: ENRaW applications received and approved**

Window	Applications received	Domestic grant requested	Successful applications	Domestic investment awarded
1	85	£54.4m	36 <sup>26</sup>	£14.4m
Window	EoI received		Invited to full application	
2	20		5 (2 of which have been approved)	£14.4m
3	29		19 <sup>27</sup> (14 of which have been approved and appraised, 6 are awaiting appraisal and 9 unsuccessful)	£16.5m
Total	134		60	£45.3m

Source: Welsh Government (January 2022)

4.57 An analysis of Welsh Government databases shows that in 12 cases, the lead body applied for ENRaW funding on more than one occasion. In three cases the lead body applied three times for funding for the same project.

4.58 At the time of drafting, the profile of Window 1 projects is as follows:

- six large scale combined capital and revenue grant projects to the value of £3m have been completed
- 10 large scale combined capital and revenue grant projects to the value of £9.3m are ongoing
- 22 are small scale grant projects. Of these 8 are capital grant projects to the value of £0.513m – three of which are ongoing and five completed. 14 are completed small scale revenue grant projects to the value of £0.5m.

<sup>26</sup> 38 applications were successful initially and of these 36 have progressed.

<sup>27</sup> 20 applications were successful but one has since withdrawn

## 5. Aims and objectives of ENRaW

- 5.1 This chapter presents the feedback gathered from Welsh Government officials involved in the design, development, and implementation of ENRaW, including views on what the scheme set out to achieve, how the scheme was intended to operate and the outcomes which were expected. It also considers the views of interviewed funded projects on the fit of their project with the scheme's objectives.

### **Why was ENRaW introduced and what issues is it trying to address?**

- 5.2 Welsh Government officials intended for ENRaW to be a cross-sector grant funding scheme. As ENRaW was being established with funding drawn from across several policy areas it needed to ensure that outcomes could be achieved across environmental, social, cultural, economic, tourism as well as health and well-being policy objectives. Policy makers anticipated that funded projects would collectively achieve these cross-policy outcomes although there was no expectation that any single project would achieve them all individually. A key consideration therefore when making funding decisions was ensuring that a broad range of projects would be supported to allow for a wide range of policy objectives to be achieved. Whilst supportive of this intention overall, one official cautioned that it could make measuring the impact of the scheme difficult, as the activities funded could be too broad and ambiguous to measure.
- 5.3 Feedback from Welsh Government officials suggests that applicants were encouraged to broaden the remit of their original projects as part of the application process so they could achieve a wider set of outcomes. Whilst most interviewed projects thought that their proposed project was already broad enough to satisfy ENRaW objectives, the fieldwork did find several examples whereby applicants had been encouraged to extend their proposed project in some way. In many cases, this involved extending the project partnership and included one applicant being encouraged to work with an additional new partner (in this case Disability Wales) to ensure that the needs of disabled users were accommodated.



- 5.4 In other cases, proposed three-year projects were encouraged to be more ambitious. One project was encouraged to broaden their work with partner organisations which in turn led them to introducing and funding a Partnership Manager role which has since enabled the project to engage with some 30 additional organisations. Another project was encouraged by the Welsh Government to extend its remit into the health and wellbeing arena. In this case the project approached an additional partner operating in the sustainable health care sector to allow a greater emphasis on wellbeing. In this case, the new partnership took some time to develop and was considered by the lead organisation to be more akin to a contractor supplier relationship as opposed to a partnership approach.
- 5.5 Whilst the Welsh Government's encouragement to broaden the remit of projects has broadly been well received, it did on occasion create challenges for projects. For instance, one such project observed that many policy officers were attempting to 'pad out' the project during the application stage and whilst most of these requests could be accommodated fairly easily, others such as engaging with tourism in their case, could not.
- 5.6 Welsh Government officials believed that two key legislative developments set the context and underpinning need for ENRaW, namely the Environment (Wales) Act and the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) (Wales) Act. Welsh Government officials observed that the introduction of these new legislations meant that the 'business as usual' approach adopted previously, whereby grant and hypothecated funding was made available via three separate funding schemes, would not help to achieve the objectives set out within the new legislation. Welsh Government officials expect ENRaW to deliver upon the principles of the Environment (Wales) Act, and its Section 6 Duty in particular, as funded projects support the enhancement of biodiversity and resilient ecosystems.
- 5.7 ENRaW is also expected to help achieve the WFG goals as applications were assessed against their expected contribution to these goals, particularly the three goals of A Prosperous Wales, A Resilient Wales, and Cohesive Communities goals. One Welsh Government official argued that the WFG agenda was ENRaW's 'top priority', and that the main objective of

the fund should be to increase the extent and quality of community-led environmental action.

- 5.8 Another key driver which accounts for the introduction of ENRaW was a Ministerial decision to move away from core funding to a grant funding model, as the new approach offered a more integrated funding model to support innovative delivery, achieve cross-policy objectives and adhere to new legislation. As such, ENRaW was designed as an outcomes-based funding approach and was considered by Welsh Government officials to be well-aligned to the climate change aspirations set out within the Programme for Government, Prosperity for All and SMNR principles.
- 5.9 In terms of ENRaW's contribution to Welsh language standards and Welsh language strategy Cymraeg 2050, Welsh Government officials reported that a Welsh language impact assessment was undertaken during the development of the scheme. It was also reported that ENRaW adhered to the Welsh language standards in that:
- all application documents, guidance and information about the grant was made available bilingually
  - co-design events were held bilingually using simultaneous translators
  - applicants were asked to describe how their project would promote the Welsh language. Applicants set out their proposals for developing bilingual leaflets and interpretation boards and encouraging communities and visitors to learn about Welsh culture and language.
- 5.10 Feedback on the extent to which funded projects have gone above and beyond adherence with Welsh language regulatory requirements and made a meaningful contribution to some of Cymraeg 2050 objectives are considered later in this report, at Chapter 7.

### **Aims and objectives of the ENRaW scheme**

- 5.11 ENRaW is understood by Welsh Government officials to be a funding scheme intended to pilot Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) practices. The pilot nature of the scheme means that one important outcome will be learning about what works and what does not,

and that lessons needs to be shared openly rather than seen as a weakness of the scheme.

- 5.12 Welsh Government officials also described ENRaW as a funding scheme which is intended to drive partnership working and support collaborative projects, as this is a key requirement of SMNR principles. It was observed that the scheme intended to facilitate partnership working across local authority and third sector organisations, thereby making effective use of skills and capacity. Funded projects are expected to demonstrate strong landscape-based and place-based approaches and involve a wide range of different partners and community groups. In its design, Welsh Government officials believed it was important that an element of the ENRaW fund be made available for collaboration and partnership capacity building during the first year as this would allow for the involvement of smaller organisations within the scheme. The availability of funding for capacity development was considered important and was informed by a previous Wales Audit Office report which had highlighted the lack of collaboration across previous grant funding schemes.
- 5.13 The scheme is also understood by Welsh Government officials to provide funding to projects so that they can improve the natural resources where people live and encourage local communities to take greater ownership for these resources. These are important expected outcomes for the scheme which have been reflected in the ToC logic model.
- 5.14 Another key objective for ENRaW raised by Welsh Government officials during the scoping interviews was that funded projects should have a strong focus on health and well-being outcomes. These were expected to be achieved via the 'social' outcomes expected of the scheme (the guidance sets out four outcome areas which are economic, environmental, cultural, and social). It was observed that some funded projects proposed to deliver activities which would directly achieve well-being outcomes e.g., delivery of social or green prescribing activities for local communities or the creation or improvement of footpaths and trails which could be used by local community members. Other projects were more ambiguous in terms of the well-being outcomes which they would achieve.

- 5.15 A key strength of the process adopted to design the grant scheme was considered by Welsh Government officials to be the co-design of ENRaW with the wider sector. It was reported that the Welsh Government consulted widely on the development of the grant scheme as it was being introduced to replace three funding programmes. Officials believed that the Welsh Government had taken on board the sector's views and feedback in an effective way. As a result, the scheme was thought to have been designed as a flexible grant scheme which could support small- and large-scale capital projects as well as revenue funded projects aimed at developing new partnerships and collaborations.
- 5.16 Interviewed projects felt that ENRaW's aims and objectives fitted incredibly well with what they wanted to achieve, and they particularly liked the holistic approach adopted. Funded projects fully appreciate that ENRaW is a funding scheme which is focused on both SMNR principles and the WFG Act, and there was widespread support for this given that there is no other similar alternative fund available. Funded projects believed the SMNR principles and the WFG well-being goals to be highly relevant and appropriate to their funded activities. ENRaW appeals to funded projects as it is a cross-policy scheme which brings people and nature together to achieve economic, social and wellbeing objectives.
- 5.17 Interviewed projects highlighted the strengths of the ENRaW scheme design as being:
- its fairly long-term approach to funding over a three-year period which allows for transformative change
  - its offer of both revenue and capital funding, which enables projects to appoint staff to oversee the implementation of capital projects
  - its full cost recovery funding model, which allows projects to deliver projects in full without the need to secure other sources of funding
  - its focus on collaborative working, so outcomes achieved can be greater than their individual components.

## **Key assumptions which underpin the grant scheme and how ENRaW is expected to bring about change**

- 5.18 In designing the scheme, it was assumed that ENRaW would be able to maximise the financial resources available to projects if the Welsh Government could secure RDP funding to match fund domestic funding available, thereby achieving greater outputs and outcomes.
- 5.19 It was also assumed that the achievement of short-term project outputs would provide an indication of the longer-term outcomes that would ultimately be achieved via ENRaW. Many of the outcomes expected of the scheme are long-term in nature and are not expected to be achieved over the project delivery period. It was therefore assumed that outputs such as an increase in trees and hedgerows planted could be used as proxy indicators to demonstrate that longer term outcomes, such as an improvement in environmental conditions, would be achieved. Such assumptions however do not always hold true. For instance activities such as litter picking may lead to an immediate short-term improvement but do not necessarily change people's behaviour thus a longer term reduction in litter may not be obtained. As a result, several of the outcomes set out in the ToC logic model relate to changing community behaviour (e.g., greater custodian responsibility for the new green spaces created and improved) as these will allow short term outcomes to be sustained on an ongoing basis.
- 5.20 Another key assumption is that there would be sufficient interest from organisations to apply for funding via a competitive funding scheme. The competitive nature of the fund was expected to result in the best quality projects, most aligned to Welsh Government priorities being supported.
- 5.21 It was also assumed that collaborative approaches and partnership working would be more effective than individual action in terms of making a difference and securing longer-term sustainability. In order to deliver effective collaborative projects, the Welsh Government assumed that funding was required to build capacity and capability across the sector.
- 5.22 A further assumption made by Welsh Government officials was that not all ENRaW projects would be successful. Given that the scheme was intended

to support pilot innovative approaches it followed that some projects would succeed whilst others would fail.

- 5.23 A final assumption of ENRaW is that funding a wide range of projects should result in a wide range of outcomes being achieved. The outcomes achieved by each project would be unique but nonetheless should be informed by the suite of outputs and outcomes set out within scheme guidance documentation.

### **The impact of external factors upon achievement of successful outcomes**

- 5.24 The scoping interviews with Welsh Government identified three key external factors which have impacted upon the ENRaW scheme, and these are considered in turn at Chapter 7 of this report. The key external factors were considered to be the COVID-19 pandemic; the transfer of scheme administration from the Welsh Government's domestic grants process to the Welsh Government's Rural Development Programme, which required compliance with EC specifications and unique project level factors which will have impacted upon individual project positions.
- 5.25 The COVID-19 pandemic was considered to have impacted upon the administration of ENRaW in two ways. First, Window 1 projects were asked by the Welsh Government to identify any financial savings which could be adopted during 2020/21, due to their inability to deliver as planned within the pandemic restrictions, in order to allow the Welsh Government to reallocate funds to the pandemic frontline emergency response. As a result, ENRaW expenditure during 2020/21 was reduced. Some Window 1 projects were able to re-profile their expenditure over remaining years whilst others were unable to do so and had to reduce their overall expenditure. Second, the Window 2 application timeline was impacted by delays due to the pandemic outbreak.
- 5.26 The pandemic was also thought to have had an impact upon Window 1 project's ability to deliver their intended work programmes, and that this would have negatively impacted their achievements and outcomes. Welsh Government officials reported that many projects had to pause their

planned activities and amend their delivery plans, timescales, and budgets accordingly. The pandemic was also reported to have reduced some of the organisations' ability to develop effective partnerships and engage with others.

- 5.27 Finally, it was reported that the pandemic would have impacted upon peoples' behaviour in terms of making greater use of their local green spaces for leisure and exercise during the lockdown and increased homeworking trends has meant that people have greater access to their local areas during the day.
- 5.28 The second key external factor which Welsh Government officials believed to have impacted upon the scheme was the decision not to proceed with the original plan to establish the Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch as an IB but rather to administer the scheme through RPW on receipt of RDP funds for Windows 2 and 3. Feedback from Welsh Government officials suggests that Window 1 grant administration had run smoothly but many challenges had been experienced across Windows 2 and 3. Welsh Government officials reported that the Window 1 application process had been completed within the set timeframe, with grant award letters being issued before the end of March 2019 as planned.
- 5.29 The length of time taken to approve RDP applications has reduced the time available for project delivery thereby raising a risk that Windows 2 and 3 projects may not be able to spend their allocated funds. Welsh Government officials suggested that successful applicants were not prepared to proceed at risk, despite being notified that they could do so at an earlier point in time. A key concern raised during the scoping interviews related to the underspend across Windows 2 and 3 projects because of these delays.
- 5.30 Other common external factors which would have affected individual projects were thought to include issues around planning permissions, weather, seasonality issues, contractor delays, and disputes between project partners.

## **6. Grant administration**

6.1 This chapter considers the grant administration arrangements for operating ENRaW. It first considers the implications of transferring scheme administration from the Welsh Government's domestic grants process (which was in place for Window 1) to the Welsh Government's Rural Development Programme (which was in place for Windows 2 to 3), drawing upon interviews with Welsh Government officials. It then considers surveyed applicants and interviewed projects views about the grant administration including methods of hearing about ENRaW, the application process, the assessment and awarding process, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation.

### **Changes in administration**

- 6.2 Feedback from Welsh Government officials suggested that the transfer of scheme administration from the Welsh Government's domestic grants process to the RDP gave rise to a number of issues, including:
- five successful applicants who initially submitted their applications under the Window 1 domestic funding call for proposals had to reapply through RPW to satisfy EU funding requirements and to draw down RDP funds
  - some of the larger Windows 2 and 3 applications were awarded funding for their initial phase only (usually one year), often involving a feasibility study, with the remaining funding being made available on the condition that initial phase delivery demonstrated a need for the project
  - it was suggested that RPW lacked resources to administer Windows 2 and 3 of the scheme and was not operating in a way which best met the needs of funded projects. In order to better meet the needs of funded projects, at the time of undertaking our fieldwork RPW was planning on introducing a relationship manager approach within the team to account manage ENRaW projects and help resolve any claims issues experienced by projects



- Windows 2 and 3 applications of over £1 million were reviewed by an independent scrutiny committee. This was considered to have added to the timescales for approving applications. Some Welsh Government officials noted that members of the panel lacked environmental and biodiversity expertise. In an effort to overcome the lack of expertise, arrangements were made for a Welsh Government policy officer to attend the scrutiny committee to provide expert advice and guidance on ENRaW applications and respond to committee member queries about individual applications
- RDP grant administration processes administered by RPW are better suited to meet the needs of single farm claims and have not been designed to accommodate more complex projects with less defined outputs and broader outcomes. RPW has found it challenging to assess the potential value for money from ENRaW applications because of their broader, 'softer' and less tangible outputs. It was suggested that ENRaW did not sit well within RDP funding requirements and processes because of its broader objectives, such as capacity building and developing new partnerships, and because of the large number of partners involved with each project. Any RPW queries or request for change for instance must be considered by all project partners, which adds to the complexity of the process
- it was reported that projects don't generally like to engage with RPW via its online portal, as it is a non-personal approach. However, the portal allows RPW to capture all queries and ensure that queries are directed to the most appropriate team member.

6.3 Feedback from Welsh Government officials suggests that Windows 2 and 3 applicants have:

- faced long delays in receiving formal notification of funding. Once Eols were approved, applicants were required to submit a full application within a six-month period. Window 2 projects were expected to receive formal approval in March 2020 (which unfortunately coincided with the

COVID-19 outbreak and first lockdown), so did not do so until mid to late 2021

- faced greater demands in terms of meeting the specific application requirements of the RDP
- had to reprofile their expenditure profiles in order to take into account the delays to commence activity
- been subjected to a recent retrospective audit, administered by the European Commission via RPW across all RDP funded activities, which has placed additional burden upon all RDP funded projects, including ENRaW projects. Projects are now expected to submit procurement evidence in advance of making a financial claim to RPW.

6.4 The main implication of the delays associated with Windows 2 and 3 project approval is that projects risk not being able to achieve their long-term objectives and there was a strong suggestion that projects:

‘are no longer three-year programmes that evoke long term change – they are more traditional task and finish activities. Some of the things that have had to be dropped are the things that would drive behaviour change’.

