

Cwmpas Response to the Senedd Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry on Halting and Reversing the loss of Nature by 2030.

- The effectiveness of current policies / funds / statutory duties in halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030;

We draw on the 2023 WWF Cymru State of Nature¹ report and it is extremely worrying that they claim that "Wales is now one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth" and that "it is clear that despite some progress to restore ecosystems, save species and move towards nature-friendly land and sea use, Wales' biodiversity and wider environment continues to decline and degrade".

- New approaches needed to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

To reverse the trend of decline of nature in Wales, we need to fundamentally transform how we manage our communities and how our economy works. We cannot chase growth and profit for its own sake at the cost of depleting vital green spaces and harming our environment, but we must look to create sustainable local economies that prioritise the well-being of communities and the planet.

The WWF State of Nature report says "work to restore nature needs to happen at the same time as work to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, both must be done while meeting people's needs for food, raw materials, energy and access to nature. Simultaneous delivery of these multiple goals is not straightforward, but international expert bodies have emphasised the need to ensure that nature and climate goals are pursued in concert, requiring a thorough understanding of the synergies and risks associated with different actions."

Social enterprises and community-owned enterprises are a proven way of doing this. When they have ownership of key spaces they create better outcomes for local people and the planet.² The triple-bottom line embedded in their business models mean impact on the natural environment is at the heart of what they do as they regenerate and strengthen local economies and create high-quality jobs. Across Wales, social enterprises are leading the way:

Bryngarw Country Park is managed by **Awen Cultural Trust**, which was established in 2015 as a registered charity with a wholly-owned trading subsidiary, Awen Trading. Their commitment to biodiversity is clear:

¹ <https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP26053-SoN-Wales-summary-report-v10.pdf>

² <https://cwmpas.coop/mapping-the-sector-2022/>

Bryngarw is not just a fabulous visitor attraction; it's also a hugely important natural resource that is sensitively managed in order to protect and promote its biodiversity. The rangers are assisted in the conservation of the park's habitats by a dedicated team of volunteers.

At the other end of the country, **Groundwork North Wales** supports people facing multiple challenges, living in isolation, with significant health issues, limited employment prospects and who are vulnerable to the economic and environmental uncertainty of today's society. We do this by creating better places, improving people's prospects and by promoting greener choices through our diverse range of projects and services.

Building upon recent renovations and events programmes at Minera Lead Mines heritage and interpretation centre, the Making More of Minera Country Park project has provided opportunities for local people to get involved in volunteering to maintain the site's habitats for wildlife. This has been complemented by an education programme and seasonal events. The education programme is specific to Minera, providing opportunities for children from local schools to learn about the built and natural heritage of the site, and to value it for future generations.

Volunteers have improved the country park through woodland and grassland management, path maintenance, improving and creating garden areas, and maintaining open viewing areas for visitors to enjoy the heritage features. In the latter half of 2022/23, the project has engaged 5 regular weekly volunteers, planted 20 trees, and benefitted 4,500 local people by improving 5,000m² of green space.

These case studies demonstrate that social enterprises and community-led groups embed have the trust and networks to bring people and communities into the mission of reversing nature loss and nature restoration. We need this to happen in communities across Wales, and facilitating this being done in a community-led way will lead to greater awareness of the issue, community buy-in to the solutions, and will maximise positive impact on well-being.

In addition, supporting the development of the social enterprise model across different sectors will lead to an economy that has sustainability and nature at its heart. There are countless examples of innovative social enterprises across Wales producing social and economic value while ensuring environmental sustainability and nature-friendly practises.

Creating Enterprise won the Social Enterprise Innovation of the Year Awards at the 2023 Social Business Wales Awards – they are an award-winning building and maintenance contractor based in North Wales with plans to build energy efficient, carbon-zero homes whilst employing the people supported by Cartrefi Conwy. On top of their work leading the way on creating a sustainable construction industry, they engage the local community with nature by conducting family nature walks in the local area.

Câr-Y-Môr is a pioneering project that exemplifies the potential of the CBS model. It was established in 2019 as a community benefit society operating a Regenerative Ocean Farm, growing seaweed and shellfish and is based at Clegyr Uchaf, St Davids, Pembrokeshire. Two trial farms are located just off the coast near St Davids, at Porthlysgi and Carnarwig.

It is the first commercial seaweed and shellfish farm in Wales. They have two main aims:

- To improve the coastal environment through regenerative ocean farming, and;
- To improve the wellbeing of the local community through job creation, supply of fresh local seafood, and environmental restoration.

They are already making a huge impact. Câr-y-Môr was named as the Social Enterprise of the Year at the Social Business Wales Awards 2023, after the judges were impressed with its commitment to making a positive impact on the Welsh coastline and the local community, and their innovative approach to running a business that puts people and community at its core.

It is clear that social enterprise can play a vital role in protecting and revitalising nature, engaging communities in finding and implementing the solutions needed to do this, and transforming the wider economy to be more sustainable and nature-friendly. Here are our recommendations for the Welsh Government to ensure this grows even further in Wales:

- Make social enterprise and community ownership the business model of choice in Wales as a central part of the mission to secure a just transition to a sustainable and nature-friendly economy.
- Promote the community ownership of land and spaces for nature and facilitate this through legislation, learning from experiences in England and Scotland, as well as providing and expanding accessible finance for the whole start-up process and providing specialist support from ideation to ownership and management
- Expand specialist support to social enterprises to grow and maximise their impact across different sectors – whether to expand into providing services related to the renewal of nature or embedding sustainable practises across economic sectors
- Embed a well-being economy approach across economic development policy, ensuring that the well-being of people and planet is at the heart of the economic agenda. Responsibility for halting the nature emergency and creating an environmentally-sustainable economy lies with all government departments, and the Welsh Government and public bodies should be mandated to pro-actively explore how it can play a key role as anchor institutions in the mission of transforming our local and national economies.