

**REPORT TO:**

Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board

DATE: 28/02/202**LEAD OFFICER & ORGANISATION:**

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SUBJECT: Update on Area Statements**1. WHAT IS THE REPORT ABOUT**

- 1.1 An Update on Natural Resources Wales' work on Area Statements in North Wales

2. WHAT IS THE REASON FOR MAKING THIS REPORT?

To provide members with an update about the ways of working and raise awareness of the type of opportunities developing in advance of the publication of the North West and North East Area Statements at the end of March 2020.

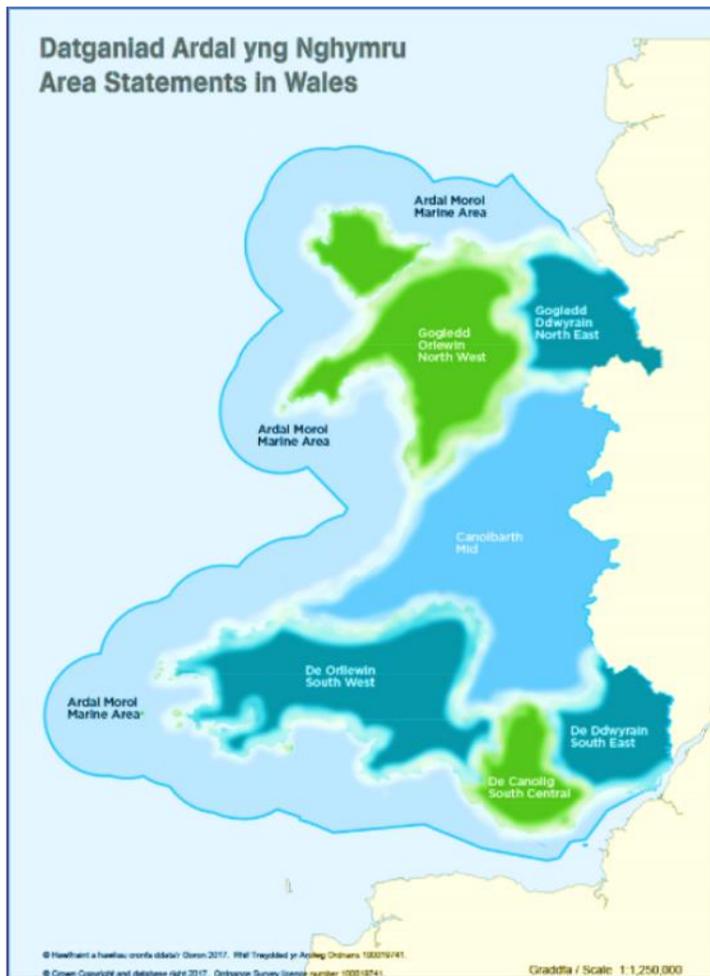
3. WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Note the Themes/Priorities and publication deadlines
- 3.2 Note the iterative nature of the Area Statements
- 3.3 Understand that publication is the start of developing collaborative opportunities within the Priorities and the Place, as well as developing shared a shared evidence base
- 3.4 Encourage attendance at next events (during May).

4. REPORT DETAILS

Area Statements are a product of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It is NRW's responsibility to produce area statements, but they are owned by everyone and they will also feed into the next PSB wellbeing assessments.

There are seven Area Statements across Wales. Denbighshire is within the North East Wales Area Statement and Conwy is within the North West Wales Area Statement. It is important that Area Statements for adjoining places, including the marine Area Statement, will work closely together where communities and issues are similar or overlap.



Co-production principles are at the heart of every decision made to arrive at the themes/priorities in the Area Statements. NRW have facilitated 15 workshops across North Wales, engaged more than 500 stakeholders often in different locations and venues, using different techniques. This is in addition to attending various established groups such as Local Access Forums, Farming Union Meetings, Snowdonia National Park Board.

