

Annual Report on Natural Resources Wales

March 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.** The Welsh Government created Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on 1 April 2013, merging three bodies: the Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales, and Forestry Commission Wales. It also incorporated several Welsh Government responsibilities and, from 1 April 2016, the functions of the three Internal Drainage Boards operating wholly or partly in Wales.
- 2.** Alongside a wide range of operational and regulatory responsibilities, NRW is the principal Welsh Government adviser on natural resource issues. As a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, it is accountable to the Welsh Ministers through the Sponsorship Minister (currently the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James ('the Minister')) and subject to scrutiny by relevant Senedd Committees. The NRW Board is responsible for ensuring it exercises its legislative functions appropriately and effectively.
- 3.** On 20 January 2022, representatives of NRW, including the Chief Executive and the Chair, appeared before the Committee for a scrutiny session. We are grateful to the representatives of NRW for their cooperation. This report on the Committee's annual scrutiny of NRW is the first to be produced during the 6th Senedd. We will continue this annual scrutiny throughout this Senedd term



2. Governance

Remit Letter

4. NRW's Remit Letter for 2020-21 was received from the Welsh Government in May 2020. It set several objectives to be delivered until the end of the term of the government at the time. At the time of the Committee scrutiny session, no up-to-date remit letter had been published. When asked about this, Clare Pillman, Chief Executive, said that NRW was expecting a "term of Government remit letter" within the next month. This would "sit alongside" NRW's budget and would be informed by the "baseline review, programme for government, co-operation agreement, all those things coming together." Clare Pillman said she expected the "term of Government" remit letter to set out an overarching framework and that annual remit letters, which would contain more detail, would continue to be necessary.

5. Clare Pillman said that a specific flood-risk management remit letter, which had been received in late December 2021, had enabled NRW to progress "major works to protect communities, to reduce risk and improve defences". In response to a question, she said although she believed that remit letters for each distinct policy area were not necessary, it would be useful if the level of detail in the flood-risk management remit letter could be replicated in the annual remit letter.

Corporate Plan

6. In March 2018, NRW published its Corporate Plan, which covers the period up until 2022. It set out its medium-term performance measures against seven well-being Objectives¹. When asked when a new iteration of the corporate plan would be available, Clare Pillman explained that NRW and the Welsh Government had agreed to delay the next iteration of the Corporate Plan. She said the delay was necessary "to enable a new Government to come in, for the programme of government to be published, and of course, since then, we had the co-operation agreement as well" and for these to be reflected appropriately in the Plan.

¹ They are: Champion the Welsh environment and the sustainable management of Wales' natural resources; Ensure land and water in Wales are managed sustainably and in an integrated way; Improve the resilience and quality of our ecosystems; Reduce the risk to people and communities from environmental hazards such as flooding and pollution; Help people live healthier and more fulfilled lives; Promote successful and responsible business, using natural resources without damaging them; and Develop NRW into an excellent organisation, delivering first-class customer service.

7. Clare Pillman said the Welsh Government had begun a “baseline review” process which would also need to be reflected in the corporate plan and explained that NRW was also in “the fifth year of our well-being objectives, so we've got a review of them coming up”. She said that a one-year delay “had felt right” because of these reasons. She said she expected the next corporate plan to be published in March 2023, following a comprehensive consultation with stakeholders.

Business Plan

8. NRW’s most recent Business Plan covers the period 2020-21. It includes five strategic priorities² which, according to NRW, will contribute to achieving its Well-being Objectives and delivery of its Corporate Plan actions. At the time of the Committee’s scrutiny session, no business plan had been published for 2021-22.

9. When asked about the strategic priority of supporting the communities of Wales, Clare Pillman said this was a key area and that NRW had invested in “our staff’s skills and capabilities in terms of engaging with communities”. This had involved “Improving our customer-facing presence in terms of the advice that we give and the website, et cetera”. She explained there had been an increase in joint working with individuals and organisations who are already active in communities. She said this would be built on in the next iteration of the corporate plan.

10. Sir David Henshaw, Chair, added that there had been a conscious effort to make NRW more “outward-looking”. This involved working with external partners, “rather than it all being top-down control by Cardiff, which perhaps will be a way of describing what was happening before”. He too said this would continue to be a priority for NRW.