6.5 Welsh Government officials were also unable to put in place planned events to enable projects to share experiences and good practice, similar to other grant schemes such as the SMS. This was due to COVID-19 restrictions but also latterly because of the lack of resources within the Welsh Government to provide these events.

### **Hearing and gaining information about ENRaW**

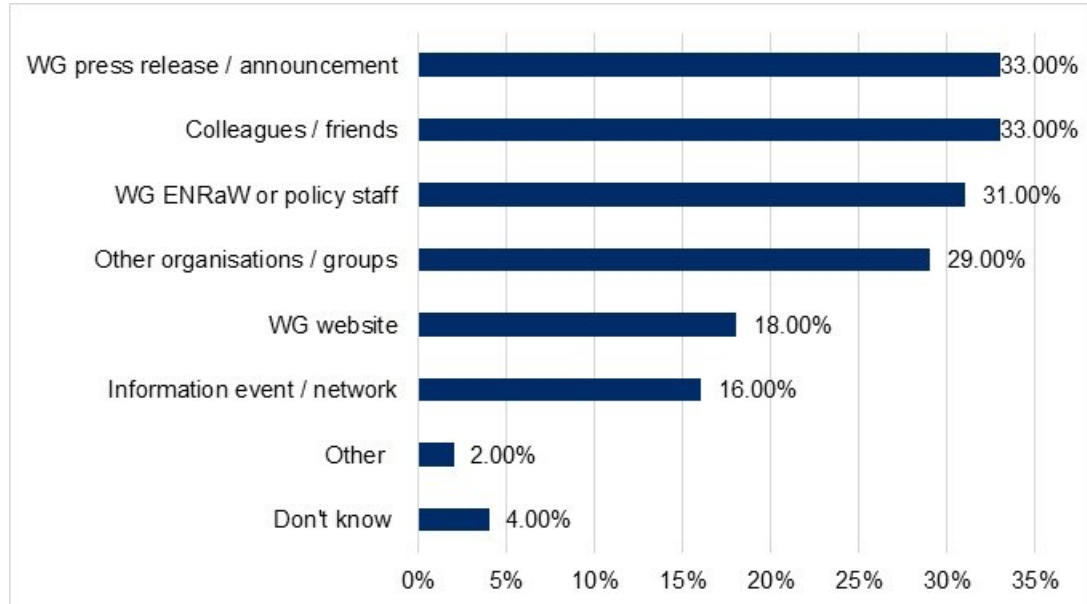
6.6 ENRaW applicants found it easy to access information about the scheme. Most of the 45 surveyed respondents found it either very (five) or fairly (33) easy to access information whilst only six had found it difficult<sup>28</sup>. The most common method of hearing about ENRaW was directly from the Welsh Government, although other organisations or colleagues and friends were also important sources, as shown at Figure 6.1. Welsh Government

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<sup>28</sup> One survey respondent did not know.

'workshops' were considered as being 'very useful' in providing a detailed briefing about 'what was a fairly intense and complicated project'.

**Figure 6.1: Methods of hearing about ENRaW**



Source: OB3 web survey (45 responses). Respondents could select more than one option

**6.7 Suggestions offered by surveyed applicants and interviewed projects to improve information to prospective applicants included:**

- ensuring information reached those not in receipt of funding via previous Welsh Government schemes
- simplifying the language used as there was a view that the information contained 'a lot of jargon and a lot of wording' due to the scheme being funded via RDP which made 'accessing funding quite elitist'
- ensuring that prospective applicants were better informed of the financial thresholds for Window 1 domestic grant funding (as above this threshold applications became eligible for RDP) so that project ideas could be kept more manageable.

**ENRaW guidance and advice**

**6.8** The written and published guidance about ENRaW has been well received by applicants. Three-quarters of surveyed Window 1 applicants (27 of 36) considered the Welsh Government Window 1 guidance to be either very or

fairly helpful whilst only a handful (six) did not find it helpful. A similar proportion (three-quarters) of surveyed Windows 2 and 3 applicants (17 of 27) found the application guidance either 'very' or 'fairly' helpful. Amongst the comments offered by surveyed applicants and interviewed projects from across all funding windows about the guidance included it being 'readable and accessible', 'comprehensive' and 'user friendly'.

- 6.9 Very little use was made of the Yammer platform by interviewed projects during the application stage, although a few could recall this being available and had attempted to use it, and overall interviewed projects did not attach much value to this provision. One possible factor accounting for its low use could be internal IT restrictions across organisations and as such it was suggested that any future grant funding mechanism might want to consider a more commonly used digital platform.
- 6.10 Just under half of surveyed Window 1 applicants (15 of 36) considered the advice or feedback provided by the Programme Management and Delivery Branch team within the Welsh Government to be either very or fairly helpful. A similar proportion (14 of 36) considered the advice provided by Welsh Government sector policy officers to be either very or fairly helpful too. A quarter or fewer considered the advice provided by each of these two different teams to be less helpful to them (nine in the case of the Programme Management and Delivery Branch and seven in the case of Welsh Government sector policy officers). The remaining survey respondents were not in a position to comment on any advice provided.
- 6.11 The same question was asked of surveyed Windows 2 and 3 applicants. A similar proportion at just under half of surveyed Windows 2 and 3 applicants (12 of 27) considered the advice or feedback provided by the Programme Management and Delivery Branch team within the Welsh Government to be either very or fairly helpful. A smaller proportion however considered the advice from sector policy officers (8 of 27) or Rural Payments Wales (7 of 27) to be either very or fairly helpful. Indeed, it is worth noting that over a quarter (8 of 27) did not find the advice from Rural Payments Wales to be helpful.

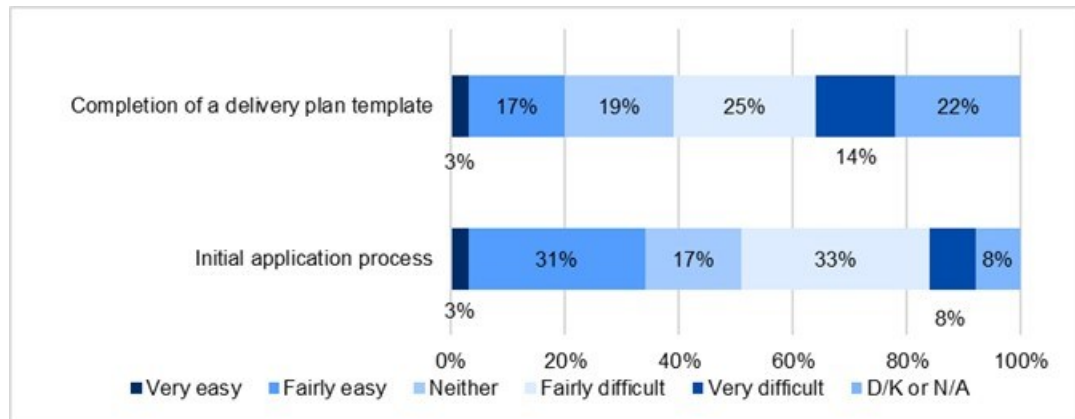
6.12 The feedback suggests that the advice provided by Welsh Government officials did make a difference to applicants. Half (18 of the 36) of Window 1 survey respondents and two-fifths (11 of 27) of Window 2 and 3 survey respondents thought it had made either some or a significant difference to their application.

**Application process**

6.13 The feedback received about the ENRaW application process is mixed, with those applying during Window 1 reporting much more positive feedback overall than those who applied during Windows 2 and 3. Most Windows 2 and 3 applicants described their application process negatively, and used terms such as a ‘nightmare’, ‘horrendous’ and ‘a mess’ to describe their experiences.

6.14 Feedback from 36 surveyed Window 1 applicants shows that whilst some found the initial application process relatively easy, others found it difficult. Interviewed projects reported a fairly straightforward application experience overall during Window 1.

**Figure 6.2: Surveyed Window 1 applicants’ views on application process**



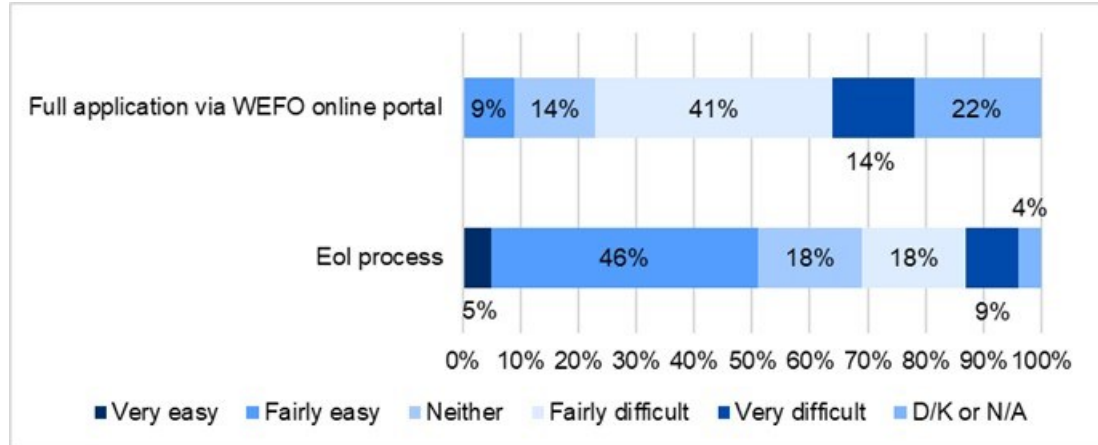
Source: OB3 web survey (36 Window 1 applicants)

6.15 Feedback from 27 surveyed Window 2 and 3 applicants and 10 interviewed Window 2 and 3 projects<sup>29</sup> shows that around half had found the EoI process

<sup>29</sup> There is a degree of overlap between these two evidence sources as 21 interviewed projects also completed the web based survey.

either very or fairly easy. Over half had found the WEFO online portal difficult.

**Figure 6.3: Surveyed Window 2 and 3 applicants' views on application process**



Source: OB3 web survey (27 Windows 2 and 3 applicants)

**Feedback about Window 1 application process**

6.16 The main strengths of the application process were identified as:

- being able to meet with and talk to Welsh Government officials. Window 1 applicants spoke of the advantages of having ‘direct contact with project officers’ on a face-to-face basis to ‘clarify a couple of issues with the application’ and ‘having a nominated scheme assessor who I could call or email directly with any questions or to seek clarity’. A few Windows 2 and 3 applicants observed that whilst having a dedicated case officer during their application process had been useful the fact that they had to operate within an ‘extremely frustrating and protracted system’ and because officers they were dealing with lacked a detailed understanding of requirements, reduced their usefulness:

‘we did have a named contact during approval process, but he didn’t always know everything we needed to know and came back to us for further information on many occasions that was presumably requested later by another colleague’.

- a straightforward application form as part of Window 1 which adopted a pragmatic approach to demonstrating fit with national and local strategies:

‘The tick box approach to covering National and Local Strategies and Plans was far quicker than later versions of the forms and seemed more sensible than the approach in later windows which resulted in repetition and duplication’.

6.17 The main suggestions put forward to improve the Window 1 application process included:

- having a single point of contact throughout the application process which would have ensured applicants received ‘more consistent advice from [the same] dedicated case officer’
- introducing a simple and short EoI with successful applicants asked to provide the detail during the full application stage, which would allow applicants to provide more detail on operational delivery and less on outcomes and ‘time spent on justification against policies’
- more timely responses from Welsh Government staff during the re-submission of delivery plans and a reduction in decision timescales which would help do away with the need to reprofile project timetables and budgets:

‘we then had to develop a delivery plan - which took 5 months and 6 iterations as every time it went back to Welsh Government, it seems it was looked at by a different person who had a different take on what we needed to do before it was acceptable and how many outputs and parameters we would need to include. Not sure if this was done to the fact that it was the first window and Welsh Government weren't sure what they were looking for, but it was by no means easy and had an impact on us financially as we were unable to make a claim until 6 months into the project by which time we'd run through all our reserves pretty much and then some’.

### **Feedback about Windows 2 and 3 application process**

6.18 On the whole, the principle of introducing the EoI phase as part of Windows 2 and 3 was welcomed, as was the opportunity to attend a briefing meeting for all successful EoI applicants during the full application stage. One applicant argued that gaining a successful EoI outcome:

‘helped us to keep the partnership engaged during the long approval process ... as we knew we were fairly guaranteed the money’ at that stage.

6.19 However, several interviewed projects found the EoI itself difficult to complete as it needed to demonstrate the project’s fit with policy as opposed to being an opportunity to share what the project was intended to deliver. Some bid writers did not have previous experience of this:

‘If I had been left to submit the application I originally wrote we would not have got through. I handed it to someone...who had been through this process...and they realised that it didn’t fit. I had written about the project. Welsh Government wanted me to reference policies. I had to re-structure the application completely’.

6.20 Several suggestions for improving the Windows 2 and 3 application processes were offered, including:

- being able to deal directly with an individual case officers with an understanding of the scheme, without ‘the convoluted process of asking questions through RPW and WEFO’
- the need for greater resources within the Welsh Government to respond to, and approve, applications quicker as there was a common view that staff resources were lacking
- making it easier for applicants to describe their project during the EoI stage as opposed to demonstrating their alignment with policies and referencing indicators. Amongst the comments made were:

‘the questions were worded in a way that didn’t make it easy to actually describe the project’

‘the application form [i.e., EoI] was all about where your project fitted into the policies and not about what the project was going to do and achieve. Basically, you needed to roll out the policy stuff to get

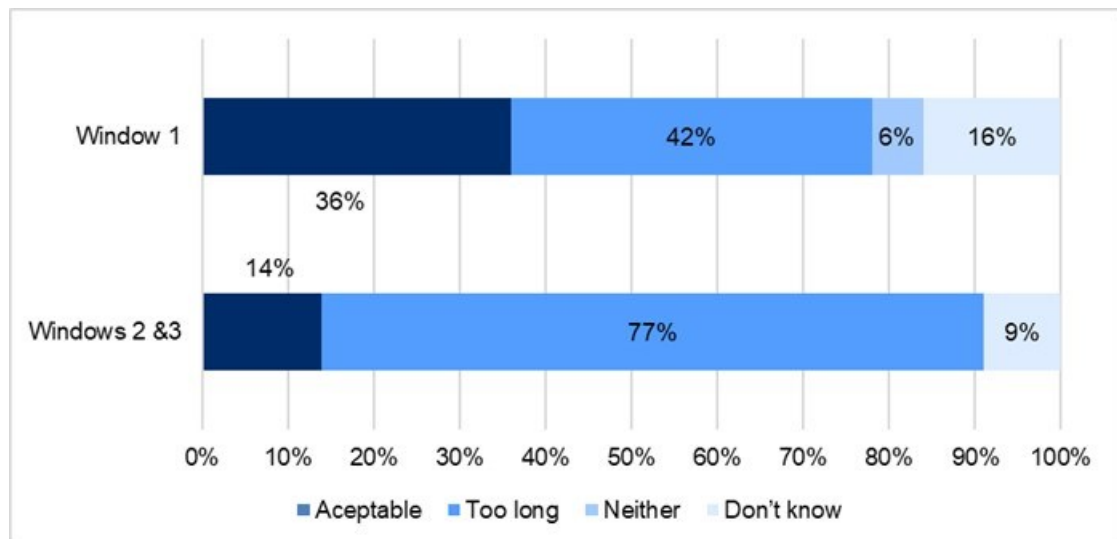


through so if you weren't familiar with what was required, [you had] no chance of scoring highly enough. No wonder the Welsh Government staff had to speak to us to understand it further down the line.'

### Assessment of applications

6.21 In terms of the time taken by the Welsh Government to assess applications, the feedback set out at Figure 6.4 suggests that just over a third of Window 1 applicants (13 respondents) and only three Window 2 and 3 applicants found the timescales acceptable. Indeed, over three-quarters of Window 2 and 3 applicants (17 of 27 applicants) considered the time taken for assessment to have been too long.

**Figure 6.4: Surveyed applicants' views on time taken to assess application**



Source: OB3 web survey (36 Window 1 and 27 Window 2 or 3 applicants)

6.22 Amongst the feedback provided on the assessment process, the issues raised were primarily those relevant to Windows 2 and 3 and included:

- delays in approving full applications: several Windows 2 and 3 project had experienced very long delays before hearing the outcome of their application and given the go-ahead to proceed at risk, and then further delays before receiving their formal offer letter. It was not unusual to hear projects observe that:

'the approval process took an unbelievable long time'

'EoI took almost 12 months to approve'

‘the gap between the EoI being submitted, being informed of success, and invited to a full application was too long – from memory was around six months. Assessing the full application also took too long. The combination of both above meant that we lost almost an entire year from the project duration we proposed in the EoI’.

