

Environment

Introduction

Wales' environment is a resource of cultural, social, spiritual, and economic importance. According to 'Valuing our Environment'ⁱ, £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 increased by 2.7 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, 19 local authorities in Wales will fail to meet the 2012/13 Landfill Directive targets, resulting in fines of more than £32 million.
- ◆ In March 2005, 70 per cent of Welsh Sites of Special Scientific Interest were in an unfavourable condition.

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

"Environment" is field 6 of Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. This means that the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers over environmental matters through Legislative Competence Orders.

The following secondary legislation responsibilities of the Second Assembly will transfer to Welsh Ministers in the Third Assembly:

- ◆ Conservation and management, including marine policy, nature conservation, biodiversity, agri-environment policy, and fisheries.
- ◆ Environmental protection, including flooding, coastal risk, waste, local environmental quality, radioactivity, pollution prevention, climate change, and environmental strategy.

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- ◆ A Marine Bill White Paper was published on 15 March 2007. A European Maritime Policy is currently under consultation.
- ◆ A White Paper on Energy is expected to be published by May 2007.
- ◆ A draft Climate Change Bill was published on 13 March 2007.
- ◆ The 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 European Council of 8-9 March 2007 called for a binding target of a 20 per cent share of renewable energies in overall EU energy consumption by 2020ⁱⁱ. From the overall renewables target, differentiated national overall targets will be derived.
- ◆ The EU Regulation on the registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals was adopted in December 2006.
- ◆ The EU has set itself the objective of halting the loss of biodiversity on its own territory by 2010.
- ◆ The second European Climate Change Programme was launched in October 2005.
- ◆ Under the Batteries Directive, free collection for portable batteries must be in place by September 2008. Minimum collection rates are stipulated.

Key Assembly Government strategy documents and action plans from the Second Assembly:

- ◆ The Environment Strategy for Walesⁱⁱⁱ and its accompanying Action Plan^{iv} are the principal means of tackling environmental issues.
- ◆ Starting to Live Differently^v is the sustainable development scheme of the National Assembly for Wales. It is accompanied by a Sustainable Development Action Plan^{vi}.
- ◆ A consultation closed on 27 April about a climate change adaptation action plan for Wales^{vii}.
- ◆ The National Waste Strategy for Wales is the waste management strategy^{viii}.
- ◆ The Walking and Cycling Strategy for Wales^{ix} was launched in 2003. Climbing Higher^x is the Welsh strategy for sport and physical activity.

Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

The Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee's legacy paper highlighted the following environmental issues for the attention of the Third Assembly:

- ◆ The Environment Strategy for Wales
- ◆ Waste management
- ◆ Biocrops and biofuels
- ◆ Food and market development
- ◆ The Marine Bill and the Climate Change Bill

Useful links

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

Further information

Research papers are available on waste management, climate change, renewable energy, and the Environment Strategy for Wales at <http://assembly/presidingoffice/mrs/briefings/environment-planning-e.htm>

For further information on any aspect of the environment, please contact:

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ⁱ National Trust Wales, *Valuing Our Environment: Economic Impact of the National Parks of Wales*, http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/voe_national_parks_summary_english.pdf

ⁱⁱ European Council, *Conclusions of the Presidency*, 8-9 March 2007, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=DOC/07/1&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

ⁱⁱⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, May 2006, *Environment Strategy for Wales*, http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epg/Environment_strategy_for_wales/About_the_strategy/?lang=en

^{iv} Welsh Assembly Government, *Environment Strategy for Wales: First Action Plan*, http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepros/40382/4038231121/118554/Env_strat_rewrite/Action_Plan_e.pdf?lang=en

^v Welsh Assembly Government, *Starting to Live Differently*, <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/strategypublications/935748/?lang=en>

^{vi} Welsh Assembly Government, *The Sustainable Development Action Plan: 2004-2007*, http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable_development_publicat/sdactionplan?lang=en

^{vii} Welsh Assembly Government, *Responding to our Changing Climate: Consultation on a Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan for Wales*, <http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultation/662235/1502-270407/climatechange?lang=en>

^{viii} Welsh Assembly Government, June 2002, *Wise About Waste: The National Waste Strategy for Wales*, <http://www.countryside.wales.gov.uk/fe/master.asp?n1=366&n2=213&n3=368>

^{ix} Welsh Assembly Government, *Walking and Cycling*, <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/IntegratedTransport/walkingcycling/?lang=en#>

^x Welsh Assembly Government, January 2005, *Climbing Higher: Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity*, http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/departments/dlqc/localgovculturepubs/cwispublishings/climbing_higher?lang=en