

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate Change,
Environment and Rural Affairs Committee
Ymchwiliad i bolisi coedwigaeth a choetiroedd yng Nghymru | Inquiry into Forestry
and woodland policy in Wales

FWP 30

Ymateb gan : Cymdeithas Hosteli Ieuencid Cymru a Lloegr (YHA)
Evidence from : Youth Hostels Association England and Wales (YHA)

Introduction to YHA

The Youth Hostel Association is a charity that ‘to help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, and an appreciation of the cultural values of towns and cities, particularly by providing Youth Hostels or other accommodation for them in their travels, and thus to promote their health recreation and enjoyment’

Further details are at www.yha.org.uk

YHA belongs to the International Federation of Youth Hostels IYHF which has over 100 member organisations.

YHA has 28 Youth Hostels in Wales with many located in the three Welsh National Parks. The only city hostel is in Cardiff with the remainder located in rural Wales. These hostels have a total of over 1,400 beds and accommodate over 150,000 visitor overnights each year. YHA is one of the largest providers of low cost accommodation in Wales. The accommodation is provided for school and youth parties, families, overseas visitors and individuals. Some hostels have specialist facilities for the disabled and most provide family accommodation

YHA makes a significant contribution to the rural economy in Wales by attracting visitors of all ages, but especially the young, from all parts of the world, by providing local employment, supporting local visitor attractions and businesses. YHA has partnerships with other organisations to provide activity and educational experiences.

Introduction

The need for action to protect woodlands and trees and to create and plant more of trees has never been greater. By investing in woodlands, Wales will secure multiple environmental benefits and in doing so will also secure the social and economic benefits that woodlands bring through the creation of jobs, reducing imports and providing locations for a variety of recreational activities including walking and cycling.

YHA has consistently replied to consultations with regard to forestry policy in both England and Wales. YHA has established Youth Hostels in and near to major forests

including the National Forest and New Forest. YHA has since its inception over 80 years ago recognised the value of forests for recreation and education

YHA welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

YHA is content that the Government retains its forestry estate which covers 6% of the Welsh land area.

Responding to Climate Change

YHA considers that young people and others should be made fully aware of the impacts of climate change and the influence of climate change on the nation's forests.

Welsh Government should incentivise appropriate and well planned planting that delivers net Green House Gas emission reductions, flood alleviation and improved water management. There is a need to protect, restore and enhance ecosystems by reversing the trend of loss and degradation of trees and woodland, and thus achieve a resilient and diverse tree cover across Wales.

Grant support for woodland creation should be increased, including the expansion of deciduous and native woodlands in both urban and rural areas, as well as natural regeneration and tree planting to support biodiversity

Woodlands for People

Welsh woodlands are now an international attraction with world renown cycle trails and recreational activities which improves the economy of the areas in which these activities take place including former coal field areas.

Welsh Government should continue to provide open access to its forests for walking except where temporary closures are required for safety or conservation purposes. Welsh Government should ensure that private woodlands maintain public rights of way to a high standard when present and encourage improved or open access when providing grants including Glastir or its future equivalent.

Good public access to forests is required by public transport and the provision of car parks at suitable locations adjacent to or within forest and woodland areas is essential. Opportunities for cycling and horse riding should be provided where conditions are suitable

The provision of educational / interpretive centres should be maintained and expanded. Formal and informal educational courses should be provided. Nature walks should be encouraged. In some locations especially at car parks and at public transport access points information boards should be provided. These centres should increase public awareness of woodland biodiversity and conservation including tree planting and woodland education in the National curriculum. Some centres have recently moved from

public to private or trust ownership and every effort must be made to prevent centres from closing

The Woodlands for Wales Strategy including urban tree planting should be integrated with future Local Well-being Plans and Area Statements.

There should be continued or enhanced funding to increase the number of community woodland groups (such as those within the Llais y Goedwig network). There must be opportunities for people to increase their experience of woodland wildlife, to get involved in using and managing woodland and in biodiversity conservation, and to benefit physically and psychologically by doing so.

Welsh Government should develop a new overarching Sustainable Land Management policy for Wales, which combines agriculture, forestry and the environment, recreation and access. The policy should increase public awareness of and involvement with woodland biodiversity and conservation, including tree planting and woodland education in the National Curriculum.

Historical forests should be well conserved and the community woodland sector should be developed to give improved local access for the communities which they serve.

There must not be an assumption that government owned forests should all be developed for wind energy. There is a need for areas of tranquillity for biodiversity and recreations. Areas of high landscape values including those in National Parks should remain undisturbed by new developments

A competitive and integrated forest sector

The Government should revise forestry regulations in Wales based on the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty.

The Government should fully evaluate the effects of tree planting (including those as part of the Welsh Government's 100,000 ha woodland creation target) to maximise benefits and avoid negative impacts.

There is a need to achieve a resilient and diverse tree cover across Wales. There must be no adverse impacts of coniferous forestry upon the Welsh environment.

Environmental quality

The Government should combine agriculture, forestry, access, education and the environment including high value landscapes into a fully integrated sustainable land management policy.

The importance of views of the countryside from roads, footpaths and hilltops should not be underestimated and selective felling should take place where these are compromised.

Environmental quality requires adequate maintenance of forests and high quality restoration after felling. The scars of premature larch felling remain in Wales.

Increased use of rail transport is needed to remove the convoy of lorries which is transporting timber along Welsh roads.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The State of the Natural Resources of the Nation Report underlines the role of woods and trees in delivering the goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The Woodlands for Wales Action Plan clearly sets out how each of the areas of priority action, particularly supporting native woodland creation and management, deliver against all the Well-being goals. The need to plant urban trees and provide community woodlands should be integral to the development of the Local Well-being Plans.