‘in our case it took three years to apply, forcing a project that was designed to run over three years to be delivered in 1.5 years’

- not receiving queries on their application in one go: but rather being shared with the applicant on a drip-feed basis. Applicants would prefer to deal with one comprehensive set of comments on their applications:

‘respond to all issues in one go rather than drip feeding responses which often had to be resubmitted multiple times due to changes in staff responding’

- the level of detail required for the full application was unwarranted: many questioned the value of ‘excessive and somewhat pointless’ detail required around costings given the large multi-year nature of their project and the likely changes which would occur anyway. Several contributors suggested that it would be better to provide detailed costing information after approval was granted, as this would provide a more accurate reflection of intended spend in light of the delays incurred:

‘the delay in project approval meant we needed to make changes to the budget which then needed to be approved’

‘there was an expectation that we could predict the cost of every intervention, despite the project inviting applications from communities.’

6.23 Many projects spoke of being awarded ‘proceed at risk’ approval for their project. Lead organisations responded in different ways to this: some were prepared, and in a sounder financial position, to take such risks whilst others were not able to do so either due to being more risk-adverse or did not have

the financial security to do so. Some interviewed projects had been prepared to take some risks, such as to employ their own project staff but not prepared to cover staff costs for partner organisations. One project spoke of having recruited and appointed four new members of staff but lacked the confidence to agree upon their start dates until receiving formal approval. As this formal approval took many months, appointed staff were left in a 'state of limbo' and it proved a challenging time for all concerned.

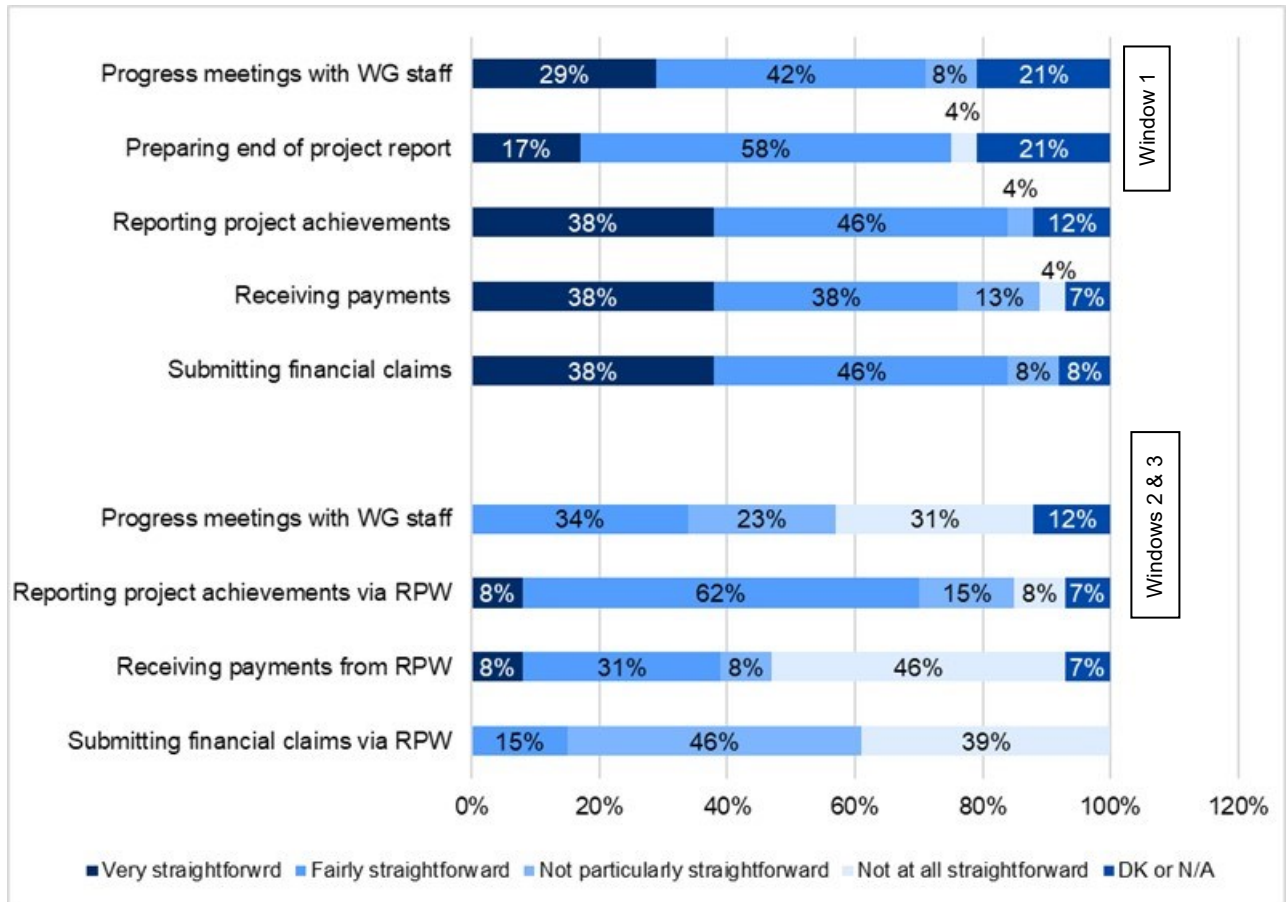
6.24 The delays in approving Windows 2 and 3 projects gave rise to several issues, discussed in detail later. These included:

- proposed projects costs were no longer true and realistic
- deliver timescales were reduced, often from three to two years, or even 18 months in some cases.

#### **Claims, payments, and reporting**

6.25 The claims, payments, and reporting arrangements in place for Window 1 were considered reasonable and straightforward by funded projects. In contrast and as shown at Figure 6.5, those funded via Windows 2 and 3 reported much more challenging and negative experiences. For instance, whilst over four-fifths of Window 1 surveyed projects found the process of submitting financial claims straightforward, this was true of less than a fifth of Windows 2 and 3. Similarly, some three-quarters of Window 1 surveyed projects found the process of receiving payments straightforward compared with less than two-fifths of the Windows 2 and 3 sample.

**Figure 6.5: Surveyed funded projects views on ENRaW claims, payments, and reporting requirements**



Source: OB3 web survey (36 Window 1 and 27 Window 2 or 3 applicants)

### Feedback on Window 1 grant administration processes

6.26 Most of the qualitative feedback on Window 1 grant administration suggested that claims, payments, and reporting processes were reasonable. The feedback suggests that submitting claims had been straightforward and payments were made promptly. One project observed that the front loading of payments had been helpful. Amongst the comments offered were:

- ‘the staff in the environment and communities unit have been incredibly helpful ... easily contactable, flexible, and supportive throughout... in contrast to my experience in later windows’
- ‘progress meetings with Welsh Government staff were really helpful; the key contact was extremely supportive’

- ‘ENRaW domestic grant was by far a much simpler process than the RDP system’
- ‘Window 1 was more like HLF<sup>30</sup> projects where outputs and invoices are used to base claims upon, rather than being based also on defrayment evidence, which can be administration heavy’.

6.27 Interviewed projects also observed that Welsh Government staff had been particularly helpful and flexible when the pandemic impacted on their work. One such interviewed project representative explained:

- ‘the dialogue was fantastic. they were so understanding. They told us to report on what we can – with an understanding that the end of project report would come later. They were really helpful. We felt dreadful that we were behind schedule, but they were very practical about it.’

6.28 The key points raised in relation to Window 1 processes were:

- projects had to deal with several Welsh Government staff changes which reduced consistency and in some cases resulted in projects having to ‘amend reporting retrospectively’ to deal with different requests. There was some suggestion that having a single ‘dedicated project staff allocated to projects’ would have been helpful
- the time taken to agree on a final report template was long and it would have been beneficial to agree reporting requirements upfront. One funded project suggested combining the end of project report with the final claim paperwork so as to avoid having two separate sets of documents in place
- projects had to shift to online meetings with Welsh Government officials to discuss projects and whilst these were thought to be held more regularly than would otherwise have been the case, they proved less useful in developing close relationships and did not provide projects with an opportunity to showcase their activities in person.

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<sup>30</sup> Now known as the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)

## **Feedback on Windows 2 and 3 grant administration processes**

- 6.29 As has been alluded to, the experience of Windows 2 and 3 funded projects in terms of claims, payments and reporting are much more challenging. As such, we consider each issue raised individually:

*Funded projects would value having a dedicated named contact within RPW in order to resolve issues.*

- 6.30 This was by far the most cited request made by surveyed and interviewed funded projects. Amongst the comments offered were:

‘the main criticism is the lack of a dedicated point of contact with knowledge of the project to talk to and seek advice from’

‘we have requested a progress meeting with staff and to date not had one since the start of the project’

‘a dedicated named point of contact...to meet regularly with us and keep track of our project. We get someone we know and trust to provide advice ... Welsh Government get to steer the project more effectively and greater reassurance we are actually delivering on ENRaW aims’

*The RPW online system is not considered appropriate for ENRaW*

- 6.31 It was widely felt that the RPW online system was not suited to a complex scheme such as ENRaW, and it was therefore not unusual to hear comments such as:

‘The RPW communication platform is not fit for purpose’

‘RPW are awful, always behind and they come back with senseless questions. Their payment and processing system is always way behind. The on-line claim system is disgraceful. It’s not user friendly at all.’

‘[name of organisation] has received hundreds of grants over the years and we have never experienced anything as bureaucratic or non-user-friendly as the RPW system. The system does not work for a project of this size. We would much rather prefer the admin that we had in Window 1’.

- 6.32 Projects identified several practical issues with the RPW portal – the most pressing being that lead organisations cannot submit a claim until a previous

claim has been processed. This is causing major issues for many projects as submitted claims are taking a long time to be processed and paid. Other issues raised by projects included not being able to delete or amend entries, the spreadsheet format being cumbersome, and having to rename every entry which takes time.

*Using two systems, the RPW portal and the WEFO on-line portal, adds further confusion for funded projects*

- 6.33 A few funded projects argued that they had to familiarise themselves with two different online portals, the RPW portal for submitting financial claims and the WEFO on-line portal for submitting quarterly reports, and that this has been challenging. Some considered the WEFO on-line portal to be better suited to larger infrastructure projects and were frustrated that they were not able to report any over-achievements against their indicators via this tool. Many would welcome having a single web portal which could accommodate both of these requirements, although a few added that they have since familiarised themselves with the WEFO on-line portal and find this relatively easy to navigate.

*The level of detail required to support a claim is considered onerous, leading to significant delays in payments being authorised and confusion about the level of fund remaining.*

- 6.34 Many projects reported delays with claims and the negative impact which this was having on their financial stability and project delivery. For instance, projects reported that:

‘we are a partner on an ENRaW project that started over a year ago and it took over a year to be paid for the first claim. All our paperwork was in order. This is unacceptable’.

‘claims are taking so long to process that I’ve lost track of where we are at. It’s June 2022 and we have only been paid up to September 2021. I’ve now stopped putting through any more claims.’

‘we’re still waiting for our payment from Jan-March 2022 with significant expenditure already paid out from our charity. It’s now June’.

- 6.35 Most projects would welcome a more simplified approach to the claims process and a reduction in the volume of evidence required of them.

*Securing advance authorisation for any spend over the value of £500 creates major challenges for projects*

- 6.36 Most projects expressed their frustration at the need to secure advance authorisation to spend on each item over £500, and reported that this was impacting negatively upon project delivery:

‘With processes to agree expenditure and certain project work before we undertake the spend on an item or make a claim adds extra burden and delays into project delivery making it near impossible to deliver within timescales without partners taking the risk to proceed without agreement. It has also resulted in significant delays to claims, in the current project, that have had serious financial implications for some partners.’

- 6.37 Many of the project costs provided at the point of application had been based on quotes received, but there has been no flexibility to allow for any inflationary costs.

### **The implications of Windows 2 and 3 approval delays and issues associated with claims and payments**

- 6.38 Most Windows 2 and 3 funded projects observed that their project had to be re-designed in some way in order to accommodate a shorter delivery window, due to the delays in receiving formal approval of funding. It was not unusual for projects to have between 12 and 18 months less than planned to deliver their project. In one case the lead partner had to reappoint a contractor to repeat explorative research in order to identify a plan of action which could be delivered within a much shorter delivery window. The change in timescales was particularly problematic due to the nature of many ENRaW projects. Several projects reported that the reduced timescale meant that they lost a season of activity such as tree planting or land maintenance, as such work could only be carried out at specific times of the year.
- 6.39 The implications of the claims and payment issues being experienced by Windows 2 and 3 funded projects are severe and include having a negative



impact on outcomes being achieved as well as a negative impact upon project staff. For instance, one project reported that their project:

‘have ended up lending money between organisations so that wages could be paid’.

6.40 Several interviewed projects admitted that they were finding themselves in a financially intolerable position and were extremely concerned about being financially exposed. Several projects were also confused about their remaining levels of budget at the time of undertaking the fieldwork and felt that they were ‘slaving over spreadsheets’ to resolve these issues at the expense of delivering their project.

6.41 The stress of managing ongoing ENRaW projects is clearly taking its toll on project lead officers, as demonstrated via this particular case:

‘I believe [the project] has so much potential to deliver great change for people and the natural world but I am really disappointed that I genuinely feel that the funder is the only thing holding this back. I am really concerned that we are just not going to get our money back that we have spent which is putting a lot of charities (and people's livelihoods) at risk...I am really struggling to keep this project on track purely due to the demands placed on us by the funder and the complete lack of support to meet these excessive demands.’

6.42 Several projects reported that they had been required to allocate more staff time to the task of grant management than anticipated, thereby reducing the resources which they could allocate to project delivery tasks.

### **Transitioning from Window 1 to Windows 2 and 3**

6.43 Three interviewed projects were advised to split their original project into two phases and to make a second application to ENRaW RDP to support the implementation of the second phase. The feedback from these organisations suggests that they have faced a particular set of challenges.

6.44 In one case, the EoI submitted during Window 2 was rejected and following feedback a successful application was made during Window 3. However, the delays in awarding formal funding for this Window 3 application (the

organisation was reluctant to proceed at risk) meant that a formal contract was not offered until October 2021. The shortened delivery timescale coupled with the additional funding conditions imposed (particularly the need to secure prior approval for expenditure over £500) meant that the organisation took the decision to withdraw their application as they did not think it feasible to deliver a successful project:

'The initial grant phase (2019) was curtailed due to the ENRaW team not following RDP processes correctly (as I understand) and so we were offered funding for the first 6 months of the project from the Welsh Government's domestic fund. We then applied for the 2nd window -and were turned down. We then applied for the 3rd window winter (2020) and were successful, though we weren't able to proceed fully until the Autumn of 2021 due to the 'proceed at risk' statement meaning that we couldn't begin to deliver the project until we had a formal grant offer from Welsh Government. When this finally arrived in Autumn 2021 there were numerous new conditions applied which meant that we were unable to proceed with the acceptance of the grant. The whole process led to a significant drain on our charitable organisational resources.'

- 6.45 In another case one-year funding was awarded during Window 1 but their application during Window 2 was unsuccessful, and the organisation only managed to secure funding during Window 3. The organisation managed to scrape funding together for the interim period, but the outcome of this process has resulted in the loss of good will and interest amongst partner organisations. It has also meant that a three-year project has to be delivered within the space of two years.

### **Monitoring, evaluation and sharing of knowledge**

- 6.46 Overall, Window 1 funded projects found the scheme reporting requirements to be proportionate and the monitoring and evaluation requirements, such as the preparation of an end of project report, placed on them appropriate and straightforward. Several of the Window 1 projects which were funded for one year only, did not have an element of delivery and therefore conducting any evaluation activity would have been inappropriate.

- 6.47 Projects funded for a longer duration reported being encouraged by the Welsh Government to monitor their activities and to adopt monitoring indicators which reflected their work. A key lesson for some projects is that they allocated too small a budget to commission an independent evaluation of their project. Several projects reported that they have found it useful to have external evaluators on board. For instance, one project noted that their evaluators sit on their steering group and bring an additional level of oversight and scrutiny to their delivery.
- 6.48 One unprompted key issue raised over the course of the fieldwork related to the fact that there is no facilitated network in place for ENRaW funded projects to meet up and share experiences, unlike the case of the Sustainable Management Scheme where some funded projects have come together to share experiences. Several projects, particularly those who had been involved with these SMS meet-ups, observed that they would have benefited from such a network and from meeting other funded projects.

## 7. Progress and achievements

7.1 This chapter considers ENRaW grant achievements to date and draws upon both survey and qualitative fieldwork, as well as scheme level output reporting. It first considers the progress made by funded projects who contributed to the evaluation before discussing scheme level outputs achieved to date. It then reports upon some of the challenges which projects have faced, and achievements across RDP focus areas and cross cutting objectives. Finally, it considers the extent to which funded projects are delivering against their Welsh language objectives.

### Project progress

7.2 In terms of the progress made by Window 1 funded projects, 16 of the surveyed Window 1 projects had been completed at the time of responding to the survey. All respondents thought that their project had achieved its aims and objectives either to a large extent (14 of 16) or to some extent (2 of 16). Feedback from the 20 Window 1 projects who contributed to the qualitative fieldwork reinforced this finding and project representatives believed that their project had or continued to make good progress.

