



Cymru Can Newsletter: Climate and Nature



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Cymru can save our water

Water keeps us alive.

But our water quality is still not good enough and people across Wales know it.

I began my [first month as Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#) making the challenge for urgent action to protect our rivers.

There has been some positive action to stop the pollution to our water.

- After my intervention, Welsh Government expanded on its previous Rivers Summits, now renamed Water Summits, to focus on reducing **all** sources of pollutants, not just phosphates, and include **all** Welsh rivers, not just those in a protected area.
- The percentage of farmers who are non-compliant with the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations has fallen dramatically.
- The [Usk Catchment Partnership](#) is restoring the River Usk through a collaborative whole-catchment approach and appointment of a Nature Guardian that puts the voice of nature at the heart of decision-making.

- In February 2026, the [Deputy First Minister will publish a Green Paper](#) on the future of water governance in Wales.



But as Natural Resources Wales' [2025 State of Natural Resources Report \(SoNaRR\)](#) reveals, our water quality is still not good enough.

- Only 40% of water bodies achieve good status.
- Salmon are expected to disappear completely from some rivers by 2030.
- Dŵr Cymru recorded the highest number of sewage pollution incidents in 10 years.

Future generations have the right to clean water.

That's why, the next Welsh Government that comes into office in May **must ensure water quality is at the top of their agenda.**

In my [Future Generations Report 2025](#), I urged for Natural Resources Wales to be given the same regulatory powers as its English counterpart, including the authority to issue civil sanctions such as stop orders and fines for polluting activities.

I also recommended that Welsh Government invest more in collaborative working between water companies, local authorities, farming representatives, and regulators like Natural Resources Wales through nutrient management boards and coastal and river forums.

It's going to take everyone working together, a collective movement of urgent action, if we are going to save our water.

And I am making that clear when I meet the new leaders of Dŵr Cymru, Natural Resources Wales and NFU Cymru, organisations that play an important role in this, soon.

Saving our rivers and seas is a life and death issue. We cannot fail.



State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) 2025

Wales should be proud of its ancient woodlands, carbon sink peat bogs and diverse marine habitats.

But our environment is at a critical tipping point, and the consequences are already hitting hard: floods in our towns, heat-related illnesses, polluted rivers, declining birdsong, and rising food prices.

Natural Resources Wales' [2025 State of Natural Resources Report \(SoNaRR\)](#) reveals that in Wales, almost one in five species now faces extinction, only 40% of water bodies achieve good status, and ecosystem resilience is low across the country.

So what can we do about it?

The '[Bridges to the Future](#)' chapter includes a roadmap for the systemic change Wales needs and closely aligns with the recommendations made in our [Future Generations Report 2025](#).



It offers practical ways to turn SoNaRR's evidence into action, to close the gap between policy and everyday life:

1. Redesign everyday systems - food, energy, travel and the built environment

2. Restore nature as essential infrastructure
3. Build a regenerative economy
4. Realign governance for the long term
5. Deliver a fair transition

Speaking at the SoNaRR launch, I called for public bodies to **accelerate how we use nature as one of our most powerful allies** in creating better lives for all of us by preventing flooding, reducing pollution and protecting our health.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act has given us a way to deal with the problems made plain in this report.

But without urgent, coordinated action across the public sector to halt and reverse the dangerous decline of our environment, we are quite literally putting lives at risk unnecessarily.

From budget planning and what we buy, to land management and how we look after our buildings; everyone in every public service needs to play a role in unlocking the power of nature.

Read [SoNaRR](#) and the [Bridges to the Future chapter](#).

A new law to protect nature

The [Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets \(Wales\) Bill](#) is one step closer to being made law. [Stage 3](#) will start on 10 February with the aim that the legislation will be passed by the Senedd and receive Royal Assent within the current term of Government.

The new law was needed to address the post-Brexit governance gap, ensuring an independent watchdog - the [Office for Environmental Governance Wales \(OEGW\)](#) - **holds public bodies to account, enshrines legal environmental principles in policy, and sets binding biodiversity targets to combat the nature emergency.**

Wales is the last of the four UK nations to bring this forward.

We have given advice and evidence that strengthens the proposed Bill by:

- Aligning the legislation with the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- Setting urgent, long-term nature targets
- Ensuring the new environmental governance body has full independence and adequate funding to tackle the biodiversity crisis

Most duties will fall on Welsh Ministers and Natural Resources Wales, but public bodies and water companies will also need to apply the new environmental principles in policy and plans that has, or could have, an effect on the environment.

For more information on the Bill and its progress, [visit the Senedd Cymru website](#).



