



Environment

Introduction

Wales' environment is a resource of cultural, social, spiritual, and economic importance. According to 'Valuing our Environment', £6 billion of GDP in Wales is directly dependent on the environment, 1 in 6 jobs is supported by the environment, and the environment contributes £1.8 billion in wages to the economy of Wales each year. Here are some further statistics:

- Carbon dioxide emissions in Wales have decreased by 3.7 per cent since 1990.
- Transport is the most rapidly growing source of emissions, and the major threat to clean air is now posed by traffic emissions.
- If present trends continue, 15 local authorities in Wales will fail to meet the 2012/13 Landfill Directive targets, resulting in fines of nearly £27 million.
- In March 2005, 70 per cent of Welsh Sites of Special Scientific Interest were in an unfavourable condition.

Current and proposed legislative competence of the Assembly

Under the *Government of Wales Act 2006*, the National Assembly for Wales can seek legislative competence through Acts of Parliament or Legislative Competence Orders (LCOs) to make a piece of law in the form of an 'Assembly Measure'. Measures can only be made in a specific policy area (or 'Matter') added to one of the 20 'Fields' (or broad subject areas) which are contained in Schedule 5 to the Act.

As "Environment" is Field 6 of Schedule 5 to the Act, the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers in this area. The Environmental Protection and Waste Management Legislative Competence Order, currently in progress, would provide wide-ranging opportunities for primary legislation to the National Assembly for Wales.

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- A Draft Marine Bill was published on 3 April 2008. The European Commission published its vision for an Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU on 10 October 2007.
- The Climate Change Bill was published on 14 November 2007.
- A White Paper on Energy was published in May 2007.
- The EU Waste Framework Directive is currently being revised.

EU Policy

The EU has wide jurisdiction over environmental matters. Fields of competence include air quality and emissions, biotechnology, chemicals, marine pollution, climate change (including emissions trading), nature and biodiversity, noise, soil, waste, and water.

- The EU has set itself the objective of halting the loss of biodiversity on its own territory by 2010.
- Under the Batteries Directive, free collection for portable batteries must be in place by September 2008. Minimum collection rates are stipulated
- An EU target for a 20 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2020, and for 20 per cent of energy generation from renewable sources by 2020, was proposed on 23 January 2008.
- On 10 January 2007, the European Commission published a Communication on a climate change strategy for Europe, with the aim of limiting climate change to 2°C above pre-industrial levels.
- The EU Regulation on the registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals was adopted in December 2006.
- The EU Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection was published on 22 September 2006.

- The EU Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution was published on 21 September 2005, with the aim of reducing the number of deaths linked to air pollution by 40 per cent by 2020.
- The European Strategy on Transport and Environment, defining the objectives for integrating environmental requirements into transport policy, was published on 6 October 1999.

Key Welsh Government strategy documents and action plans:

- The *Renewable energy Route Map for Wales* consultation document was published in February 2008ⁱⁱ.
- The One Wales agreement commits the Welsh Assembly Government to cut carbon emissions by 3 per cent year-on-year by 2011 in areas of devolved competenceⁱⁱⁱ. The Climate Change Commission for Wales provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on climate change.
- *Starting to Live Differently*^{iv} is the Welsh Assembly Government's sustainable development scheme.
- The *Environment Strategy for Wales*^v and its accompanying Action Plan^{vi} are the principal means of tackling environmental issues.
- The *National Waste Strategy for Wales* is the waste management strategy^{vii}. It is currently undergoing revision.
- The *Walking and Cycling Strategy for Wales*^{viii} was launched in 2003. *Climbing Higher*^{ix} is the Welsh strategy for sport and physical activity.

Useful links

- Wales Environment Link is an umbrella organisation for voluntary environmental and countryside NGOs in Wales: <http://www.waleslink.org/>
- The Welsh Assembly Government has a website covering environmental and countryside issues: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/?lang=en>
- The Sustainable Development Commission regularly publishes information on its specialist subject: <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/>
- Cynnal Cymru is the sustainable development forum for Wales: <http://www.cynnalcymru.org/>
- The European Commission Directorate-General of the Environment can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/environment/index_en.htm
- The BBC has a website dedicated to science and nature: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/>

Further information

Research papers are available on waste management in Wales, carbon dioxide emissions in Wales, the Climate Change Bill, the White Paper on Energy, fortnightly collections of residual domestic waste, the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Legislative Competence Order, renewable energy, and the Environment Strategy for Wales at <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-assembly-publications-economic.htm>

For further information on any aspect of the environment, please contact Gareth Clubb, Members' Research Service (Gareth.Clubb@wales.gsi.gov.uk), 029 2089 8638

ⁱ National Trust Wales, [Valuing Our Environment: Economic Impact of the National Parks of Wales](#)

ⁱⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, [Renewable energy route map for Wales: Consultation on way forward to a leaner, greener and cleaner Wales](#), February 2008

ⁱⁱⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, [One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales](#), June 2007

^{iv} Welsh Assembly Government, [Starting to Live Differently](#), March 2004

^v Welsh Assembly Government, [Environment Strategy for Wales](#), May 2006

^{vi} Welsh Assembly Government, [Environment Strategy for Wales: First Action Plan](#), May 2006

^{vii} Welsh Assembly Government, [Wise About Waste: The National Waste Strategy for Wales](#), June 2002

^{viii} Welsh Assembly Government, [Walking and Cycling](#)

^{ix} Welsh Assembly Government, [Climbing Higher: Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity](#), January 2005