7.3 The vast majority of completed Window 1 projects reported that they had delivered their outputs and achieved what they intended. In several cases it was reported that the project had exceeded its targets despite elements of the project not having panned out as expected. One completed capital project reported that they had exceeded their outputs and expectations by some margin:

‘We are way past the outputs intended. It is a phenomenal success. It is everything we imagined and more. The community is taking it on now. They have taken on the project and the responsibility. They are ambitious.’

7.4 A couple of the sampled Window 1 projects which had already been completed were focused on preparation and development rather than delivery work, and there was a clear output from their work such as in the form of an action plan. For instance, the relatively small-scale revenue funded North Anglesey Action Plan project achieved its objective of producing an environment action plan for the area in order to improve the

natural, historic, and cultural assets for the benefit of economy and tourism. Similarly, the large scale one-year National Trust Tir Afon project in Uwch Conwy achieved its objective of identifying opportunities, engaging landowners and other authorities to obtain the necessary access permissions, as well as develop relationships with community representatives in order to inform a follow-on delivery project.

- 7.5 A few of the one-year Window 1 projects had used ENRaW funding as a development phase in order to apply for further funding, such as in the case of the small-scale revenue funded Buglife Cymru and Dyfi Biosphere projects, which applied for NHLF funding.
- 7.6 The fieldwork also revealed that there are plenty of Window 1 one-year capital funded projects which have been completed and have achieved what they set out to do. For instance, the Tir Afon project in Uwch Conwy completed improvements to a 1.5km riverside footpath in Cwm Penmachno which has been equipped with information touchpoints, way-markers, and locally constructed furniture to create a family-friendly trail. Similarly, the Green Infrastructure project at the Teifi Marshes has completed work on reinstating a historical walking route from Cilgerran to Cardigan which has included the construction of 600 metres of boardwalk around the Teifi marshes.
- 7.7 Very few completed Window 1 projects reported that they had not been able to deliver what they originally set out to achieve. Perhaps the Rhondda Cynon Taf Tracks and Trails capital project is one such example, where the project was unable to secure the necessary agreements and permissions to deliver the proposed project on Natural Resources Wales owned land and instead had to amend their plans to make improvements to the tracks and pathways on local authority owned land instead. Another reported having overachieved on some targets but not meeting others due to staff capacity issues, and project targets were reprofiled as a result.
- 7.8 Six of the Window 1 projects which participated in the qualitative fieldwork were ongoing as they had been funded as three-year projects. In addition,

another four had received Window 1 funding and had also applied, and secured, funding via either Window 2 or 3 and were ongoing.

- 7.9 Overall, ongoing projects appear to be making good progress but frequently observed that Windows 2 and 3 delivery was being hampered by ENRaW grant administration issues. Interviewees commonly observed that staff resources were being allocated to deal with grant administration issues such as adhering to procurement requirements as opposed to project delivery and that delays in gaining approval to appointing suppliers was negatively impacting upon their progress. One such Window 2 project for instance reported that whilst they had been able to achieve their targets and objectives during Window 1, they would be unlikely so to do during Window 2 due to a loss of enthusiasm amongst staff associated with the delays in funding approval, the loss of staff with prior experience and skills and difficulties recruiting staff to short term employment contracts:

‘Funding like ENRaW is scarce, it has a mixture of capital and revenue and it should make a massive difference, but the way the scheme has been administered has hindered progress and made everyone disillusioned.’

- 7.10 Projects funded under Windows 2 and 3 were also less optimistic about the potential difference they could make due to the reduction in delivery timescales. Whilst most felt they could still achieve their targets within a shortened delivery window they were more cautious about the impact of intervention and the legacy which projects would leave behind. Many of the projects which have only started since late 2021 and early 2022 felt that it was too early to say whether they would achieve their intended outcomes. For instance, one project appointed a project officer in January 2022 and the focus of their work so far has been around community engagement, ground investigation work and website development. The project is yet to appoint a contractor to undertake work on their behalf as the only tender received has been over budget. Similarly, another project appointed staff in April 2022 and the focus of the work so far has been on engaging landowners. These projects have very ambitious goals to achieve within an 18 month to two-year timescale.

- 7.11 Despite these issues, the fieldwork found many examples of good progress being made by ongoing projects. Two of these projects (RDP Menter Môn and Cadwyn Clwyd) involve the administration of grant funding to local community groups. In one case funding has been awarded to some 13 community groups and in the other, funding has been awarded to support a wide range of community activities such as improvements to local parks and community woodlands, the creation of allotments and community gardens, as well as tree planting activities.
- 7.12 Some projects reported that elements of their activities were going well, but that other aspects were more challenging. For instance, the Window 3 Ramblers Cymru Paths to Wellbeing project reported that its work in engaging volunteers and arranging events is progressing very well as they have a strong track record of this type of engagement, but securing permission from landowners to carry out physical infrastructure improvements such as the installation of way markers and path clearance is progressing at a slower pace due to the need for local authorities to liaise and secure these agreements with landowners. Similarly, the Window 3 North Wales Wildlife Trust Dyfi Catchment project has made good progress in terms of community and volunteer engagement and training but has yet to secure a licence from Natural Resources Wales to enable the project to achieve its main objective of releasing beavers in the wild on the Dyfi river.

#### **Scheme outputs to date**

- 7.13 A database of scheme outputs for Window 1 projects was shared with the OB3 research team. Outputs are grouped into five key themes, as set out at Figure 7.1. Data is based on information reported by 33 funded projects. The definitions and limitations of the outputs as well as performance against targets set are discussed from paragraph 7.14 onwards.

**Figure 7.1: Window 1 outputs achieved to date against targets**

Indicators	Target <sup>31</sup>	Output reported	% achieved to date
<b>Green spaces</b>			
No. of green/blue corridors improved	17	19	112%
No. of green spaces improved	636	6,997	1,100%
No. of meadows created or restored	100	121	121%
No. of wetlands created	6	6	100%
Target species protected	20	44	220%
People engaged	32,357 <sup>32</sup>	98,323	304%
Volunteering	8,572 <sup>33</sup>	29,347	342%
<b>Social prescribing and wellbeing</b>			
Social prescribing participants	104	192	185%
Reported improved well-being	3,014	1,579	52%
<b>Trees and hedgerows</b>			
Trees planted	7,166	19,175	268%
Hedgerows created or maintained	706	1,445	205%
<b>Community food and growing projects</b>			
No. of projects delivering community food and growing activities	24	29	121%

Source: Welsh Government database accessed September 2022

7.14 Some observations about the monitoring data are set out below:

*Green spaces*

<sup>31</sup> When determining the target set for each indicator, where no specific target was set but the project was expected to achieve at least one output against the indicator, a target of '1' has been assumed

<sup>32</sup> The target set for each project varied from having no output targets to over 10,000 participants. Where no numerical output was set for projects due to the lack of any baseline data, a target of '1' has been assumed as an indication that the project intended to achieve outputs for this indicator. In several cases, the target set for a project is the same as the output reported, suggesting that outputs have been set retrospectively in these cases.

<sup>33</sup> The target set for each project varied from having no output targets to over 19,000 participants. Where no numerical output was set for projects due to the lack of any baseline data, a target of '1' has been assumed as an indication that the project intended to achieve outputs for this indicator. In several cases, the target set for a project is the same as the output reported, suggesting that outputs have been set retrospectively in these cases.



- 7.15 ENRaW has reported to date that nearly 7,000 individual green spaces and 19 green/blue corridor areas have been improved, thereby exceeding both of the targets set for these indicators. Green spaces include access to site improvements, school ground improvements, improved signage, walkways and cycle routes, woodlands, vegetation clearance, and local wildlife sites as well as activities such as litter picks and community clean ups. Green/blue corridor improvements are those completed alongside coastal and river corridors and include footpath improvements, dune restoration, grass planting, repairs to damaged bridges, improved signage and interpretation and improved access. Understandably, the scale of the outputs reported vary from one green space or green/blue corridor to another and constitute several hectares or several kilometres of paths/routes to much smaller sites thereby making it difficult to aggregate meaningful achievements.
- 7.16 ENRaW has exceeded its target for meadows created or restored. This indicator is consistently defined and reported against, in that some projects report an output of one site regardless of the scale of meadow created or restored (in some cases over 100 hectare), whilst others report larger number of individual sites, such as number of raised beds created, even though these areas are smaller in scale. However, there would be value in defining this indicator by area covered as this would provide a more meaningful output.
- 7.17 Wetlands created: the target set for this indicator has been achieved. Other than one project which accounted for three of these six outputs, all other projects reported a single output against this indicator. The scale of the wetland area created is not reflected in the data reported and could be useful for future reporting.
- 7.18 Target species protected: other than one project which accounted for 29 of the 44 outputs reported for this indicator and which has possibly overinflated achievements, all other projects reported a single output thereby suggesting some consistency when interpreting this indicator.

- 7.19 People engaged: this output is defined differently by funded projects. Most report individual beneficiaries (be they local residents, school children, farmers, SMEs<sup>34</sup> etc) whilst others report the number of groups such as schools or events which have been involved with the project. On occasion some projects use other definitions e.g., increase in community use. Given that most projects report against this target as intended, it is safe to say that ENRaW has engaged with at least 98,323 people, three times its original target, accepting that this under-reports the total number of beneficiaries engaged.
- 7.20 Volunteering: the scheme definition (number of volunteer hours) adopted for this indicator is not applied consistently across funded projects and so it is difficult to offer a view on ENRaW performance against this indicator. Some projects report the number of volunteering hours or volunteer days secured by the project, whilst others report the number of volunteer individuals involved. The output reported at Figure 7.1 is not an accurate representation for the output, as it is based on different metrics.

#### *Social prescribing and wellbeing*

- 7.21 The aggregated data for these two indicators are problematic. ENRaW has reported that 192 people have been engaged in social prescribing activities, which far exceeds the 104 target set out by funded projects. The scheme has achieved around half of its wellbeing targets, having reported 1,579 against a target set by projects of 3,014.
- 7.22 However, it is unclear what exact data or measurement is being reported against these targets and it appears in some cases to include individual participants who have engaged in social prescribing activities. Projects reporting on the number of participants reporting improved wellbeing via tools such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and Outcomes Star would be identified as appropriate outputs against this indicator.

#### *Tree and hedgerow planting*

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<sup>34</sup> Small and Medium Enterprises

7.23 Some eight projects have reported tree planting outputs, amounting to a total of 19,175 trees planted to date. This is against a target of 7,166 but several projects which have since reported such outputs did not specify them as part of their application. In all but one case, projects have reported on the exact number of trees planted thereby reporting consistent and useful data.

7.24 Eight projects have reported hedgerow planting outputs. Some of these have reported the linear metres planted, others reported the number of saplings planted, others have reported the number of sites where work has been done and others have reported the number of days spend planting hedgerows. It is therefore impossible to interpret the aggregated total outputs to date by ENRaW in an accurate way against this indicator.

#### *Community food and growing*

7.25 Three projects have reported 29 community food and growing outputs, and the target set (at 24) has been exceeded. These have included new allotment sites and the creation of allotment plots as well as the planting of orchard sites and establishment of community kitchens.

#### **Factors which impact project delivery**

7.26 Three main factors have impacted upon project delivery. These are the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; the transfer of scheme administration from the Welsh Government's Programme Manager and Delivery Branch to RPW, and localised individual project level factors. The impacts of these three factors are summarised below, although are also considered as appropriate throughout this report.

7.27 The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted upon ENRaW processes and accounts for some of the delays during the assessment and approval stages. The pandemic also impacted negatively upon projects which were live during periods of restrictions and these impacts included:

- funded staff had to be furloughed
- volunteers couldn't be recruited and supported

- community engagement events were restricted, and projects had to resort to online delivery
- sites and spaces usually accessed by the public were closed
- projects could not undertake planned activities in schools and/or with groups of school children
- project costs escalated due to raising supply and contractor costs as well as projects having to resort to using contractors instead of volunteers to carry out some work
- projects found it difficult to source some supplies and had to overcome supply chain issues.

7.28 The transfer of the scheme administration has impacted upon individual projects in many ways, but the key implications have been that projects funded under the latter two funding windows:

- are less likely to be able to achieve their ambitions in full due to having a much shorter delivery period
- have had to allocate significantly more resources to administrative tasks than anticipated
- are being hampered by procurement requirements so are moving at a slower pace than anticipated
- have a cohort of staff who are demoralised and genuinely worried about issues such as financial clawbacks to the extent that it is impacting on their health and wellbeing.

7.29 The main local and individualised factors which have impacted upon project delivery include:

- challenges associated with securing consent from landowners to access sites and carry out work
- difficulties gaining licences and permissions
- severe weather conditions such as flooding impacting upon ground work.

## **Achieving innovation through new products, practices, partnerships, processes, and technologies**

7.30 There is widespread evidence from the fieldwork that ENRaW has funded innovative approaches, new practices, and new partnerships.

7.31 Many of the projects who contributed to the evaluation reported that ENRaW funded had enabled them to operate at a larger scale than was previously the case, be that at a regional or catchment level scale. Several of these had been encouraged by the Welsh Government to widen their geographical coverage and the number or type of partners involved during the application stage. One such project which has taken advantage of the ENRaW objective of delivering at a landscape level is the Green Connections project funded via Window 3:

The Green Connections project in Powys is being delivered by three Wildlife Trusts which operate within the county. The Trusts are collaborating together for the first time as a result of ENRaW and in doing so adopt a landscape approach to the river Wye. The project has played an instrumental role in supporting small community groups, including a Friends of the Upper Wye group which has recently been established, equipping them with training and advice as well as guidance on applying for their own sources of funding. The project has been able to outreach to new community groups which partners previously did not have capacity to do so. The project is also establishing landowner support groups which will provide landowners with an ongoing network to sustain activities post funding.

7.32 The widening of geographical areas covered by projects has not always been easy or straightforward, and a few funded projects reported upon the challenges of working at this scale with numerous partners:

The Green Grid Partnership project across south east Wales involves six local authority partners, with Monmouthshire acting as lead partner. There has been a strong history of collaborative working across the south east local authorities, including on projects such as the Valleys Regional Park and the south-east Wales Uplands project and as such the ENRaW partnership builds upon this. The scale of the ENRaW project and the involvement of so many partners has however created delivery challenges although it is accepted that more can be achieved by working collaboratively. The partnership is working to develop a more

consistent approach to green infrastructure planning across the region and has collaborated on a joint, single campaign under the brand of 'Nature isn't Neat' to change grass cutting behaviours.

- 7.33 Other projects which contributed to the evaluation reported that ENRaW had enabled them to establish new partnerships, such as the Window 1 three-year Llanishen and Lisvane project led by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, which is now being replicated as a successful approach in other areas as well as the Window 2 Healthy Hillside project:

The formation and strengthening of a new partnership was regarded as a key achievement for the Llanishen and Lisvane reservoir project. The funding has enabled them to form a strong core partnership including Natural Resources Wales, Cardiff County Council, and a Local Action Group. The funding has also enabled them to develop and establish a secondary wider cohort of over 30 organisations who are supporting the work. Without ENRaW funding, the partnership would not have been able to take forward their plans and move at pace. Welsh Water plan to manage the site post ENRaW funding by appointing a new Asset Manager and two Rangers who will work with the friends of group. Opportunities to develop social prescribing activities are also being explored in partnership with the Health Board.

The approach adopted at Llanishen and Lisvane is beginning to shape Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's policies for other reservoirs across Wales, whereby greater community engagement can be secured to help identify ways of improving access, interpretation, and educational aspects of each site. The ENRaW project manager will also be promoted to a pan-Wales manager role to help co-ordinate volunteer input across other reservoir sites.

The Healthy Hillside project has involved an innovative partnership between Natural Resources Wales and the Fire and Rescue Services, as well as other partners, to tackle problems such as arson and accidental fires on hillsides. The project is focused on south Wales but has the potential to influence the development of national policy and funding for these issues.

- 7.34 Several of the projects which contributed to the evaluation believed that the ENRaW funding had allowed them to strengthen existing partnership working approaches. For instance, the Window 3 funded Ramblers Cymru

Paths to Wellbeing project is enabling the lead partner to work with all local authorities across Wales and the Window 3 Cwm Taff Nature Network project has brought together a number of countryside teams from across several local authorities to work more closely with Public Service Boards to improve access to the countryside and conserve nature. Similarly, the Window 1 Keep Wales Tidy Caru Cymru project has allowed the lead partner to facilitate the sharing of knowledge between local authority partners about what works and doesn't work in terms of changing behaviours and secure a greater alignment between local activities and national campaigns which focus on reducing fly-tipping, littering and dog fouling issues. In the same manner, Window 3 ENRaW funding has enabled the Outdoor Partnership to expand its provision to parts of Wales which it did not previously operate within, including mid Wales, south central Gwent, and Swansea Bay.