Managing estates with tomorrow in mind

The role of asset and estate managers across public bodies is crucial for achieving Wales' climate and nature targets.

In the [Future Generations Report 2025](#), we called on public bodies to embed decarbonisation, climate resilience, and nature recovery in how they manage their buildings, tenant farms, parks, roadside verges and other land assets.

Whether it's installing renewable energy on leisure centers, growing vegetables for schools on county farms, spraying less pesticides, or restoring nature to prevent pollution and flooding; there are lots of things that public body estate and asset managers can do.





1 - National Library of Wales

- Swansea Council and Natural Resources Wales are [turning Swansea into a 'sponge city'](#) by using nature to soak up flood waters in the city centre while improving health and biodiversity.
- Pembrokeshire Council has worked with [Egni Co-op](#) to [install solar panels on 20 local schools and leisure centers](#) saving them £180k in energy costs and improving children's eco-literacy.
- Carmarthenshire County Council is [growing Welsh food for local children and care homes on one of its county farms, Bremenda Isaf Farm](#) - supporting Welsh agriculture, reducing carbon emissions and increasing access to local, sustainable food.
- In its aim to become net zero by 2030, the [National Library of Wales is now the largest EV charging hub in Wales](#) and has worked with local trades and businesses to install solar panels on the Grade 2 listed building.



What we're doing

- Our team have analysed 32 asset plans from local authorities, health boards and national bodies. We've found that decarbonisation is becoming better embedded, but adaptation and nature recovery are still not a core consideration or priority.
- We're working with [Ystadau Cymru](#), the national network for public sector estate and asset managers, to challenge and support asset managers in understanding their important role in acting on climate change.
- We have also worked with Dr. Alan Netherwood on how public bodies should build climate and nature resilience into land management including:
 - Adopting a whole organisation approach and progressive approaches to achieve climate resilience and nature recovery
 - Improving nature recovery through farming and rural development
 - Nutrient management and achieving land carbon outcomes

Keep an eye out for the publication of this work in March 2026.

From protecting the peatland that absorbs carbon, to building natural flood management and powering up community energy, our shared estate must be a powerful lever for system-wide change.



Parisians say ‘yes’ to greener city

In a landmark referendum, Parisians voted **‘yes’ to creating a ville jardin** (garden city) and continue its current urban greening work to increase climate adaptation, reduce pollution and improve people’s well-being.

From pedestrianising 500 more streets and removing 10,000 parking spaces, to planting more than 500,000 trees, creating 145 hectares of green walls and roofs, and maintaining wetlands, Paris is beautifying its city while increasing biodiversity, preventing flooding and making streets safer.

Alongside The Wildlife Trusts, Helen Nelson, our Director for Climate and Nature, met with the [Deputy Mayor of Paris, Dr Luke Bashford](#) (Newcastle University) and [Dr William Bird](#) (Intelligent Health) to discuss Paris’ urban greening, the value of nature to people’s health and how Wales can implement similar schemes.

Swansea Council has already begun its journey of putting nature at the heart of infrastructure and with support from Natural Resources Wales and Urban Foundry, has built [the largest green roof in Wales on Swansea Arena](#).

Keep an eye out on 19 March 2026 for a Wales-wide symposium, to be followed by a European wide conference at Swansea Arena.



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The Nature Service – Join the movement

Wales can create thousands of local nature-based jobs through large-scale restoration, but [we are lacking the skills and capacity needed](#) to support these careers and deliver the system change needed to save our environment.

Working with young people to identify the barriers to pursuing nature-based careers, [The Nature Service](#) found that it wasn't lack of interest or motivation, it was that opportunities for nature-based education, training and careers are largely invisible.

So the Nature Service is bringing together training partners who are already doing great work, to build a movement of learning and working in service of nature.

With a new website and national directory planned for 2026, and a research partnership with the Open University to support young people's participation and progression, they will help people find the opportunities to make a difference.

Other sectors have long understood the need to invest in skills pipelines. Nature restoration should be no different.

To join the growing movement in service of nature, get in touch with Daniel Lock, Director of The Nature Service via Daniel.lock@ffcc.co.uk.



Join our Culture Forum

Join our Culture Forum on 25 February 2026 for:

- A new research report for the development of a Culture Bill
- Launch of our Freelancers Guidance for Public Bodies
- Insights from public bodies and the cultural sector on priorities for 2026

[Register to join the Forum.](#)

We have a small fund available to support the participation of freelancers. Contact jacob.ellis@futuregenerations.wales for more information.



Contact us

Want to catch up on previous issues of the newsletter? You can find them on our website [here](#).

For more information get in contact here:

futuregenerations.wales

contactus@futuregenerations.wales

[@futuregencymru](#)