The starting point for the statement themes (priorities) were:

- a) The priorities set in Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy - delivering nature-based solutions, increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency and taking a place-based approach. The challenges set within the policy were also used.
- b) Information from the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) on ecosystems and their resilience, and the risks to the benefits they provide.
- c) The Wellbeing Assessments and Plans, and the priorities that are emerging through the Public Service Boards.

These priorities were discussed and validated, short term and long term visions were developed and together we started looking at steps to achieving them.

Below are updates from the developing North West and North East Area Statements.

4.1 North West Wales Area Statement – covers the area of Conwy, Gwynedd and Ynys Môn

North West Wales – Themes [October 2019]



Two cross cutting themes were identified by our stakeholders during the development of the Area Statement which were **Ways of Working** and **Climate and Environment Emergency**.

Ways of Working

This is at the heart of how we deliver the Area Statement is how we work with our stakeholders so that everyone can contribute and deliver the Area Statement.

Example opportunities

- Ensuring all have a chance to contribute to the process.
- Need appreciation of each partner's aspirations and respect for them, mutual support and acknowledgement of contribution.
- Support a better understanding of co-production.

Climate and Environment Emergency

This is a complex issue that effects everyone and every service, we need to do more in the area than making empty symbolic gestures, and that is why the North West Area Statement has Climate & Environment Emergency as a cross cutting theme and at the core of our decision-making process.

Example opportunities

- Working collaboratively across North Wales to share this huge cross cutting agenda, and put the people of North Wales in the heart and forefront of the decisions made
- Actions to reduce water demand and encourage its efficient use, as there will be likely competition for water between households, agriculture, industry and the needs of the natural environment.
- Managed realignment may also be the favoured option in areas of low public exposure to risk.
- Improving the management of forests and peatlands so that they store more carbon.
- Encourage natural flood management techniques, such as restoring a degraded peatland, tree planting in the uplands and reinstating hedgerows.

Supporting Sustainable Land Management

To manage the air, land and water of North West Wales in a sustainable way so that it can support all life in the area. This is an opportunity to embark on an integrated approach to how we manage our most important and irreplaceable resource - our land and the water that flows off it, into our rivers and sea.

Example opportunities

- Working with Nature-Based Solutions from source to sea, to restore and emulate the natural functions of catchments, floodplains, rivers in North West Wales.
- Work collaboratively in groups and build knowledge and skills and deliver shared outcomes especially where ecosystems overlap farm holdings; such as common land and catchments.
- The importance of working at the local level; to avoid “one size fits all” approaches to allow for distinctive differences in farming.
- NRW needs to be an exemplary organisation in how we go about our day-to-day activities in managing our land and assets.
- Continued and improved management of water resources and related infrastructure, ensuring that abstractions and releases are operated in the most sustainable way.

Opportunities for Resilient Ecosystems

This theme includes ensuring that we work together to improve ecosystem resilience in the area. We need to reverse the decline, and act to enrich biodiversity. This theme links closely with Vital Nature, our strategic steer for Biodiversity.

Example opportunities

- The need for better biodiversity of woodlands, expanding woodland corridors and broader list of trees for planting.
- Conservation of priority habitats were identified by stakeholders as: West Atlantic woodlands, blanket bog, coastal heath, upland dry heath, ffridd, upland and coastal grazed species rich pasture.
- Actions to halt biodiversity loss, and ensure more, bigger, better wildlife habitats including wider and more resilient coastal habitats.

- Ensure protected sites network in favourable condition/ Reviewing and potentially expanding the protected sites network.
- Take appropriate action to prevent spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), pests and diseases.

Encouraging a Sustainable Economy

This theme promotes working together to identify sustainable economic opportunities that enhance the natural resources unique to North West Wales.

