

Landscape & Biodiversity Champion Report

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority AGM, 28 June 2019

1. Brexit and our land - Meetings with CLA and Welsh Government

On 9 August 2018, Cllr Durrant and I met with Peter McDonald (Deputy Director Land Reform) and Jon Westlake (Head of Policy) to discuss the Welsh Government's '*Brexit and our land*' consultation, to which responses were requested by 30 October. The three Wales National Parks submitted a joint response with BBNPA input led by Paul Sinnadurai.

On 12 April 2019, I led an upland 'walk and talk' on the Cwmdu ridge (Black Mountains SSSI) with Peter McDonald, WG officials, the CEO and Delivery Director. The outcome of our discussions was an invitation to submit proposals for post-Brexit land management support pilot scheme(s) in BBNP – this work is being led by the Delivery Director and will be shared as a thought piece with WG in July.

On 4 June 2019, Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, made an oral statement and published a written Ministerial statement with a summary of responses to the *Brexit and our land* consultation, the WG policy response and an evidence pack – '*Agriculture in Wales*'.

- The summary of responses can be found here: <https://gov.wales/support-welsh-farming-after-brexit>
- The Welsh Government's policy response can be found here: <https://gov.wales/brexit-and-our-land-our-response>
- The evidence pack can be found here: <https://gov.wales/agriculture-wales>

2. Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP)

On 4 September 2018, I met with Officers to discuss the final draft NRAP text ahead of a meeting with the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) on 18 October, when partners agreed the draft Plan.

Members enjoyed an opportunity to discuss the successful development and completion of the draft NRAP, and explore what it means in practice, during a Member Development day at Pwll-y-Wrach SSSI near Talgarth on 29 March 2019. The April 2019 NPA meeting agreed to adopt the NRAP and it will be published with a launch event at the Royal Welsh Show

The LNP met at Plas y Ffynnon on 13 June to discuss plans to communicate with wider stakeholders, develop projects and submit applications for additional funding for NRAP delivery over the coming months.

3. Meithrin Mynydd and Mynydd Du

I attended the Meithrin Mynedd Advisory Group meetings on 14 November 2018, 28 March (an extraordinary meeting organised by Cllr Roderick with the Chief Vet) and 15 May 2019. Encouraging progress has been made in discussions with commons graziers working towards an integrated herd health and upland grazing management plan. A further meeting with the graziers has been arranged for 26 June to discuss the possibility of developing an agri-environment scheme/package for Mynydd Du.

4. Reflections on SoPR14, indicators and reporting

At request of the CEO, I wrote a critique of SoPR14 on 31 August 2018 detailing concerns with regard to lack of clear baselines, choice and relevance of indicators, use and analysis of evidence, and conclusions of 'Good' status which are not supported by best available evidence. I provided further advice on 'shifting baselines' and proposals for a revised suite of indicators for SoPR19 on 29 September 2018. Officers agreed at the June 2019 Policy Forum that some data analysis in SoPR14 was flawed.

5. Upland management and Glastir in BBNP

At request of the Authority's Chair, I wrote a discussion paper on '*Upland management and Glastir in BBNP*' and gave an evidence-rich presentation to the February 2019 Policy Forum (which was well received by many Members as eye-opening); followed by a presentation by Ann Humble on WG's post-Brexit scenarios for land management.

6. Use of evidence in policy and decision-making

Use of best available evidence and sound data analysis have been recurring themes of my internal advocacy and advice throughout 2018/19. The April 2019 NPA meeting agreed that Officers should produce an Evidence Protocol as part of the revised Code of Governance – this work is being led by the Delivery Director and Systems & Performance Manager.

7. Input to LDP review

I have provided comments and advice to Officers on the Sustainability Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), and various iterations of the draft LDP review to ensure appropriate policy reference to climate change and biodiversity. The June 2019 Policy Forum agreed to remedy absence of systemic application of HRA and Appropriate Assessment to all of the Authority's plans, programmes and projects; and shortfalls in LDP monitoring with regard to in-combination and cumulative effects.

8. Forward look

Initial discussions have been held with the Democratic Services Manager about further Member Development days to learn more about the NRAP proposed actions.

We propose a focus on uplands, native broadleaved woodlands, and possibly to look at land use change and diffuse pollution with the Wye & Usk Foundation in the Afon Tarrell/Nant Cwm-Llynch/Nant Gwidi catchment near Brecon.

James Marsden
Landscape & Biodiversity Champion
17 June 2019