7.35 Projects identified a wide range of innovative products, technologies, and processes which they were adopting. Amongst the examples cited were:

- the Window 1 National Trust Tir Afon project reported using natural processes such as re-meandering of the river, introducing woody debris, and reducing the impact of weirs and non-natural barriers rather than hard engineering solutions
- the Window 1 River Teifi and Teifi Marshes projects both reported using recycled plastic materials for the construction of their boardwalks
- the Window 1 River Teifi project reported using QR codes for users to access along the route to gain information and to make a financial donation to the financial upkeep of the path
- the Window 1 Llais y Goedwig project reported adopting innovative approaches involving arts and the environment (e.g., yoga, photography) as a new way of engaging a different cohort of people to use outside spaces

- the Dyfi Catchment project reported that this will be the only area in Wales to introduce beavers into the wild once a licence can be obtained.

### **Achieving RDP Focus Areas objectives**

7.36 The evaluation fieldwork explored the extent to which Windows 2 and 3 projects, funded via RDP, were achieving the Focus Areas objectives. In all, projects are required to achieve six Focus Areas priorities and the feedback suggests that these are being achieved in the following ways:

- knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas is being facilitated by a number of projects which focus on bringing partners, be they public sector or private landowners, together to share experiences and good practice. A few of the projects focus in particular on sharing land management best practice such as the Window 1 Brecon Beacons Mega Catchment project
- the competitiveness of agriculture and farm viability is being enhanced primarily by those projects which engage farm landowners, although this does not appear to have been a significant focus of the projects which contributed to this evaluation
- relatively little evidence has been captured on how ENRaW projects are promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture, and this will need to be addressed during the final evaluation fieldwork, although there are several examples of community food growing initiatives being funded via the scheme
- many of the ENRaW projects are focused on restoring, preserving, and enhancing ecosystems – although these are not necessarily ones which are dependent on agriculture and forestry. Amongst the examples reported are planting of wildflower meadows and community gardens to encourage biodiversity, tackling pollution and invasive non-native species to reduce the negative impact upon ecosystems, delivering pollinator projects and managing footfall in crucial areas of wildlife habitats



- several of the ENRaW projects included in the evaluation support a shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy. Many projects have involved making improvements to walking and cycling routes and one project has purchased e-bikes for community use. Several projects have also been involved in tree planting and meadow restoration as methods of sequestration and achieving carbon neutrality
- many of the projects are geared towards reducing the impact of poverty and stimulating economic development in rural areas, and several of the projects supported by ENRaW more broadly are located in areas of high deprivation. Several projects are encouraging communities to take ownership of local green resources and are actively ensuring that provision can be accessed by all, regardless of mobility issues. Many projects with a capital allowance have taken active steps to make their sites and spaces more accessible to disabled people and those with mobility issues such as older people and families with young children.

### **Achieving cross cutting themes and objectives**

7.37 In terms of the three cross cutting objectives of the RDP (namely Innovation, Environment, and Climate change adaptation and mitigation) the fieldwork found extensive evidence that funded projects are delivering provisions and activities which will make a contribution towards these objectives. Funded projects were found to:

- be innovative in the way that they work, in that they are seeking solutions in a collaborative manner which have the potential to be sustained by communities and partner organisations in the long-term; as well as in the type of solutions which are being explored. Examples of these innovative products and approaches are set out at paragraph 3.5
- have environmental considerations at their core, in that they have been funded to safeguard and enhance natural environments such as green spaces, meadows, woodlands, and river paths for the

benefit of wildlife, nature and local communities. It is not our intention to reiterate these examples here as they are discussed extensively throughout this report

- take extensive positive action which will help address climate change. Funded projects are improving wildlife habitats, creating biodiversity corridors, removing invasive non-native species, restoring meadows and peatlands, and increasing tree and other plant cover.

7.38 In terms of the Welsh Government's cross cutting themes (namely Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty) the fieldwork found evidence that funded projects:

- are adhering to their organisation's policies in relation to equal opportunities in terms of employment practices and were actively ensuring that provisions made available e.g., to volunteers and beneficiaries could be accessed by all. Many projects observed that their main objective was focused on improving access to green spaces and sites in order to make them more accessible to members of their communities which would not have previously used them. Several examples of good practice were highlighted such as the active targeting of ethnic minority groups and the LGBTQ+<sup>35</sup> community by the Window 3 Opening Doors to the Outdoors project and ensuring that volunteering opportunities were open to those with special educational needs (across the Window 1 We Care project). The Window 1 Great Meadow Bishop's Park project reported that users of these spaces are now much more diverse and include families with young children as well as wheelchair users. Very little evidence however emerged around how projects were embracing gender mainstreaming within their work

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<sup>35</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and others.

- have sustainable development at their heart and have overarching objectives aligned with this goal. It is not our intention to reiterate these examples here as they are discussed throughout this report
- many projects which contributed to this evaluation spoke of wanting to address the financial barriers which might restrict members of their community from accessing green spaces and the countryside. Several projects have improved local green spaces which residents can access free of charge, and a few involve food growing projects which community members can take ownership.

### **The use of the Welsh language**

7.39 Projects reported making consistent use of bilingual promotion and marketing activities, including within websites and social media. They also reported that all signage, interpretation panels and way markers produced are prepared bilingually, in line with Welsh Government funding requirements.

7.40 Beyond this, a number of projects which contributed to the evaluation identified good practice in terms of using Welsh and supporting the socioeconomic infrastructure of Welsh-speaking communities. Amongst the examples cited were:

- many projects employ Welsh speakers who are able to facilitate bilingual community engagement events and deliver training or events in Welsh
- schools are able to participate in projects in the language of their choice
- one project actively celebrates Welsh culture, including Welsh myths and legends, as part of its promotion to visitors
- one project has set KPIs<sup>36</sup> for the number of Welsh language events and enquiries dealt with in Welsh

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<sup>36</sup> Key Performance Indicator

- one project has provided free Welsh language lessons to members of the community who are involved with the project and another delivers an outdoor pursuit course specifically for Welsh learners who are supported to speak Welsh during the training
- one project adopts a Welsh language active offer, in that communications commence in Welsh and is offered to participants
- one project has collaborated with their local Menter Iaith<sup>37</sup> to identify how they could make greater use of Welsh within their provision and have since ensured that greater use of Welsh terminology, such as Welsh names for plants, are adopted.

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<sup>37</sup> A Community Language Initiative

## 8. Benefits and outcomes achieved

8.1 This chapter considers the benefits generated and outcomes achieved across completed ENRaW projects. It also considers the feedback gathered on the value for money achieved to date and funded projects' perceptions of what would have happened in the absence of ENRaW support, including drawing upon feedback from unsuccessful applicants. Finally, it considers the findings of the evaluation around project and partnership sustainability post ENRaW funding.

### **Achieving cross-sector outcomes**

8.2 The feedback gathered from both completed and ongoing projects strongly suggests that they are delivering outcomes which cut across different policies and sectors. One such project reported that they achieve this as some of the provision provides health and wellbeing opportunities combined with environmental improvements e.g., wild swimming activities which are combined with beach clean-up sessions.

8.3 Interviewed projects also took a strong view that they were able to achieve much more by working in partnership with other organisations than had they been delivering alone. It was also the case that:

- nearly two thirds of completed Window 1 projects (10 of 16) thought that ENRaW funding had helped them strengthen an existing partnership
- half of completed Window 1 projects (8 of 16) thought that ENRaW funding had helped them expand the number of members within an existing partnership
- just under half of completed Window 1 projects (7 of 16) thought that ENRaW funding had helped them to establish a new partnership
- a third of completed Window 1 projects (6 of 16) thought that ENRaW funding had helped them expand the range of members within an existing partnership

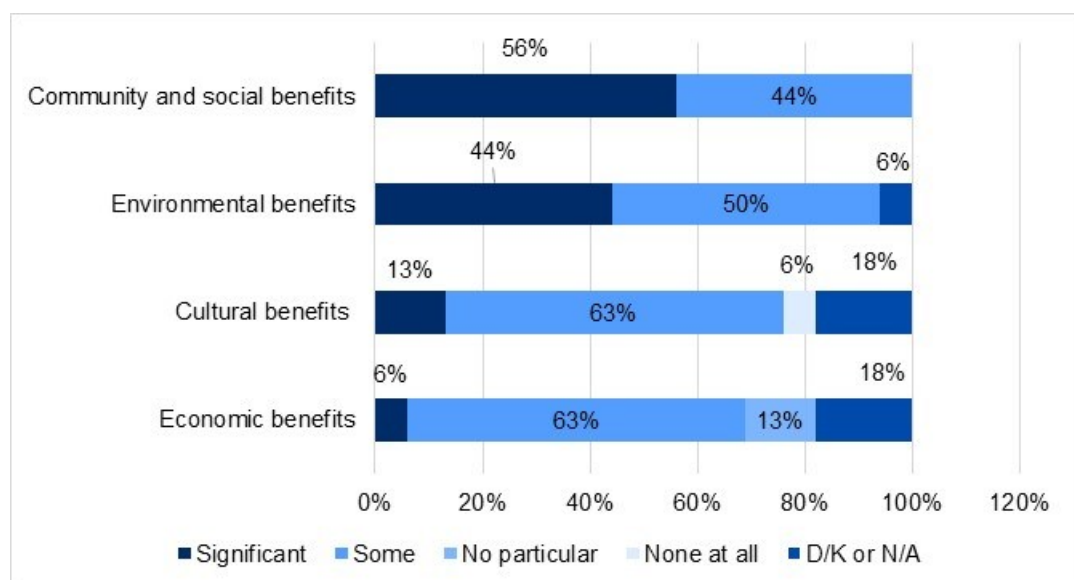
8.4 In terms of the difference being made at this mid-term stage, we primarily draw upon the achievements and impact of projects funded via Window 1

(including those who have since received further funding) on the basis that much of the feedback from newer projects funded under Windows 2 and 3 suggests that it is too early for them to report on the difference they had made. Gathering evidence about the outcomes achieved was reported to be more challenging for some projects, particularly those which were reliant on partner organisations to capture and report such data to them as lead organisations. In one case for instance, the lead organisation observed that they spend a lot of time ringing round partners and volunteers to gather outputs information such as the number of rubbish bags collected but that it is virtually impossible for them to measure whether their intervention is having a positive impact on levels of littering within these communities.

### Window 1 completed projects

8.5 When asked about the benefits generated, surveyed projects were more likely to highlight the community, social and environmental benefits of their actions and less likely to identify cultural and economic benefits, as shown at Figure 8.1. This was echoed via the feedback gathered via the qualitative fieldwork and which is set out below for each of the individual outcome areas which ENRaW intended to focus upon.

**Figure 8.1: Benefits generated by completed surveyed projects**



Source: OB3 web survey (16 Window 1 completed funded projects)

### Community and social benefits

8.6 A wide range of community and social benefits have been achieved by completed projects. The most commonly cited include:

- activities have been informed by community consultation and engagement, to ensure that the provisions made available by funded projects meet the needs of local communities
- improved facilities within their community which have included improved and more accessible pathways and green spaces; which are better signposted and contain useful information; which in turn have led to increased use by a broader range of local residents and community groups for purposes such as walking and gardening. The Ramblers Cymru Paths to Wellbeing project reported that improvements to local paths and the development of some 144 community routes as part of the project has resulted in increased use amongst walkers
- increased events taking place within communities, including events such as picnics, wildlife sessions and wildlife walks which in turn have led to a more diverse and broader range of local people making use of their local environments for a wider range of purposes
- increased community groups as several projects have set out to establish new groups of volunteers to maintain many of the local improvements delivered. Projects were mindful of the need to support these into self-sustaining groups and the degree to which they will achieve this was thought to differ
- increased community ownership of assets and activities, with several projects citing that they have enabled and trained community members and groups to maintain facilities and spaces after the ENRaW project comes to an end. The We Care project for instance has equipped Friends of Groups with the skills and knowledge to better manage their green assets and restrict the spread of invasive non-native species such as Himalayan balsam

- 8.7 Other types of community benefits were reported by individual projects, such as the Waterfall Country project in the Brecon Beacons which had managed to improve conditions for local residents during the peak tourism season by creating overflow car parks, introducing yellow line parking restrictions, providing toilets and better management of traffic flow.
- 8.8 The following project examples illustrate how ENRaW has supported community and social benefits:

Securing community ownership of new wildflower meadows is regarded as a successful outcome of the Window 1 Wrexham Green Infrastructure Project, and much learning has been adopted from previous efforts to plant trees without the community being consulted and engaged. The local communities across Caia Park and Plas Madoc were initially rather resistant to the proposed developments, as previous trees which had been planted in their communities had been left to grow thereby creating spaces which had become susceptible to littering, fly tipping, and antisocial behaviour. A key lesson has been the need to consult the community and get them on board, and identify a way, via the local authority's Street Scene arm, to maintain the meadows post funding once North Wales Wildlife Trust steps away from its maintenance role. Street Scene staff have been trained and equipped to maintain the site post funding.

The Grange Pavilion project in Cardiff has supported the development of outdoor spaces, outdoor classrooms, and gardening equipment storage for the use of local residents across Grangetown. The project has created a new and accessible green space within a highly deprived community which has high levels of houses of multiple occupancy and very little or no outdoor space available.

### **Health and wellbeing benefits**

- 8.9 The fieldwork found that completed Window 1 projects have generated a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits for participants and volunteers who have been engaged, although in some of these cases these outcomes are assumed to have taken place as a result of increased activity or changing behaviours. In several cases, particularly where there has not been a direct and ongoing contact with participants, projects have not collected any data to monitor changes in health and wellbeing. However,



others have done this effectively using tools such as Outcomes Star and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale to report on participant changes.

8.10 The type of health and wellbeing benefits reported include:

- improved physical health as a result of increased use of outdoor spaces for exercise, such as walking and cycling. For instance, the new boardwalk installed as part of the River Teifi project has seen an annual increase in use from 10,000 to 30,000 users since the path was completed and it is assumed that this will have positive benefits upon peoples' health
- reduced isolation and improved mental health such as reduced anxiety and depression, as a result of being part of new community and volunteering groups, including social prescribing activities. In one case care home residents reported improved wellbeing as a result of being involved with a forest school at their care home
- improved diet and access to free, fresh, and locally produced produce as part of community gardens and allotment projects.

8.11 A couple of projects illustrate the health and wellbeing outcomes achieved:

The Tir Afon project purchased e-bikes, initially to be used as part of a GP referral scheme. The pandemic meant that the e-bikes had to be used in a different way to that intended and are now used by the local authority partner to hold group sessions for local residents as part of the leisure centre's fitness programme. Instructors take up to 10 participants out on each ride, with three rides arranged per week. Participants report improved physical health, increased confidence, improved well-being, reduced isolation, and increased access to the outdoors and local countryside. Participant feedback gathered by the project is as follows:

'For me, the opportunity gave me experience of E-biking which I would not otherwise afford and has opened up rides that I would otherwise not tackle on a normal bike. The buzz of cycling up forest trails, crossing a stream and not 'running out of steam' really has been amazing!'

An independent evaluation of the Trywydd Iach Outdoor Health pilot project provides an insight into the health and wellbeing impact of one social prescribing project.

The one-year pilot involved the establishing of a network of health providers, environmental organisations, outdoor providers, and organisations connected to tourism and the trial of four activities relating to animal therapy, woodland skills and crafts, a walking group, and a gardening group. Participants could be referred by partners or self-refer themselves to these activities. The pilot found that public transport was often a major barrier to engagement, as was social barriers such as nervousness to attend alone or meet new people. A small number of participants (25) trailed the activities and reported to have enjoyed the activities. Some 57 per cent reported increased wellbeing against the short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale as a result of their engagement and self-reported health increased amongst the small number (8) who completed both pre and post questionnaires (using the EQ-5D scale<sup>38</sup>). The evaluation reported that the project was starting to see increased GP buy-in but that a longer period of delivery was required to fully embed the approach. Feedback from participants included:

‘this gave a focus to my days, helped me to feel part of a community ... eased my anxiety and got me outside at a time when I normally wouldn’t go out’

‘opportunity to step out of work, out of worries, out of anxieties and being around animals was perfect’.

- 8.12 Overall, the feedback suggests that exercise referral schemes and social prescribing provisions struggled to get underway initially, largely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon health sector professionals, and so have achieved fewer outcomes than expected. One such project found it impossible to engage healthcare providers during the pandemic and had to explore other means of encouraging local people to make greater use of new green assets. Others, as alluded to above, have learnt many lessons about what works and what restricts effective social prescribing practices. It also seems that projects run by organisations with prior experience and strong connections with referring organisations have faced fewer issues when delivering social and green prescribing activities, as in the case of

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<sup>38</sup> The EQ-5D is a self-report survey that measures the quality of life across five domains - mobility, self-care, usual activities, pain/discomfort, and anxiety/depression. Each dimension is scored on a 5-level severity ranking that ranges from ‘no problems’ through ‘extreme problems’

one Window 3 project suggesting that they have been able to build on existing experience and practices.