Performance measures

11. NRW’s Business Plan ‘dashboard’ tracks progress against several measures under each of the seven Well-being Objectives using a traffic light system. The performance report for 2020-21 showed that of its 35 measures, 21 were ‘green’, 12 were ‘amber’ and two were ‘red’. The two red measures are: Deliver remaining water-related investigations and develop updated River Basin Management Plans; and Make payments on time.

² They are: Responding to the climate emergency; Responding to the nature emergency; Developing and using our evidence with partners to advocate for and deliver the sustainable management of natural resources; Developing NRW into an excellent organisation that supports the communities of Wales; and Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK leaving the European Union, taking opportunities for a green recovery.

12. When asked about the red measures in relation to water pollution, Clare Pillman said “we are absolutely focused on this—the board, exec team and staff.” She said that “it’s been a year of real focus in this area. I think we are making strides”. She added that “it feels to me as if there’s been a shift this year in terms of public awareness and interest, in terms of the focus that the water companies are now bringing to bear, to a sense in Wales that, actually, this is not something that can be solved by one party making a change”.

13. Ceri Davies, Executive Director for Evidence, Policy and Permitting explained that resources had been redirected to “focus in on the storm overflow work, which has been of great public interest and concern, and also the phosphate in [Special Area of Conservation] rivers work, and then the follow-up work to that, which is the state of all of the rivers across Wales and the investigations that we do there.” She said:

“what you will be seeing towards the end of the month...is a route-map to better water quality in Wales, coming together from NRW and also including the water companies, Ofwat. We’ve involved the Consumer Council for Water in those discussions, and also Afonydd Cymru, and we’re talking to our wider stakeholders to bring those in.”

14. Sir David Henshaw emphasised that the Board of NRW were considering “what good regulation looks like” and how NRW can be a more effective regulator. He explained that “you can either stay with just checking, inspecting, and prosecuting and all that, and that could end up being ticking the box and missing the point”. He believed that one aspect of “good regulation” meant “working with other colleagues, other partners”.

Annual reports and accounts

15. NRW’s annual report and accounts for 2020-21 were the first not to be qualified since 2015-16. Previous qualifications arose from the awarding of standing sales plus (SS+) contracts introduced in the Timber Marketing Plan 2017-2022. NRW brought most SS+ contracts to an early conclusion during 2019-20.

16. In the 2020-21 accountability report, NRW’s internal audit team suggested there had been ‘some progress’ on timber sales contracts, and noted ‘issues’ remain with compliance and oversight.

Covid-19

17. In NRW’s Performance report 2020-21, Clare Pillman stated that from the outset of the pandemic NRW focused on supporting its partners and others dealing with the crisis. NRW’s Accountability report 2020-21 noted that staff absence because of Covid-19 was not a

“significant issue”. It says NRW has put continuity plans in place to provide cover for key individual or multiple absences.

Our view

It sometimes feels that NRW has been in a constant state of flux since its creation in 2013 when three distinct organisations with very different responsibilities were brought together. The journey to this point has been fraught with considerable difficulty and some controversy.

Between its creation and 2020, NRW’s budget had been reduced by over a third. As its budget has reduced year on year, the Welsh Government has piled additional responsibilities and duties upon it.

It is not unreasonable to ask whether these challenges have proven to be a distraction for NRW from exercising its duties and responsibilities in the most efficient and effective way.

The baseline review of NRW’s duties and functions may provide an opportunity to put an end to this chaotic period. We believe this review is much needed. It was something that stakeholders called for during our consultation on the Committee’s priorities for the 6th Senedd. What was apparent from that evidence was the risk that stakeholders were losing confidence in NRW’s ability to fulfil its duties and responsibilities. We should emphasise that this was not a criticism of NRW staff, but a question of lack of capacity and resources.

Once the baseline review is complete, we expect there to be a much-needed period of stability, where NRW can focus on getting on with the job. The Welsh Government and senior staff at NRW must ensure that the baseline review does not take up too much of NRW’s bandwidth. We would be grateful for further information from the Minister about the timetable for the baseline review.

On the matter of the Remit letter, we welcome the introduction of the “full term of government” remit letter. This will give NRW certainty for the purpose of planning in the medium term. We also note the comments from NRW about the need for more detail in annual remit letters and we encourage the Welsh Government to take that on board.