Example opportunities

- Understand the role of agriculture and other rural enterprises in underpinning the rural economy.
- Work with existing forums and networks to support the rural economy agenda.
- Create a vision and implement a sustainable tourism plan for North West Wales.
- Creatively connecting tourism businesses with their local environment, including interpretation, education and volunteering opportunities that encourage greater understanding of the natural environment / local landscape.
- Encouraging a local circular economy, connecting people with locally sourced timber, food and products through branding of local quality produce.

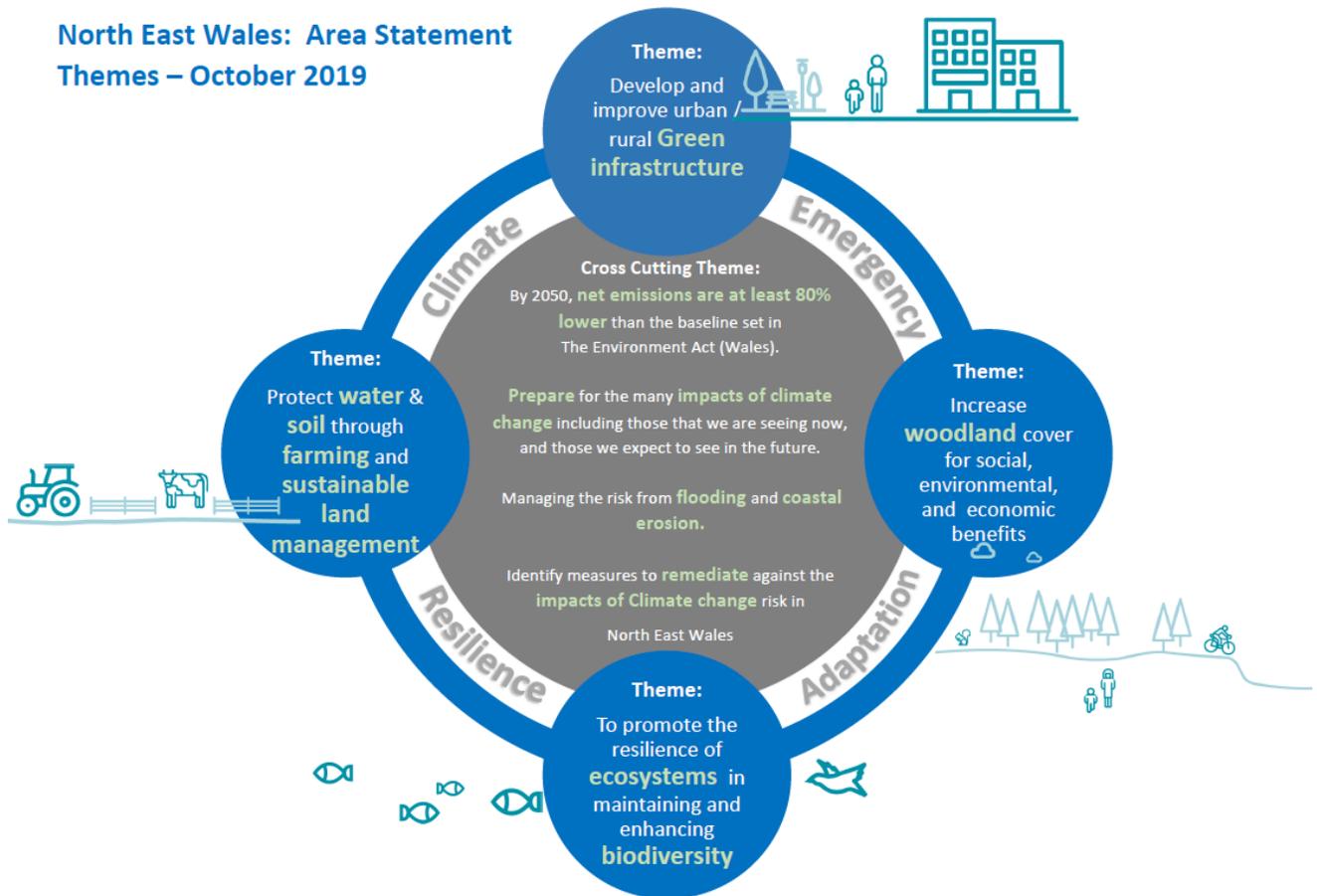
Reconnecting People with Nature.