### **Environmental benefits**

8.13 The vast majority of completed Window 1 projects which contributed to this evaluation believed that their projects had taken action which would lead to environmental improvements and benefits. It is important to note however that these anticipated environmental benefits will only materialise in the long-term and it will not be possible for projects to evidence them during the project's lifetime. The type of actions and anticipated benefits include:

- several projects reported improved footpaths or introduced boardwalks which would help limit the negative impact of people on vegetation
- a few had cleaned up local environments by supporting volunteers with litter picking, dealing with fly tipping, dealing with dog fouling and issues of arson and fires in rural areas
- several projects reported that participants had improved environmental and nature knowledge as a result of training and talks, including knowledge about particular species, ecosystems, and maintenance
- several projects had planted or improved new meadows, trees and bulbs which were hoped would help promote wildlife and increase local biodiversity. In some cases, it was also hoped that tree planting would help reduce noise and air pollution from heavy traffic
- several projects had created community gardens and food growing projects, including creating orchards of fruit trees which would help increase pollinators as well as benefit local residents
- a few projects have been involved with managing invasive non-native species, equipping local volunteer groups with the motivation, skills or equipment to maintain this work on a longer-term basis.

8.14 A couple of completed Window 1 projects were hopeful that their initial development work would result in environmental gains. These included

projects which had developed action plans, undertaken ecological surveys, and drafted ecological management plans to improve the management of sites such as meadow habitats. These projects argued that such plans would benefit nature and ecosystems at a later point, but it was too early to identify the impacts at this point in time.

Two beneficiaries, involved with the Caru Cymru project had become involved as they wanted to keep their village or local housing estate clean and tidy. They reported that they had benefited from health and safety training relating to litter clean ups. They are also able to access the kit and the project arranges for the rubbish collected to be taken away. Both beneficiaries are litter champions for their local area and are key contacts for other people who want to get involved locally. In one case, other local residents have got involved since seeing the work of the litter champion and in the other, a large number of people are now regularly involved in litter pick-ups. They reported that their local areas have less litter as a result. In one case the litter champion provides talks about keeping the local environment clean at the local school. Litter champions play a key role in providing feedback about the nature of litter being collected e.g., a recent increase in disposable vapes being collected. In one case, the litter collection work is helping local residents to build a sense of community across a fairly new housing estate.

One project (the Dyfi Catchment project) has recruited and trained local volunteers to be involved in the reintroduction of beavers into the wild. One volunteer, an ecologist by profession, got involved due to a genuine interest in the species and wanting to see them survive. So far, their involvement with the project has focused on community engagement to raise awareness and facilitate conversations about the issues of reintroducing beavers into the wild. They have also benefited from training provided by the project on the reintroduction and management of beavers in the wild. This has included a visit to Bavaria, Germany to learn how a similar project has reintroduced beavers into the wild and the impact which this can have on local environments and communities.

### **Economic benefits**

- 8.15 Overall, few of the completed Window 1 projects could evidence that their project had generated positive economic outcomes, although some were hopeful that these would materialise in due course. The main economic benefit cited by completed projects related to the use of local contractors to

deliver capital funded works. The second economic benefit related to increased skills amongst volunteers as a result of training and volunteering opportunities provided by funded projects. In many cases, projects reported that volunteers and participants were gaining improved green and conservation skills, such as growing food, monitoring species and using equipment. Some projects, such as the Opening Doors to the Outdoors project, provide accredited training opportunities to participants which are more likely to be used by individuals for the purposes of seeking work.

- 8.16 Projects which had a stronger emphasis on attracting more visitors and generating income from this were the most likely to identify potential economic benefits. These included the Brecon Beacons Waterfall County project which anticipated that the local economy would benefit from increased tourism numbers and spend; the Dyfi Catchment Beavers project which anticipated would attract more tourists to the area; and the Great Meadow Bishop's Park project which would attract more visitors and which in turn would utilise its café facilities.

### **Value for money**

- 8.17 Completed Window 1 projects thought that they had provided good value for money overall. Some two-fifths of those who responded to the survey (7 of 16) thought that they had provided exceptional value for money and a further half (8 of 16) thought that they had provided very good value for money. The remaining one project thought that they had still provided fair value for money. In comparison, interviewed Window 2 and 3 projects thought that they were achieving fairly good value for money, but argued that this could be much better if they were not hampered by grant administration issues which created delays and which consumed more administration resources than anticipated.
- 8.18 The main factors accounting for good value for money include:
- that projects draw upon the skills, knowledge and reach of a wide range of partner organisations i.e., that their sum is greater than their respective parts

- that ENRaW funding enabled partnerships to draw down other sources of funding both from within the partnership and externally
- that projects were able to leverage the input of volunteers
- funds were spent directly to support local rural jobs, contractors, and businesses
- using tendering portals such as sell2wales to source suppliers resulted in projects securing more competitive contractors.

8.19 The feedback gathered via the evaluation strongly suggests that in the absence of the ENRaW funding many projects would not have existed at all. Others would have made progress with elements of their project, particularly those where there was some form of collaboration already in place between partners such as in the case of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership. However, even in those cases it is clear that projects would not have been delivered at the same scale or pace without the ENRaW funding. Many projects would not have had the resources to appoint project staff to deliver and co-ordinate initiatives.

‘the ENRaW gave us freedom to focus. It could have been done over time, but it would be less spectacular – the money gave us physically what we drew on paper.’

#### **What has happened in the absence of funding**

8.20 Some six survey respondents had never secured any ENRaW funding and one of these was also interviewed as part of the fieldwork. When asked about the feedback provided on their unsuccessful application, a range of views were provided. Two felt that their experience had been ‘a waste of time’ and have not applied for any other funding to support their project. Another two recalled the feedback as being ‘vague’, ‘not particularly helpful’ and ‘unfair’. The sixth however thought that the feedback had been ‘very detailed and constructive’.

8.21 The main reason given by one interviewed applicant for not pursuing the intended project any further was the lack of staff capacity and the impact of the pandemic:

‘Covid had a big impact on workload, stress, and people, it’s affected staff capacity. We hope to look at other funders such as the Lottery to do the work’.

8.22 One of these six unsuccessful applicants recalled having applied during Window 1 and observed:

‘We had the impression that they were looking for big projects with partners. It felt complicated to bring people together as partners and to be responsible for the whole project. I think the fact that we didn’t have partners went against the project.’

8.23 Some of the ENRaW funded projects interviewed could also recall the feedback received on their unsuccessful applications and overall considered it to have been helpful in preparing a revised bid and securing funding during later windows. One such project recalled that the feedback noted their project needed to be cross-county, was too large for the timescales set and that they required more partners. These points were taken on board for their second, successful, application.

8.24 Another representative from a lead applicant organisation recalled only getting feedback after requesting it, following an unsuccessful bid during Window 1. In this case the feedback was felt to be akin to guidance repetition, and a personal conversation would have been more useful in order to break down scheme terminology.

8.25 In three cases where applicants had not been able to access any ENRaW funding, there has been further collaboration between project partners with the focus on securing other sources of funding to support their project idea. In one of these cases the organisation were partners in another successful ENRaW application.

8.26 In three cases, applicants had applied and secured other funds to support their proposed project. The other sources of funding secured were reported as being from:

- trusts, foundations, and small grant funds
- another department from within the same local authority

- the Welsh Government and Visit Wales Brilliant Basics Scheme
- the Community Renewal Fund (CRF)
- the Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme.

### **Sustainability post ENRaW funding**

8.27 Overall, there is good evidence from the fieldwork that Window 1 ENRaW funded projects and partnerships are being sustained post funding or are likely to be sustained post funding in the case of ongoing projects. In the vast majority of cases activities were ongoing and partnership collaborations are still in place. The ways in which activities are being sustained post funding include:

- the maintenance of assets and spaces forms part of some lead organisations' remit and this will be funded via their core funding, often supported by volunteer and community input
- partners continue to work together to secure further funding. In a few cases funding has already been secured, whilst in other cases partners are working on funding applications. Some hope to improve their financial sustainability by securing commercial income. In one case some £1.2m has been secured from the National Lottery Community Fund and Natural Resources Wales and the partnership is pursuing a further £7 to £8 million funding over the next few years. In another case a funding application for some £3m has been submitted under the Shared Prosperity Fund and other funding applications to the value of £10m are being developed to transform the project area
- partners continue to work together and provide ongoing support to community groups who have been involved with the project. In some cases, partner organisations have taken on the maintenance of sites and spaces
- community groups and volunteers have taken, or are in the process of taking, ownership of local green spaces be they community gardens, meadows, paths, or allotments



- some partners emphasised that their capital projects have been designed to last and to withstand harsh weather conditions
- some lead partners have committed to the ongoing funding of the project manager role due to the success of the ENRaW funded approach. For instance, Wrexham County Borough Council has retained the project officer responsible for the Wrexham Green Infrastructure project in order to expand the approach into other areas of the county. Likewise, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water intends to expand the model adopted in a pilot project across other reservoirs in Wales.

The Brecon Beacon Mega Catchment project is a good example of how ENRaW funding has been used effectively to establish a sustainable community interest company to continue delivering land management approaches tested over the project period. The Beacons Water Group was established to facilitate landscape scale changes in agricultural land use, to protect water purity. Consisting of local farmers, the group can now receive payment from Dŵr Cymru to manage pilot projects and is testing different approaches which can then be shared with other landowners and other areas in Wales. The Mega Catchment approach trialled here is also being rolled out to other areas, with Dŵr Cymru funding it via its core funds.

8.28 A small number of Window 1 projects were less confident about the longer-term sustainability of their partnership and approach. One such project which worked with all local authorities across Wales was concerned that the withdrawal of funding would lead to reduced commitment from these organisations and the project would be unlikely to continue on the scale it has operated to date. Another project emphasised that their work was unlikely to continue without grant funding to cover the costs of paid staff. Others, such as set out below, anticipated a more focused partnership approach in the future:

The Window 1 and Window 3 funded project, Connecting Green Infrastructure, operates on a regional basis across south west Wales and

involves a number of partner organisations. Future funding opportunities are being explored but it is likely that any successor project will be focused on specific activities or areas, which could also have implications upon the membership and composition of the future partnership.

- 8.29 Less evidence is currently available to gauge whether community group activities funded via the local grant schemes run by partners such as Cadwyn Clwyd and Menter Môn for instance, will be sustained given that their delivery is one step removed from the core team. Evidence from project level evaluations will be useful to shed light on these as the anecdotal feedback does suggest that partners such as community councils and third sector organisations will sustain activities and maintain any improvements made.
- 8.30 Feedback from Window 2 and 3 funded projects suggests that it is too early for them to gauge whether or not project activities will be sustained post ENRaW funding. Feedback suggests that some of these projects are already positioning themselves for further funding opportunities but a key message from this cohort is that their long-term sustainability would be stronger had their ENRaW funded delivery timescale been longer. It was also observed at the time of fieldwork that there was much uncertainty about whether there would be a successor scheme to ENRaW which projects could tap into and/or whether they could play a role within the delivery of the National Nature Service in the future.

## 9. Conclusions and recommendations

- 9.1 ENRaW has been an excellent opportunity to support cross-policy projects spanning environmental, community, economic, health and wellbeing across Wales at scale and pace. It is a Wales-based funding mechanism which closely reflects Welsh Government policy and strategies. It has been promoted effectively and with energy and positivity on the part of Welsh Government staff. The ENRaW scheme has proved popular and demand for the funding has been high. Clearly, having a major funding scheme which can support 100 per cent of project costs over a medium-term period of three years is an attractive offer and has been incredibly helpful to partnerships. Applications have far exceeded the funds available and as such, this demand has had implications upon the staffing resources required to process applications.
- 9.2 ENRaW's focus on collaborative working has encouraged and supported significant cross sector working which is unlikely to have been achieved otherwise. There is good evidence that ENRaW has supported the establishment and development of new partnerships as well as enabled others to expand and strengthen, both geographically and in terms of the range of partners involved.
- 9.3 Our fieldwork to date suggests that ENRaW is supporting good quality projects which are delivering worthwhile environmental and community work. The evaluation found ample evidence that funded projects are delivering activities in line with the RDP Focus Areas and Cross Cutting Objectives, as well as the Welsh Government cross-cutting themes, although as yet there is very little evidence in place to demonstrate how projects are embracing gender mainstreaming within their work. The evaluation also found very good, often creative, examples of funded projects using and promoting the Welsh language in a positive way and there would be merit in sharing these approaches between projects.
- 9.4 The experience of Window 1 applicants and funded projects suggests that grant application, assessment and administration arrangements have been reasonable and appropriate, and a clear strength of this funding window

has been applicants' ability to deal directly with a Welsh Government officer. The feedback suggests that ENRaW Window 1 reporting and claims processes are commensurate and acceptable to funded projects.

9.5 The transfer of the scheme into RDP mechanisms and the need to satisfy RDP funding requirements and processes has been hugely disruptive and detrimental for the scheme. The feedback gathered about Windows 2 and 3 grant application and administration points to a very challenging experience for this cohort. This is causing significant stress for projects funded via Windows 2 and 3 and is impacting negatively on their ability to deliver successful outcomes, not least because of the loss of staff, community, and partner goodwill to their projects.

9.6 Whilst appropriately designed, ENRaW's roll-out and implementation over the latter two funding windows has been flawed. The view of one surveyed respondent sums up the position well:

'the concept was good but in practice it has been a nightmare to apply to and to run'.

9.7 There are clear lessons to be learnt from the implementation of the RDP funded windows. The feedback from grant holders strongly suggests that the timescales and processes for approving scheme expenditure needs to be simplified and shortened. Funded projects should be afforded greater flexibility to accommodate changes to their budgets. Securing prior approval for any expenditure over £500 should be reviewed. The current payment and claims system is not fit for purpose and is unsuited to the administration of large, complex projects such as ENRaW. It is causing significant problems and delays and adversely affects lead and partner organisations. It is telling that many of the organisations who contributed to this evaluation, who were funded through the latter two funding windows, would not wish to be involved in a similar funding scheme in the future without significant changes being made.

9.8 The significant issues associated with Windows 2 and 3 means that funded projects are unlikely to achieve all of their intended aims and objectives, mostly due to their shortened window of delivery but also because grant

administration issues, such as securing prior approval for any spend over £500, is hindering progress and pace of delivery.

- 9.9 In terms of Window 1 completed projects there is good evidence that they have delivered what they intended to deliver. Completed projects have delivered outcomes which cut across different policies and sectors. The evaluation found that completed ENRaW projects have generated a wide range of community and social; health and wellbeing; and environmental benefits. To date, fewer completed projects can evidence that their project has generated positive economic outcomes, other than using local contractors to carry out works although there is some good evidence that projects have secured further sources of income. Projects which have a stronger emphasis on attracting more visitors are the most likely to identify potential economic benefits for their communities.
- 9.10 The Welsh Government capture achievements against an appropriate set of indicators which is helpful to demonstrate the outputs being achieved at scheme level. An analysis of this data suggests that the scheme is performing well against its original targets and to date, projects have far exceeded the targets they set themselves. However, our analysis suggests that further work is required to capture and report more consistent metrics against target indicators to allow for the reporting of more accurate achievements. By way of example, we would suggest that the scheme reports on the size (e.g., hectares or meter square) of any areas improved in the future rather than simply the number of spaces improved.
- 9.11 Finally, there is good evidence that ENRaW funded projects and partnerships are being sustained post funding or are likely to be sustained post funding in the case of ongoing projects. Projects and partnerships are being sustained in a variety of ways, including via other sources of grant funding, existing organisation funds or via community and voluntary ownership.

### **Recommendations**

- 9.12 We are very mindful that ENRaW funded projects have less than a year left to achieve their objectives and that many will be winding down and closing

their operations in the run up to their end date. A final evaluation of ENRaW will be undertaken between April and October 2023 and will provide an opportunity to gather further evidence on the outcomes achieved and difference made by the scheme. At this interim stage we therefore offer a small number of pragmatic recommendations which could be implemented over the remaining period of ENRaW. We also offer some more strategic recommendations for the Welsh Government to consider to inform the design and delivery of any future funding mechanism which might replace ENRaW post 2023.

9.13 We recommend that for the remaining ENRaW delivery period:

**Recommendation 1:** ENRaW should support funded projects to adopt consistent metrics when reporting the outputs achieved against core scheme indicators such as green spaces improved and hedgerows planted

**Recommendation 2:** the Welsh Government should facilitate the sharing of experiences between funded projects and in particular the sharing of good practice approaches in relation to the cross-cutting themes, including the Welsh language, and RDP Focus Areas in order to encourage others to adopt similar practices and to address weaker areas such as gender mainstreaming

**Recommendation 3:** the Welsh Government should allocate a dedicated funding officer from within RPW to ongoing RDP funded projects to help resolve financial claim and grant payment issues.