We understand the reasons for the delay of the next iterations of the Corporate and Business Plans, particularly in the context of the baseline review. However, we would be grateful if NRW would set out a timetable for the publication of both documents as soon as the timetable for the baseline review becomes clear.

We note that NRW's Business Plan contained "red" performance measures in relation to water-related investigations. Given the public interest in the state of our rivers, and the reassurances from NRW representatives about action being taken, we expect to see considerable progress in this area over the next year. We would be grateful for an update from NRW on progress in due course.

Recommendation 1. The Minister should set out the timetable for the completion of the baseline review of NRW. The Minister should provide an initial update to this Committee on the review's progress no later than 3 months after the publication of this Report.

Recommendation 2. NRW should set out a timetable for the publication of its corporate and business plans, in the light of further information about the timetable for the baseline review.

Recommendation 3. NRW should report back to this Committee on progress in addressing the "red" performance measures in its current Business Plan no later than 6 months after the publication of this Report.

3. Budget

Income and expenditure

18. NRW's total income for 2020-21 was £78 million. In addition, the Welsh Government provided £105 million Grant in Aid and other grants, of which £35 million was allocated to flood and coastal risk management. The 2020-21 total budget for flood risk management was spent, along with additional funding received to protect a further 720 properties.

19. Income is also earned through commercial activities and regulatory charges (to be spent on the regulatory purpose). NRW has said charge income is "relatively stable", but commercial income is "less predictable as it's very sensitive to exchange rate changes which affect timber prices".

20. NRW's total expenditure for the year was £225 million, an increase from £207 million the previous year. NRW has said this increase results from several reasons including staff cost increases following completion of organisation design.

21. During 2021-22 budget scrutiny, the then Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs said "NRW's funding is sufficient for their statutory responsibilities". However, NRW has

repeatedly said a decreasing budget was impacting its ability to deliver services and take on new duties.

Baseline review

22. The Minister for Climate Change has told the Committee that a review is being undertaken to examine NRW's allocation of resources against its statutory functions and the Programme for Government commitments. The Minister explained this was a "fundamental" review that had arisen out of a recognition that there had been a gradual expansion of responsibilities and functions, and there needed to be clarity about what was expected from NRW based on the baseline funding it receives. The Minister said that additional funding was made available for NRW to undertake work in addition to that which is funded by the baseline funding. For example, in-year funding had been allocated for work on flooding.

23. Clare Pillman noted that NRW's "grant in aid has reduced by 30 per cent in real terms since we were created". At the same time, NRW had taken on new and additional responsibilities. Clare Pillman welcomed the review, saying that NRW has "over 500 statutory responsibilities". She explained that "some of those will be quite small, some of them will be big and expensive to deliver." She added that the review would need to address questions about the level of service the Welsh Government expected from NRW and the resulting costs. The review would also help clarify the Welsh Government's priority areas.

24. During an appearance before the 5th Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee, NRW had said that from the end of 2020-21 it would no longer be able to carry money from one year to the next. Clare Pillman said this was part of a Welsh Government 'alignment project' and will potentially lead to a gap in funding. Clare Pillman explained that this meant that NRW cannot "carry forward the money that we earn, particularly from timber, from year to year". She went on to explain that "historically, we've also benefited sometimes from Welsh Government giving us money for specific purposes that we then could carry over. That was between £10 million and £15 million a year that fell into that." She said that she expected the problems associated with this approach would be minimised if the baseline review resulted in NRW being allocated a sufficient budget to deliver its core responsibilities. She explained:

"The work that we have been doing is really about saying that we need to get our budget, as the Minister said this morning, onto a stable footing that's not subject to, 'Oh, well, here's a bit of extra money to help you out on this; here's a bit to help you out on that'—really understanding what the core budget buys, what the priorities are and to be able to deliver against them."

25. Clare Pillman welcomed the indicative three-year budget, saying this would improve NRW's ability to plan. She explained that "some of the projects we've had—really good ones—we've had that sort of moment every December-January when we've been going, 'Well, do you actually have to lay the staff off or stop the work?' because we don't know whether it's funded from the following April".