Creating new opportunities to access the countryside so that communities can understand, engage and influence the creative use of the local natural environment.

Example opportunities

- People value what they understand - by reconnecting people with their local natural environment, they will gain a better understanding of the important role their local environment plays in their lives.
- Creatively reconnecting people with their local environment to improve their physical and mental health.
- Creatively connecting people to their surrounding and immediate environment through integration into everyday life.
- Increased community participation and better access to land managed by NRW and partners.

4.2 **North East Wales Area Statement** – covers the area of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham



The ambition for each theme and some of the opportunities emerging from North East Area Statement workshops so far are described below.

Climate & Environment Emergency – Resilience & Adaptation

We live in a North East Wales where we respond to Climate Emergency, and our built and natural landscapes, supporting infrastructure, economy and society are climate ready, adaptable and resilient to climate change.

- Regional approach to Climate Emergency
- Flood Risk Management
- Community Renewable Energy Scheme
- Regional carbon credit / offsetting scheme
- Improvement of public transport and the electrification of public infrastructure

Develop and improve urban / rural Green infrastructure in North East Wales

In North East Wales we have greener more inviting urban areas providing multiple benefits and supporting people in leading healthier more active lifestyles. Nature based solutions deliver a wide range of environmental and health and wellbeing benefits for our communities.

- Maintain, enhance and create riparian zones
- Better management of roadside verges for wildlife
- Increase Urban Tree Canopy
- Improve opportunities for community growing
- Sustainable drainage schemes
- Every NE Wales school to be linked with a green space and have 'ownership' over that area.

Increase woodland cover for social, environment, and economic benefits

NE Wales will be known for its high-quality woodlands. New woodland creation will reflect landscape character and local culture whilst delivering the wealth of environmental, economic, and social benefits woodlands and forests have to offer.

- Creation of a NE Wales woodland hub.
- Existing evidence like i-tree will be used to identify where urban tree canopy can be increased for the benefit of the environment and communities
- Welsh National Forest and links with the Mersey Forest
- Slowing the flow - Trees as a flood protection measure

Protect soil and water through farming and sustainable land management

A sustainable, resilient agricultural food and land management system which supports livelihoods, protects soil and water, maintains and enhances biodiversity, whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions and significantly contributes to public good.

- Post Brexit Agri Environment Scheme
- Farm Clusters
- Farming Connect and the importance of skill transfer
- Development a local food economy
- Catchment Nutrient Management Planning
- Incorporation of trees into the farm business

To promote the resilience of ecosystems in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity

We live in a vibrant and biodiverse North East Wales where we reverse the decline in biodiversity, and key species and habitats are valued and understood by its communities.

- The creation [or extension] of Strategic partnerships of stakeholders to advise on the management of biodiversity in NE Wales

- NRW will assess how flood risk management and other assets can be maintained to enhance biodiversity in all our operational activities
- The management of Invasive Non-Native Species [INNs]
- Increase resilience by connecting protected sites through local green infrastructure
- Improve hedgerows and opportunities for farmland trees
- Habitat management to reduce the risk of wildfires.

4.3 Next Steps

The webpages will go live on the NRW website at the end of March but note that this is just the next stage and that Area Statements will continue to develop as we work together, learn more about the priorities and what people can deliver. They are adaptive and need to be continually revised and improved as we deliver, build more evidence, reflect and learn and expand our skills and knowledge.

Workshops are planned in May where we will be looking at all the opportunities under each theme. It will be a chance for our stakeholders to review where we have come from, prioritise the opportunities and plan out detail use a Logic Model to plan out detail under each emerging area of work.