

Ecosystem services: The programme map for Wales

Background

The Ecosystems project is based on the findings and recommendations of the Millenium Ecosystem assessment which found significant degradation of global ecosystems which support human life – including the assets of biodiversity, water and soils. In Wales there is the need for balancing the priorities in terms of:

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Water management(flooding/drought and quality)
- Biodiversity objectives.
- Energy security versus food security
- Countryside Access
- The historic environment
- Implications for landscape as a consequence of the above land use mix.

Current Position

- Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in conjunction with partner organisations are currently in the process of mapping out ecosystems related projects in Wales and links to national and UK strategies / projects.
- It is agreed that adopting an ecosystems approach in developing mechanisms to manage land use change in the future is essential if we are to achieve a healthier natural environment.
- Key drivers for this work are obligations under the Habitats / Water Framework Directives, the new agenda resulting from the recent CAP health check, Wales Environment Strategy and Climate Change agenda.
- WAG has been successful in ensuring that Welsh needs are taken into account with regard to the Defra National Ecosystem Assessment.
- Wales is having an input into important UK research projects such as the Foresight land use futures project, Environmental Research Funders Forum – changing ecosystems project and various Defra , RELU, Natural England related projects to strengthen the evidence base.
- In Wales strong evidence is being gathered on the effects of changes in land management on ecosystems in projects such as Pontbren, Pumlimon, Lake Vernwy and the Berwyns. Best practice is then being developed to help influence future land management to achieve beneficial ecosystem outcomes.
- The Cambrian Mountain Initiative is the first project in Wales that is fully endorsing the ecosystems approach in developing a brand based on the principals of sustainable farming, tourism underpinned by achieving positive outcomes relating to ecosystem services. This is being achieved by collating baseline data on ecosystem services; identifying synergies /conflicts; identifying desired outcomes in terms of carbon, water quality, biodiversity, soil and testing new land management actions – links to Glastir; Identifying and quantifying impacts of actions.
- The development of the new Axis 2 land management scheme – Glastir has centred on the desire to achieve successful delivery of measurable outcomes relating to ecosystem services at both a farm and landscape / catchment scale. Note that the Biodiversity Ecosystem Groups are providing a valuable input to this process.
- The ecosystems approach is now being adopted by the SE Wales Spatial planning group in the development of their Networked Environment Region. This template will then be rolled out to other spatial plan areas in Wales

Decision Points

- To endorse approach being taken in Wales