Staffing requirements

26. NRW has estimated that enforcing the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021 will require 60 extra staff to deliver the "minimum viable product" but "well over 200" to deliver the "full role". NRW's review of the February 2020 flooding found it will require approximately 60 to 70 staff over the current baseline to ensure long term, sustainable improvements in flood management services.

27. During draft budget scrutiny, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change said staffing requirements would be considered as part of the baseline review. He explained that:

"So, on your 60 extra staff, 200 extra staff, are they extra, or are they people who were previously looking at tree-planting schemes who can now be freed up to do something else? It's that kind of exercise, isn't it, that we're really looking at?"

Our view

Our work on priorities for the Sixth Senedd highlighted widespread concern among stakeholders about NRW's ability to effectively carry out its roles and responsibilities due to a lack of capacity and resources. This included concerns about its ability to monitor and enforce environmental protection laws; respond to incidents of environmental pollution and flooding; monitor and assess the condition of terrestrial and marine sites; and support land use and marine planning.

NRW's regulatory responsibilities are increasing, most recently with new responsibility for enforcement of the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

We are pleased that the funding of NRW will be included within the remit of the baseline review. We believe this offers a much-needed opportunity for a "reset" of the funding arrangements for NRW, where it has been asked to take on more responsibilities against a backdrop of cuts to its funding. We expect the baseline review to result in a funding settlement that properly reflects NRW's statutory responsibilities and the tasks it is expected to perform.

The baseline review should lead to a clearer picture of the duties and responsibilities the Welsh Government wishes NRW to exercise, and the funding required to do so effectively. We note that NRW welcomed a move away from in-year funding for additional tasks and responsibilities. We recognise that this must have posed problems for NRW in terms of short and medium-term planning.

We also note that staffing will be considered as a result of the baseline review. We understand that this is a necessary part of the process. However, we also recognise that NRW recently undertook an organisational redesign which resulted in staffing changes. We are concerned that a further cycle of staffing reviews, and the uncertainty that inevitably arises from them, may harm the morale of NRW staff.

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government must ensure that funding for NRW is commensurate with its roles and responsibilities. We expect to see an appropriate increase in NRW funding following the outcome of the baseline review.

Recommendation 5. The Minister should provide further information to the Committee on discussions she is having with NRW about how its funding model might change in the light of the baseline review.

4. Commercial activity

28. NRW started the development of a new Commercial Strategy in January 2020 with publication initially planned for July 2020. In November 2020, NRW held a series of online engagement stakeholder workshops to inform the strategy's development. The Commercial Strategy was published in April 2021 and provides an overarching set of aspirations, ways of working, and outlines improvements for NRW's commercial activity.

29. During 2022-23 draft budget scrutiny, the Minister for Climate Change said the baseline review would consider whether current arrangements for funding NRW need to change. For example, NRW currently receives income from the sale of timber. The review would consider whether this was an appropriate way to fund a public sector organisation, particularly as NRW must absorb any risks arising from market fluctuations.

Timber sales

30. NRW's Timber Sales and Marketing Plan 2021-2026, sets out its approach to harvesting and marketing timber from the Welsh Government Woodland Estate. The development of the plan was informed by public consultations, and Welsh Government forestry and woodland policies.

31. The Plan aims to improve timber sales governance and compliance and brings together NRW's commitments for the next 5 years, including:

- Introducing a 'People, Planet and Prosperity' approach for all timber sales. This means that decisions that affect woodlands are measured with economic, and environmental considerations, and consider present and future needs. NRW will seek to deliver a pilot scheme in collaboration with industry;
- Using up to 30% of timber produced to explore 'alternative sale methods', which could 'support community and other social enterprise activities'; and
- Finding ways of increasing supply to the Welsh housing sector and supporting the Welsh circular economy, by working with the forest and wood processing sector, and the Welsh Government.

32. Clare Pillman said that the first year since the publication of the Plan had "been very much about putting the building blocks in place internally, getting that culture shift within the organisation". She referred to the underpinning "People, Planet and Prosperity" principle and emphasised how significant in terms of procurement and supply chain this approach might be, bearing in mind that NRW has "nearly £100 million-worth of contracts out there".

33. In June 2021, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change held a 'trees and timber' deep dive exercise. The output of that work was a report including several recommendations for NRW. The Deputy Minister has said this process "will form a starting point for the development of a timber industrial strategy for Wales", which will include "looking at the role of NRW".