9.14 Post ENRaW, we recommend that the Welsh Government:

**Recommendation 4:** recognizes, and builds upon, the strengths of ENRaW's grant funding design, notably:

- the consultation process and the input of stakeholders into its co-design
- its intended long-term approach to provide funding over a three-year period
- its offer of both revenue and capital funding

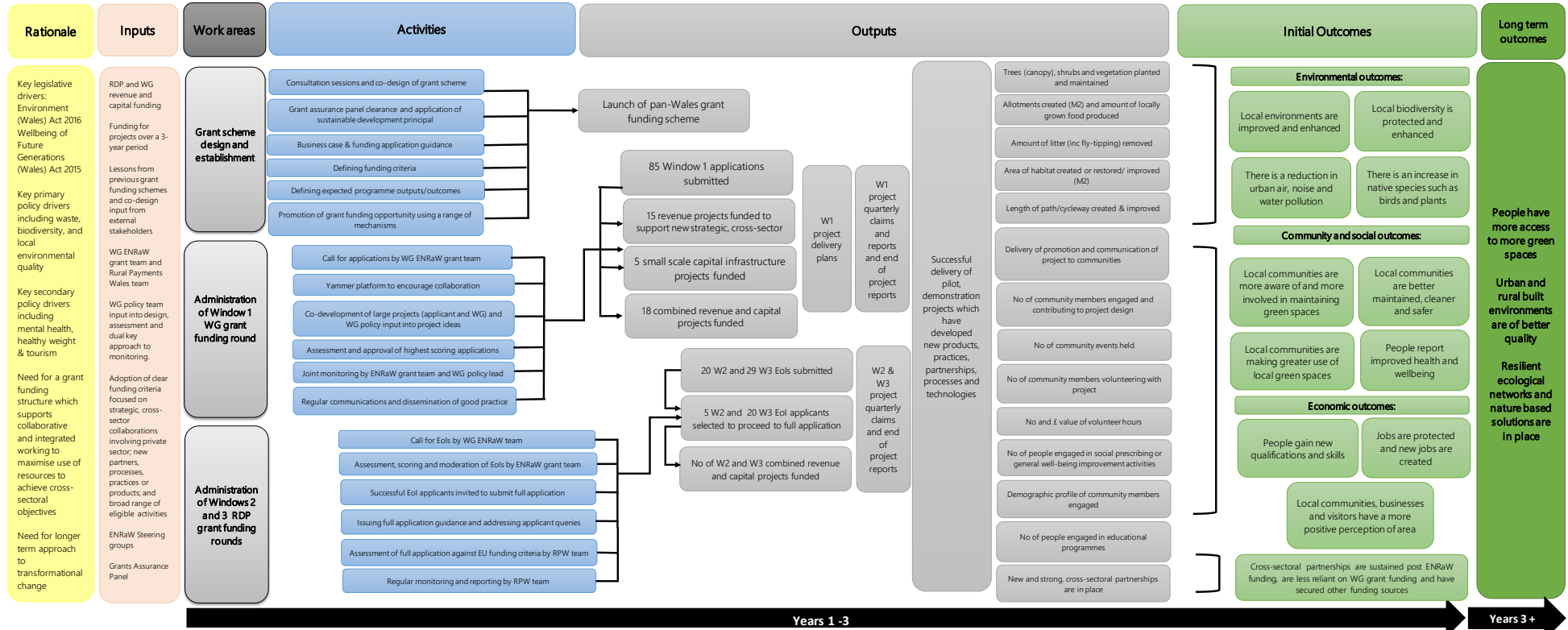
- its full cost recovery funding model
- its focus on sustainable partnership and collaborative working across multi policy areas
- its focus on regional and landscape scale delivery.

**Recommendation 5:** reflects on the feedback from applicants and funded projects about the grant application, assessment, and claims processes to inform future approaches; given that it strongly suggests that Window 1 processes have been better suited to a funding scheme such as ENRaW. In particular, the evaluators would recommend that:

- a two-stage application process consisting of an EoI and full application stage be retained but that the EoI stage requirements be simplified and provide a greater opportunity for applicants to outline the intended purpose of their project
- timescales for assessing and approving applications be agreed in advance and adhered to
- a dedicated funding officer be allocated to each funded project to monitor progress and resolve any claims issues
- arrangements for submitting and approving claims be modelled on Window 1 processes which are better suited, and provide greater flexibility, to complex cross-policy projects.

# Annex A: Theory of Change logic model and evaluation framework

## Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing (ENRaW) Theory of Change





## **Annex B: Discussion guides**

### **Topic guide 1: Scoping interviews with Welsh Government officials**

#### **Background**

1. In what way have you been involved with ENRaW? What is your role?

#### **What ENRaW set out to achieve**

1. What issues is ENRaW trying to address? Why is the scheme needed and what problem is the programme trying to address?
2. What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of ENRaW?
  - a. What is it trying to achieve? What change is it aiming to bring about?
  - b. How, if at all, have its objectives changed over time? Why is this?
  - c. To what extent have ENRaW priorities been appropriate?
3. What should 'success' of ENRaW look like? What difference do you expect ENRaW to make?
  - a. What outcomes would you expect to see being achieved by March 2023?
  - b. What outcomes would you expect to see post March 2023?
4. What are the main assumptions which underpin the grant scheme? That is, how is it expected that ENRaW will bring about change?
5. What external factors have/are likely to impact upon the achievement of successful outcomes for ENRaW?

#### **Strategic Fit**

6. In what way do you expect ENRaW to contribute to Welsh Government strategic priorities and current legislation? Which priorities do you expect it to make the greatest contribution?
7. In what way do you expect ENRaW to contribute to Cymraeg 2050? How has this been approached in the way funding has been made available?
8. What are your views on the value and effectiveness of the initial co-design work with stakeholders, and how this informed the design of the scheme?

## Application process

9. What are the application processes in place for operating ENRaW? Ask for W1 and W2/3 and key differences. What have been the steps taken to:
  - a. Oversee W1 application process / Oversee W2/3 EoI and full application process
  - b. Assess applications
  - c. Award grant
10. What role did policy leads take in decision-making across each funding window? How effective was this?
11. What are the key changes in grant administration processes, levels/type of funding and eligibility from W1 to W2/3 and the impact of these changes? E.g. W2/3 awards larger amounts of funding
12. What works well / not so well around the application processes and how do these compare across the three funding windows?

## Grant administration

13. What governance and management arrangements are in place for ENRaW? Ask for W1 and W2/3
14. What are the administrative processes in place for operating ENRaW? Ask for W1 and W2/3 and key differences. What have been the steps taken to:
  - a. Monitor grant
  - b. Report grant achievements
15. How does funded project's experience under W1 and W2/3 differ?
16. What project and programme level monitoring information is available for projects funded via W2/3 for us to access e.g. copies of successful EOIs and full business plans?
17. What support is provided/available to funded projects? E.g. facilitated networks, sharing of good practice etc? How well or otherwise does this work?

## Programme delivery

18. What are your views on the nature of projects funded via ENRaW to date? To what extent will funded projects allow the programme to achieve its aims and objectives?

19. What are your views on the performance (financial and outputs) of projects funded via ENRaW to date?

20. What are the barriers and challenges for projects to achieving their targets and objectives?

21. What are the enablers for projects for the achievement of targets and objectives?

### **Lessons learned**

22. What are the key lessons you would highlight from your involvement with ENRaW?

## Topic guide 2: Funded ENRaW project lead interviews

### Introduction

1. Tell me a little about your organisation and the ENRaW funded project. Ask about:
  - Background and development of project idea
  - What it set out to achieve and need for their project
  - Partners involved
  - How they got to hear about and got involved with ENRaW
  - Confirm which funding window did they apply for/receive support

### Programme design

2. What are your views on the design of the ENRaW grant scheme, in terms of:
  - its focus on Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) principles
  - its focus on the Well-being of Future Generations Act
  - being a competitive grant scheme?
  - making funding available for up to 3-years?
  - providing revenue and capital funding?
  - its focus on supporting collaborative and cross-sectoral projects?
  - the nature of projects it could support?

### Programme administration

3. [\[for W1 funded projects only\]](#) What are your views on the administrative arrangements for the Window 1 grant scheme? Ask about their experiences of, and the strengths and weaknesses of:
  - the funding application guidance
  - the Yammer platform for collaboration
  - the application process (including application form and delivery plan template)
  - any support provided by WG (including policy team) during application process
  - assessment processes
  - award of grant
  - timeliness of processes
  - claims
  - joint monitoring of grant by Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch and WG policy lead
  - reporting of grant achievements; and
  - the support programme running alongside the grant
4. [\[for W2 and W3 funded projects only\]](#) What are your views on the administrative arrangements for the Windows 2 and 3 grant scheme? Ask about their experiences of, and the strengths and weaknesses of:

- funding application guidance
  - submission and assessment of Eols by Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch
  - the second stage full application process via WEFO Online
  - any support provided by WG (including policy team) during application process
  - assessment processes undertaken by the RPW team
  - award of grant by RPW monitoring of grant by RPW
  - timeliness of processes
  - claims
  - reporting of grant achievements
  - the support programme running alongside the grant
5. In what way, if at all, were you encouraged by Welsh Government officials to broaden the remit of your proposed project during the application stage?
- If so, how useful was this input?
  - If so, what implications did this have for the proposed project?
  - If so, what if any, challenges came about?
6. What monitoring and evaluation requirements are expected of your project?
- What monitoring and evaluation arrangements have been put into place for your project?
  - How proportionate are the monitoring and evaluation required of your project?
  - How well equipped is your project to meet the monitoring and evaluation requirements expected?

### **Project delivery and achievements**

7. Tell me a little about the progress made by your ENRaW funded project. Ask about:
- the journey to date
  - what has been achieved
  - any major changes to what was planned and why they occurred
8. To what extent has your project achieved/is your project achieving its intended outputs and outcomes?
- What accounts for any strong or under performance?
9. What, if any, factors have impacted upon project delivery? Ask about:
- the COVID-19 pandemic
  - the transfer of scheme administration from Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch to RPW
  - local/individual project level factors (e.g. planning permissions, seasonality, contractor delays etc.)

10. To what extent has your project developed new:
- products
  - practices
  - partnerships
  - processes and
  - technologies?
11. To what extent has the project achieved/is the project achieving RDP Focus Areas and cross cutting objectives?
12. In what way does the project promote and facilitate the social use of Welsh across formal and informal events and support the socioeconomic infrastructure of Welsh-speaking communities?
13. What have been the main lessons learnt to date from your experience of delivering an ENRaW funded project?
14. What evidence does your project have that:
- it is delivering outcomes which cut across different policy and sectors e.g. achieving environmental and wellbeing outcomes?
  - it is achieving more by working in partnership than if it was being delivered by just one organisation?
  - the local community is making greater use, and taking greater ownership, of their local resources and green spaces?
  - the local community/partners will continue to be involved post-funding?

### **Impact and difference made**

15. What difference is your project having on:
- the local society and community
  - the local culture
  - the local<sup>39</sup> environment
  - the local<sup>40</sup> economy
  - the health and wellbeing of local communities
  - achieving social, environmental, economic, and cultural benefits
16. To what extent will any changes and difference made be sustained when the ENRaW project comes to an end? Why do you say this?
17. In the absence of the grant funding, what would have happened?
- What elements, if any, of your project would still have gone ahead?
  - To what extent would your organisation (or other partner organisations) have become involved with ENRaW/the project in the first instance?

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<sup>39</sup> Tailor as appropriate: if a regional or pan-Wales project ask about difference made at regional or pan-Wales level

<sup>40</sup> Tailor as appropriate: if a regional or pan-Wales project ask about difference made at regional or pan-Wales level

18. To what extent do you think that your funded project has provided value for money?
19. To what extent will the project activities be sustained post ENRaW funding?
- How do you intend to achieve this?

**Additional questions to ask of funded projects who also have experience of an unsuccessful ENRaW application.**

1. What are your views on the feedback provided by Welsh Government on your unsuccessful application?
  - Ask about timeliness, format and level of details provided
  - How, if at all, has this feedback been taken on board (including in any further ENRaW application submissions)?
2. Despite not securing ENRaW funding, what value, if any, was there in applying to this scheme?
3. How could the application process have been improved / made easier?
  - What changes should be made to any future similar grant scheme?

**In the absence of funding**

4. Since hearing that your application was unsuccessful, what further progress has been made with the intended project?
  - What, if any, further collaboration between project partners has been in place?
  - Have you applied/secured any other funding to support the intended project? If so, what source of funding has been applied for/secured?
5. [If intended ENRaW project has been delivered without ENRaW funded support] Tell me a little about the project which has since been delivered:
  - What elements of the intended project have been put in place/delivered?
  - How is this project similar/different to that submitted under the ENRaW scheme in terms of delivery partners and intended outcomes?
  - What have been the main achievements to date of this project?
  - What delivery challenges have been experienced?
  - What lessons have been learnt?

## Topic guide 3: Funded ENRaW project case study – Welsh Government policy leads

**This topic guide should be tailored as appropriate for policy leads who have been involved with more than more ENRaW case study projects**

### Introduction

1. Tell me a little about your involvement with the ENRaW funded project(s) and what the project set out to achieve. Ask about
  - what the project(s) set out to achieve and need for the project(s)
  - advice and support provided during the application stage
  - how applicant(s) responded to advice and support provided and how project(s) was modified/adapted

### Strategic fit and contribution with policy

2. In what way does the project(s) contribute to Welsh Government's strategic priorities?
  - How does it contribute towards key primary drivers such as waste, biodiversity, and local environmental quality policies?
  - How does it contribute towards key secondary policy drivers such as mental health, healthy weight, and tourism policies?
3. How does the funded project(s) fit with key legislative drivers?
  - To what extent has the Well-being of Future Generations Act influenced the development and delivery of the project?
  - In what way has the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 influenced the design and delivery of the project?
4. How have the principles of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) influenced the development and delivery of the project(s)?
5. In what way does the project(s) contribute to Welsh Government language policies, particularly Cymraeg 2050?

### Programme design

6. What are your views on the design of the ENRaW grant scheme, in terms of:
  - being a competitive grant scheme?
  - making funding available for up to 3-years?
  - providing revenue and capital funding?
  - its focus on supporting collaborative and cross-sectoral projects?
  - the nature of projects it could support?



## **Programme administration**

7. What are your views on the administrative arrangements for operating Window 1 grant scheme? Ask about their experiences of, and the strengths and weaknesses of:
  - funding application guidance
  - Yammer platform for collaboration
  - the application process (including application form and delivery plan template)
  - any support provided by WG (including policy team) during application process
  - assessment processes
  - award of grant
  - timeliness of processes
  - claims
  - joint monitoring of grant by Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch and WG policy lead
  - reporting of grant achievements; and
  - the support programme running alongside the grant
  
8. What are your views on the administrative arrangements for operating Windows 2 and 3 grant scheme? Ask about their experiences of, and the strengths and weaknesses of:
  - funding application guidance
  - submission and assessment of Eols by Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch
  - the second stage full application process via WEFO Online
  - any support provided by WG (including policy team) during application process
  - assessment processes undertaken by the RPW team
  - award of grant by RPW monitoring of grant by RPW
  - timeliness of processes
  - claims
  - reporting of grant achievements
  - the support programme running alongside the grant

## **Project delivery and achievements**

9. What are your views about the progress made by the ENRaW funded project(s)? Ask about:
  - What has been achieved
  - Any major changes to what was planned
  
10. To what extent has the project(s) achieved/is the project(s) achieving its intended outputs and outcomes?
  - What accounts for any strong or under performance?
  
11. What, if any, factors have impacted upon project delivery? Ask about:

- the COVID-19 pandemic
- the transfer of scheme administration from Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch to RPW
- local/individual project level factors (e.g., planning permissions, seasonality, contractor delays etc.)

12. To what extent has the project(s) developed new:

- products
- practices
- partnerships
- processes and
- technologies?

13. To what extent has the project(s) achieved/is the project achieving RDP Focus Areas and cross cutting objectives?

14. To what extent is the project(s):

- delivering outcomes which cut across different policy and sectors e.g. achieving environmental and wellbeing outcomes?
- achieving more by working in partnership than if it was being delivered by just one organisation?
- contributing to a local community which is making greater use, and taking greater ownership, of their local resources and green spaces?
- supported by local community/partners who will continue to be involved post-funding?

## Impact and difference made

15. What evidence do you have of the difference the project(s) have upon:

- the local society and community
- the local culture
- the local<sup>41</sup> environment
- the local<sup>42</sup> economy
- the health and wellbeing of local communities
- achieving social, environmental, economic, and cultural benefits

16. To what extent do you think that the funded project(s) has provided value for money? Why do you say this?

17. To what extent do you think project(s) activities be sustained post ENRaW funding?

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<sup>41</sup> Tailor as appropriate: if a regional or pan-Wales project ask about difference made at regional or pan-Wales level

<sup>42</sup> Tailor as appropriate: if a regional or pan-Wales project ask about difference made at regional or pan-Wales level

## Topic guide 4: Funded ENRaW project case study – Project partners and community members

### Introduction

1. Tell me a little about yourself/your organisation and your involvement with the ENRaW funded project. Ask about
  - How you got involved with the project/with ENRaW
  - Your role in terms of delivery or supporting/engaging in project activities
  - What you understand to be the purpose and ambitions of the project

### Programme design

2. What do you understand to be the purpose of the ENRaW grant scheme? in terms of:
  - being a competitive grant scheme?
  - making funding available for up to 3-years?
  - providing revenue and capital funding?
  - its focus on supporting collaborative and cross-sectoral projects?
  - the nature of projects it could support?