Wind farms

34. NRW retains about £3 million a year for the costs of managing and operating wind farms but returns £8 million to the Welsh Government. During 2021-22 draft budget scrutiny, the then Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs said she would look at ways of utilising the returned funding for the energy and the climate change agenda, "which may include some going back to NRW". In March 2021 the then Minister said discussions were ongoing.

35. In response to a question about whether NRW should consider developing windfarms itself, Clare Pillman said that NRW had developed experience in this area, however, “we'd need to look at financing and we'd need to look at how we'd do it”. She added that these matters were under discussion and were focused on ensuring that profits from such developments remain in Wales and benefit local communities.

36. Clare Pillman said she supported the proposal for a Welsh energy company that could “take some of this forward and do things at perhaps different scales, so, some of the small-scale community stuff, but also right up to the big 30-40 turbines developments that we need if we're going to be looking at being self sufficient in terms of renewable energy over the next period.”

Our view

We note the comments from the Deputy Minister that arrangements for dealing with income (or, indeed, losses) arising from NRW's commercial activity will be within the remit of the baseline review. If a decision is taken to change its approach, the Welsh Government will need to ensure that NRW's budget is not reduced in a way that impacts its ability to deliver its duties and responsibilities.

We would welcome further information from the Minister or Deputy Minister about how this might work in practice and what assessment has been made of the impact of such a decision.

We note that NRW has published a Timber Sales and Marketing Plan 2021-2026. In the meantime, the Deputy Minister has commissioned a deep dive into forestry policies, which has now reported. Several recommendations arising from that work affect NRW. We would be grateful for an explanation from NRW about the impact this has had on its Plan and the extent to which it has changed as a result of the deep dive.

We were interested to hear about discussions between NRW and the Welsh Government about the potential development of wind farms on the NRW estate. We would be grateful for an update on this matter from NRW.

Recommendation 6. NRW should explain how the Deputy Minister's deep dive on forestry policies has impacted its Timber Sales and Marketing Plan 2021-2026. It should set out the specific changes that have been necessary to reflect the outcomes of the deep dive.

Recommendation 7. NRW should provide an update to the Committee on the development of wind farms on its estate and discussions it has held with the Welsh Government about taking forward a development role.

5. Specific issues raised with NRW

The River Llynfi pollution incident

37. The River Llynfi is a tributary to the River Wye and a site of special scientific interest (SSSIs) located within a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). In July 2020, a pollution incident on the river killed 45,000 fish and other river life. NRW's investigation found there was no 'realistic prospect of conviction' against any company or individual for the event. This was the third pollution event on the river since 2016, only one of which NRW has been able to prosecute.

38. NRW was criticised for a 13-hour delay in attending the scene after the alarm was raised. NRW said the delay was due to officers attending other high priority pollution incidents, and health and safety concerns for the one available officer. Ann Weedy, Operations Manager for NRW Mid Wales, highlighted difficulties in identifying the source of pollution after the fact. NRW has not confirmed if the delay resulted in lost evidence which could have aided a prosecution.

39. Clare Pillman described the Llynfi incident as one which "struck us to the heart—that you had that level of pollution, and we weren't able to take action against it". Ceri Davies echoed this, saying that it had been "hugely upsetting" for staff.

40. She explained that NRW had taken a series of actions because of the incident. She said:

"We had a long consultation with our trade unions, and we're now consulting with our staff about contract changes and bringing more people onto our rotas so that we've got a bigger pool of people available to help us in all sorts of incidents—environmental, flooding, and also the ones on our land estate. That consultation is taking place right now, and we're hopeful that we'll be able to draw in more people onto our emergency response rotas so that we can respond."

41. She added that another approach involved exploring the use of "innovation and technology, remote sensing" as a tool to monitor incidents. Finally, she explained that NRW was exploring whether it could "work better with partners who may be located closer by, who could do some initial work for us that would be good enough to help us in both the damage limitation and also the follow-up".

Designation of the Clwydian range into a National Park

42. Clare Pillman said she welcomed the £3 million for the designation of the Clwydian range in the Dee valley area into a national park. She noted that this could be a very long process and

said that the most recent designation in England "took 10 years". She said NRW had worked "really hard with Welsh Government to look at how you can get a programme that goes through all the right stages within the term of Government".