### Programme administration

3. [\[For W1 funded projects only\]](#) Were you involved in developing the ENRaW funding application? If so, what did you think of the:
  - funding application guidance
  - Yammer platform for collaboration
  - the application process (including application form and delivery plan template)
  - any support provided by WG (including policy team) during application process
  - assessment processes
  - award of grant
4. [\[For W1 funded projects only\]](#) Are you involved in the administration of the ENRaW grant? If so what do you think of the:
  - timeliness of processes
  - claims
  - joint monitoring of grant by Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch and WG policy lead
  - reporting of grant achievements; and
  - the support programme running alongside the grant
5. [\[for W2 and W3 funded projects\]](#) Were you involved in developing the ENRaW funding application? If so, what did you think of the:
  - funding application guidance

- submission and assessment of Eols by Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch
  - the second stage full application process via WEFO Online
  - any support provided by WG (including policy team) during application process
  - assessment processes undertaken by the RPW team
  - award of grant by RPW monitoring of grant by RPW
6. [\[for W2 and W3 funded projects\]](#) Are you involved in the administration of the ENRaW grant? If so, what do you think of the:
- timeliness of processes
  - claims
  - reporting of grant achievements
  - the support programme running alongside the grant
7. What monitoring and evaluation requirements are expected of your project?
- What monitoring and evaluation arrangements have been put into place for the project?
  - How proportionate are the monitoring and evaluation required of your project?
  - How well equipped is your project to meet the monitoring and evaluation requirements expected?

### **Project delivery and achievements**

8. Tell me a little about the progress made by your ENRaW funded project. Ask about:
- the journey to date
  - what has been achieved
  - any major changes to what was planned
9. To what extent has the project achieved/is the project achieving its intended outputs and outcomes?
- What accounts for any strong or under performance?
10. What, if any, factors have impacted upon project delivery? Ask about:
- the COVID-19 pandemic
  - local/individual project level factors (e.g., planning permissions, seasonality, contractor delays etc.)
11. To what extent has the project developed new:
- products
  - practices
  - partnerships
  - processes and
  - technologies?

12. What have been the main lessons learnt to date from your experience of being part of an ENRaW funded project?

- To what extent is the project: delivering outcomes which cut across different policy and sectors e.g. achieving environmental and wellbeing outcomes?
- achieving more by working in partnership than if it was being delivered by just one organisation?
- contributing to a local community which is making greater use, and taking greater ownership, of their local resources and green spaces?
- supported by local community/partners who will continue to be involved post-funding?

### **Impact and difference made**

18. What evidence do you have of the difference the project has upon:

- the local society and community
- the local culture
- the local<sup>43</sup> environment
- the local<sup>44</sup> economy
- the health and wellbeing of local communities
- achieving social, environmental, economic, and cultural benefits

19. To what extent will any changes and difference made be sustained when the ENRaW project comes to an end? Why do you say this?

20. In the absence of the grant funding, what would have happened?

- What elements, if any, of the project would still have gone ahead?
- To what extent would your organisation (or other partner organisations) have become involved with ENRaW/the project in the first instance?

21. To what extent do you think that the funded project has provided value for money? Why do you say this?

22. To what extent will the project activities be sustained post ENRaW funding? How do you intend to achieve this?

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<sup>43</sup> Tailor as appropriate: if a regional or pan-Wales project ask about difference made at regional or pan-Wales level

<sup>44</sup> Tailor as appropriate: if a regional or pan-Wales project ask about difference made at regional or pan-Wales level

## Topic guide 5: Unsuccessful ENRaW applicant interviews

### Introduction

1. Tell me a little about your organisation and the intended ENRaW project. Ask about:
  - background and development of project idea
  - what it intended to achieve and need for the project
  - partners involved
  - how they got to hear about and became involved with ENRaW
  - why they decided to apply to the funding scheme
  - confirm which funding Window did the apply

### Strategic fit and contribution with policy

2. In what way did the project intend to contribute to Welsh Government's strategic priorities?
  - Which key policies/priorities did it intend to contribute towards?
3. In what way did the project intend to contribute to key legislative drivers such as the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016?

### Programme design

4. What are your views on the design of the ENRaW grant scheme, in terms of:
  - what it set out to achieve?
  - being a competitive grant scheme?
  - making funding available for up to 3-years?
  - providing revenue and capital funding?
  - its focus on supporting collaborative and cross-sectoral projects?
  - the nature of projects it could support?

### Programme administration

5. [\[for W1 funded projects\]](#) What are your views on the funding application arrangements for operating Window 1 grant programme? Ask about their experiences of, the strengths and weaknesses of:
  - funding application guidance
  - Yammer platform for collaboration
  - the application process (including application form and delivery plan template)
  - any support provided by WG (including policy team) during application process
  - assessment processes
  - timeliness of processes
  - feedback

6. [for W2 and W3 funded projects] What are your views on the funding application arrangements for operating Windows 2 and 3 grant programme? Ask about their experiences of, and the strengths and weaknesses of:
- funding application guidance
  - submission and assessment of Eols by Welsh Government's Programme Management and Delivery Branch
  - the second stage full application process via WEFO Online
  - any support provided by WG (including policy team) during application process
  - assessment processes undertaken by the RPW team
  - timeliness of processes
7. What are your views on the feedback provided by the Welsh Government on your unsuccessful application?
- Ask about timeliness, format and level of details provided
  - How, if at all, has this feedback been taken on board?
8. Despite you not securing ENRaW funding, what value, if any, was there of applying to this scheme?
9. How could the application process have been improved / made easier?
- What changes should be made to any future similar grant scheme?

### **In the absence of funding**

10. Since hearing that your application was unsuccessful, what further progress has been made with the intended project?
- What, if any, further collaboration between project partners has taken place?
  - Have you applied/secured any other funding to support the intended project? If so, what source of funding has been applied for/secured?
11. [If intended ENRaW project has been delivered] Tell me a little about the project which has since been delivered:
- What elements of the intended project have been put in place/delivered?
  - What changes, if any, did you make to the project and why?
  - How is this project similar/different to that submitted under the ENRaW scheme in terms of delivery partners and intended outcomes?
  - What have been the main achievements to date of this project?
  - What delivery challenges have been experienced?
  - What lessons have been learnt?

## Annex C: Online survey

OB3 Research has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the ENRaW scheme.

As part of this evaluation we would like to gather feedback from applicants and funded projects and kindly ask that you complete this brief questionnaire to tell us about your funding application and, if appropriate, delivery experience. More information is available about the evaluation, including a Privacy Notice setting out how we will use the feedback gleaned [here](#).

**A hoffech lenwi'r holiadur yma yn:**

**Would you like to complete this questionnaire in:**

- English
- y Gymraeg

### Background

**A1. Are you a:**

- Project or applicant lead
- Project or applicant partner
- Other

*Please specify below:*

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**A2. To the best of your knowledge did you or your organisation submit an ENRaW application during:**

	Yes	No	D/k
Window 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Window 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Window 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**A3. [Routed from A2] What was the outcome of this/these applications?**

	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Unsuccessful</i>	<i>Awaiting to hear</i>	<i>D/k</i>
Window 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Window 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Window 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**A4. [A3=Successful W1] Has your Window 1 ENRaW funded project been completed?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## Hearing about ENRaW

**B1. How did you first come to hear about ENRaW?**

**[Select all that apply]**

- Welsh Government website
- Welsh Government press release or announcement
- Welsh Government ENRaW or policy staff
- At an information event or network
- From other organisations or groups
- From colleagues or friends
- Other
- Don't know

**B2. How easy, or otherwise, was it to access information about ENRaW?**

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- Don't know

**B3. How, if at all, could information about ENRaW have been better promoted and communicated?**

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## [ROUTED FROM A2] Window 1 ENRaW application

### C1. How easy, or otherwise, did you find the:

	<i>Very easy</i>	<i>Fairly easy</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Fairly difficult</i>	<i>Very difficult</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>N/A</i>
initial application process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
completion of a delivery plan template?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### C2. How helpful did you find the Window 1 ENRaW funding application guidance?

- Very helpful
- Fairly helpful
- Not particularly helpful
- Not at all helpful
- Don't know

### C3. How helpful was any advice or feedback provided by the following Welsh Government teams during the Window 1 ENRaW application stage?

	<i>Very helpful</i>	<i>Fairly helpful</i>	<i>Not particularly helpful</i>	<i>Not at all helpful</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
The Programme Management and Delivery Branch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sector policy officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### C4. What difference did any advice provided by Welsh Government officials make to your Window 1 ENRaW application?

- Significant difference
- Some difference
- No particular difference
- No difference at all
- Don't know

### C5. Was the time taken by the Welsh Government to assess your Window 1 ENRaW application:

- Acceptable
- Too long

- Neither
- Don't know

**C6.** What, if anything, would you identify as the strengths of the Window 1 ENRaW application process?

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**C7.** In what way, if at all, could the Window 1 ENRaW application process have been improved or made easier for your project?

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**[ROUTED FROM A2] Window 2 and Window 3 ENRaW application**

**D1.** How easy, or otherwise, did you find the:

	<i>Very easy</i>	<i>Fairly easy</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Fairly difficult</i>	<i>Very difficult</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Expression of Interest process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full application submission via the WEFO online portal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**D2.** How helpful did you find the Window 2 or 3 ENRaW funding application guidance?

- Very helpful
- Fairly helpful
- Not particularly helpful
- Not at all helpful
- Don't know

**D3.** How helpful was any advice or feedback provided by the following Welsh Government teams during the Windows 2 and 3 ENRaW application stage?

*Very helpful    Fairly helpful    Not particularly helpful    Not at all helpful    Don't know*

The Programme Management and Delivery Branch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sector policy officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Payments Wales	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**D4. What difference did any advice provided by Welsh Government officials make to your Window 2 or 3 ENRaW application?**

- Significant difference
- Some difference
- No particular difference
- No difference at all
- Don't know

**D5. Was the time taken by the Welsh Government to assess your Window 2 or 3 application:**

- Acceptable
- Too long
- Neither
- Don't know

**D6. What, if anything, would you identify as the strengths of the Window 2 or 3 ENRaW application process?**

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**D8. In what way, if at all, could the Window 2 or 3 ENRaW application process have been improved or made easier for your project?**

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**[ROUTED FOR A2 IF SUCCESSFUL AT ANY WINDOW]  
Project delivery**

**E1. [IF A3 W1 = Successful] What were your experiences of the following administrative elements of Window 1 ENRaW?**

	<i>Very straightforward</i>	<i>Fairly straightforward</i>	<i>Not particularly straightforward</i>	<i>Not at all straightforward</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Submitting financial claims	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receiving payments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reporting project achievements (e.g. quarterly reports)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparing an end of project report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress meetings with Welsh Government staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**E2. [IF A3 W1 = Successful] Please use this space to share any feedback on the administration of Window 1 ENRaW:**

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**E3. [IF A3 W1 = Successful] How, if at all, could the Window 1 ENRaW grant administration process have been improved?**

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**E4. [IF A3 = W2 or W3 Successful] What are your experiences of the following administration elements of Windows 2 and 3 of ENRaW?**

	<i>Very straightforward</i>	<i>Fairly straightforward</i>	<i>Not particularly straightforward</i>	<i>Not at all straightforward</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Submitting financial claims via the RPW online portal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receiving payments from RPW	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reporting project achievements via the RPW Progress Report template	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progress meetings with Welsh Government staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**E5. [IF A3 = W2 or W3 Successful] Please use this space to share any feedback on the administration of Windows 2 and 3 of ENRaW:**

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**E6. [IF A3 = W2 or W3 Successful] How, if at all, could the Window 2 and 3 ENRaW grant administration process be improved?**

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**[ROUTED FROM A4 = IF W1 PROJECTS ARE COMPLETED]  
Completed projects**

**F1. To what extent did your ENRaW project achieve its aims and objectives?**

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To no particular extent
- To no extent at all
- Don't know

**F2. What type of benefits did your project generate?**

	<i>Significant benefits</i>	<i>Some benefits</i>	<i>No particular benefits</i>	<i>No benefits at all</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Community and social benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**F3. Did ENRaW funding help you to:**

**[Select all that apply]**

- Establish a new partnership
- Expand the number of members within an existing partnership
- Expand the range of members within an existing partnership
- Strengthen an existing partnership

**F4.** What delivery challenges, if at all, did your Window 1 ENRaW project face?

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**F5.** Do you think that your Window 1 ENRaW project provided:

- Exceptional value for money
- Very good value for money
- Fair value for money
- Not much value for money
- Don't know

**F6.** Why do you say this?

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**[IF ANY ENRaW APPLICATIONS WERE  
UNSUCCESSFUL]  
Unsuccessful applicants**

**G1.** The following questions should be completed by those who did not secure any ENRaW funding across any of the three funding windows.

**Does this apply to your organisation?**

- Yes, we have never secured any ENRaW funding
- No, we have secured ENRaW funding

**G2.** [IF G1=1] What did you think of the feedback provided on your unsuccessful application(s)?

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**G3. [IF G1=1] Since hearing that your ENRaW application(s) was/were unsuccessful, has there been any further collaboration between project partners?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**G4. [G1=1] What has been the nature and purpose of this ongoing collaboration?**

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**G5. [IF G1=1] Other than any other ENRaW funding rounds, have you applied to other sources for funding to support your proposed project?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**G6. [IF G1=1] Have you secured other funds to support your proposed project?**

- Yes
- No
- Awaiting outcome
- Don't know

**G7. [IF G1=1 OR 3] Please provide details for these other sources of funding applied for/secured:**

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**G8. [G1=1] As part of this evaluation, we wish to interview a small number of organisations who did not secure any ENRaW funding to better understand their experiences. Would you be prepared to talk to one of our researchers? This would be a short Teams or phone conversation over the coming few weeks. If so, could you please share your contact details with us:**

Name and name of project

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Contact email

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## Final thoughts

**H1.** Finally, do you have any other comments to make about the ENRaW scheme?

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## Annex D: Sampling Strategy

It was agreed that 20 Window 1 and 10 from Windows 2 and 3 would form the proposed sample of 30 projects and that eight of these 30 projects would form deep dive case studies (four from Window 1 and four from Windows 2/3). As at April 2022, the profile of all ENRaW projects which informed the proposed sample was as set out at Table D1.

**Table D1: Profile of all ENRaW applicants and funded projects**

	Applications	Successful	End of project report in place	Proposed sample
Window 1	85	38	21	20
Window 2	21	5		5
Window 3	28	14		5
Total	134	57	21	30

### Profile of Window 1 funded projects

The profile of the 38 Window 1 funded projects by type of funding and status is set out at Table D2.

**Table D2: Profile of Window 1 ENRaW funded projects**

	Awarded funding	Completed	Awaiting end of project report	Ending 2022 or 2023	Withdrawn
Large scale 1 year	7	6	0	0	1
Large scale 3 years	11	0	6	4	1
Small scale capital	5	2	3	0	0
Small scale revenue	15	14	0	0	1
Total	38	22	9	4	3

The profile of the 38 Window 1 funded projects by type of lead organisation is set out at Table D3.

**Table D3: Profile of Window 1 ENRaW funded projects by type of lead organisation**

	<b>Awarded funding</b>
Charity	14
Development Trust	6
Local Authority	15
Private sector	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

The following sampling framework for selecting 20 Window 1 projects was therefore adopted.

**Table D4: Sampling framework for selecting 20 Window 1 funded projects**

<b>Type of grant</b>	<b>Proposed sample</b>	<b>Type of organisation</b>	<b>Proposed sample</b>
Large scale 1 year	4	Charity	6
Large scale 3 years	6	Development Trust	4
Small scale capital	4	Local Authority	7
Small scale revenue	6	Private sector	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

In the event, three Window 1 projects were substituted with projects which received the same type of grant and were led by the same type of organisation, other than in one case where a small scale capital rather than small scale revenue funded project was selected. The eventual sample of Window 1 funded projects included in the evaluation was as set out at Table D5.

**Table D5: Final sample of 20 Window 1 funded projects**

<b>Type of grant</b>	<b>Proposed sample</b>	<b>Type of organisation</b>	<b>Proposed sample</b>
Large scale 1 year	4	Charity	6
Large scale 3 years	6	Development Trust	4
Small scale capital	5	Local Authority	7
Small scale revenue	5	Private sector	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

### **Profile of Windows 2 and 3 funded projects**

At the time of sampling, 19 Window 2 and 3 projects had received funding and their profile by type of lead organisation is set out at Table D6. No information was made available to the research team on the value of these projects. The proposed

sampling framework for selecting funded projects for inclusion in the evaluation is also set out at Table D6.

**Table D6: Profile of Window 2 and 3 ENRaW funded and sampling framework**

	<b>W2 Awarded funding</b>	<b>W2 Proposed sample<sup>45</sup></b>	<b>W3 Awarded funding</b>	<b>W3 Proposed sample</b>
Charity/Development Trust/Third sector	1	0	11	6
Local authority	3	1	3	2
Other	1	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>

In the event one selected project has to be substituted, but this did not impact upon the profile of selected projects across Windows 2 and 3.

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<sup>45</sup> 3 of the 5 projects which have received funding during W2 have been selected as part of the W1 sample.