43. Ceri Davies explained that "what we've costed up is what we believe will be the work we need to get us to that stage where we can make a recommendation". She explained that there would be regular assessments of progress with officials from the Welsh Government "so that we can ensure that we are sticking to the timescales and dealing with issues as quickly as we can".

Phosphorus pollution

44. Tighter phosphorus pollution targets were reported to have brought planning applications to a 'standstill' in some areas of Wales. In September 2021, the Minister for Climate Change said approximately 500 planning applications were on hold, including 620 housing units.

45. In January 2021, NRW published a report reviewing the compliance of Welsh river SACs against tightened phosphorous targets. This showed that of the nine SAC rivers in Wales, 61% of water bodies (section of river) assessed failed to meet the phosphorus target in the period from January 2017 to December 2019. Following the report, NRW updated its advice to planning authorities, requiring developments within river SAC water body catchments, and non-SAC tributaries flowing into them, to assess their potential impact on phosphorus levels. Developments that could increase phosphorus levels require a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) to determine if they will adversely affect the integrity of the river SAC.

46. NRW's Planning Position Statement states there is "no headroom" in waterbodies failing to meet the phosphate target, and any further phosphate increase "will further worsen the condition of the SAC". Waterbodies satisfying the standard had 'limited' headroom for additional phosphate.

47. For housing developments connected to existing public wastewater treatment works, NRW advises the planning authority to seek confirmation from the sewerage undertaker of capacity to treat additional phosphorus within existing discharge permit limits. If there is insufficient capacity, NRW is likely to respond to the local planning authority consultation to this effect.

48. Ceri Davies told the Committee that NRW was working with stakeholders, particularly planning authorities, in the areas of SAC rivers that were affected. She said:

"We all feel really uncomfortable about the fact that things are paused at the moment, but, as we said earlier, the important thing is that we couldn't carry

on watching this further and further decline of the river quality, and we do need to look at things differently and look at catchments differently."

49. Ceri Davies said that nutrient management boards were being established and would be a key mechanism to bring stakeholders together. She said:

"[The nutrient management boards]are looking at the catchment, they're looking at everyone who is caught up in the issue within the catchment, what the impact is on them and then what we can do collectively to ensure that we're moving the situation forward, and allowing us to move out of a situation where we're stopping all sorts of things from happening—for very good reason, but we need to get over that and we need to move on into a position where the right things are happening to remove the pollution from the system to allow for the development of affordable houses and those sorts of things."

Green Recovery

50. In 2020, NRW led a Welsh Government Green Recovery taskforce to develop ideas linking climate action with job creation and inclusive economic growth. In December 2020, the Green Recovery: Priorities for Action Report identified a range of practical actions to be taken forward in the short and medium-term. The report said taskforce members would continue working together in the Green Recovery Delivery Partnership. The group would provide "direct support" to help "drive forward" the implementation of selected proposals.

51. Sir David Henshaw told the Committee that the Group continued to meet and was in the process of drawing up its next work programme. He said this was "proving to be very effective in making things happen and actually learning an awful lot of lessons from some of the challenges that we've faced during the pandemic".

52. He said that the proposals for a National Nature Service were being worked up in more detail and a letter would be sent shortly to Ministers "seeking their support for developing the idea in line with what's been done in England and Scotland". Sir David agreed to provide a further update to the Committee in writing.

Our view

We were concerned about the pollution incident on the Llynfi river. We note the comments from NRW about actions that are being taken to ensure that this does not happen again. We would be grateful for reassurance that the baseline review and associated staffing

considerations will not lead to a weakening in capacity and, consequently, NRW's ability to respond to incidents such as these in future. We are also interested in the work it will be doing to improve its working with local partners to undertake some initial investigatory work. We would be grateful for further information on this.

On the matter of phosphorous pollution, we welcome the reassurances from NRW that meaningful consultation is taking place with stakeholders. We believe that the situation must be resolved as soon as possible. We would welcome further information in due course about the work of the nutrient management boards.

We are interested in monitoring the progress of a "green recovery" and will be undertaking a piece of work in the next 3 months on this to assess progress against the Taskforce's recommendations.

Recommendation 8. NRW should provide the Committee with an update on progress on each of the specific matters raised in Chapter 5 of this report no later than 6 months after its publication.