



Organisation: The Geological Society

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Background

Our first Corporate Plan will set the strategic intent for Natural Resources Wales. The consultation contains a series of proposals about **what** we want to achieve and **how** we want to work.

We would like you to tell us whether you think we are focussing on the right areas of work, whether there are any significant gaps and how we could work together in partnership to deliver our proposals. Your views on our proposed future ways of working would also be welcome. In short, how can we get the best results for Wales?

Following this consultation we will develop our full Corporate Plan.

How will we use your information?

We will publish a summary of responses on our website in which we will publish the name of the organisation for those responses made on behalf of organisations.

We will not publish names of individuals who respond.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we may be required to publish your response to this consultation, but we will not include any personal information. If you request your response to be kept confidential, we may still be required to provide a summary of it.

Please put a cross in the box if you wish your response to remain confidential.

Our purpose

1. Are our purpose, roles, shared outcomes and finances clear and understandable?

The Geological Society welcomes the joined up approach detailed in the consultation document for the recently formed Natural Resources Wales. A holistic approach to environmental management including consideration of both the surface and subsurface, and of biotic and abiotic components, coupled with stakeholder engagement and education is the key to enhanced understanding and success in environmental management.

2. Are there any ways that you would like to work with us to achieve these shared outcomes?

The Geological Society is the UK's learned and professional body for geoscience. We take an interest in the work of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) as another nationally important geoscience body. We recognise the vital and varied work done by geoscientists in NRW, many of whom are Fellows of the Geological Society, and note the shared commitment of the Society and NRW (along with its predecessor bodies, particularly the Environment Agency Wales) to professional accreditation and Chartership, which serve both to support staff development and to assure standards for the public benefit. We are keen to support the work of NRW and will be pleased to discuss any strategic matters relating to geoscience outlined in this plan or suggest potential contacts and resources.

3. Do you have any ideas of new ways we can fund our activities with our partners?

A good environment

4. Do you agree with our proposals and suggested ways of delivering them?

The Society welcomes the intention to address climate change, in addition to pollution, air, land and water quality, and the focus on whole ecosystems as a basis for decision-making. The mention of geodiversity is also welcome although, having recognised its importance in principle, a more consistent consideration of the geosphere and of abiotic aspects of ecosystems throughout the document would strengthen it. A greater appreciation of the contribution of the geosphere would be aided by considering the concept of 'geosystem services'. This would strengthen understanding of the geosphere (especially the subsurface, which is relatively neglected in the document) and the land,

water and air as inextricably linked to each other, and to the diversity of life in the biosphere. Services provided by the geosphere are often undervalued but are an important subset of ecosystem services. The geosphere provides both direct and indirect services. In terms of resources, the subsurface is the predominant provider of our energy, through sources such as oil and gas, as well as other raw materials such as mined metals and minerals and abstracted water. Indirectly, the geosphere can sustain important services such as containment of radionuclides in geological disposal of radioactive waste, and the CO₂ sequestration capacity of soils. However it is worth noting that the extraction or use of these services is not boundless and they may be subject to critical loads or burdens. Additionally, once the subsurface has been used in certain ways it can preclude future uses, so a planned approach to multiple uses of the subsurface is required.

5. Have we missed out anything significant?

The concept of ecosystem services is fundamental to environmental policy-making in Wales and throughout the UK, and we support this approach. However, this framework will be critically undermined if insufficient attention is paid to the importance of geology and the subsurface as an intrinsic part of the environment and of ecosystems; and to their role in understanding, managing and mitigating climate change, land, water and air pollution and other aspects of environmental policy implementation. Effective implementation of a holistic approach to environmental management will depend on a thoroughgoing consideration of abiotic and subsurface elements of ecosystems, and their integration with biotic and surface elements. This should be more fully recognised throughout the Corporate Plan. Delivery of the plan will also depend on maintaining and nurturing appropriate Earth science expertise and capacity within NRW, across a wide variety of areas including designation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), pollution, landscape management etc and it is important that this is reflected in the Corporate Plan.

6. How do we best work in partnership with you to deliver these? What can you do to help?

As mentioned above, the Society is open to working in partnership with NRW to help deliver its objectives. Possible joint initiatives include public engagement and information meetings regarding delivery of the Corporate Plan, and relevant aspects of Earth and environmental science.

Good for people

7. Do you agree with our proposals and suggested ways of delivering them?

We welcome the inclusion of the link between the environment, learning and education. Sustainably managed sites can provide learning opportunities as well as economic

opportunities due to the professional training and leisure activities they can sustain when their value is effectively communicated. We encourage NRW to engage closely with stakeholders, such as Learned and Professional Bodies and Higher Education Institutes, when developing and implementing the outlined proposals.

8. Have we missed out anything significant

Despite the commitment to 'improving cultural heritage and landscape distinctiveness', there is still a significant backlog of nominated Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites awaiting designation as SSSIs. GCR site designation is an essential requirement for the sustainable management of the environment. It creates protected spaces to be used by people for leisure, education and training, particularly in the Earth sciences, as well as providing a basis for future conservation of scientifically important sites. The Society urges the NRW to speed up the designation process. We are keen to discuss how this might best be achieved.

We also recommend the inclusion of geodiversity and geology in the recreation, jobs and environmental incidents sections under the 'Good For People' heading, since an understanding of geology underpins all of these strands of society. In particular the omission of the mention of geology in Jobs and Growth does not reflect the contribution of geology and its wider services to the economy of Wales.

Additionally the increasingly significant contribution of geotourism has not been mentioned. This is linked to the use of protected spaces for education and training. Geotourism can range from access to specific sites, including those used for teaching, to the general visitor who comes to experience the dynamic and varied landscape of Wales. This is well evidenced in the creation of Geoparks such as Fforest Fawr and Anglesey whose existence is based on the use of geology to promote economic prosperity through geotourism.

9. How do we best work in partnership with you to deliver these? What can you do to help?

10. Do you agree with our proposals and suggested ways of delivering them?

The Society welcomes the mention of efficient and effective use of natural resources and the aim of moving towards a low carbon economy. The discussion of waste not only as an environmental hazard but also as a valuable resource is also welcome. This holistic approach to environmental issues is the key to long term sustainable management of the environment.

11. Have we missed out anything significant?

The significant contribution of the geosphere to the economy of Wales is not mentioned in the Corporate Plan. Wales has a long history of mining and there is renewed potential for some metal mining as well as continuing extraction of hard rock for aggregate and limestone for cement. This is in addition to the growing market for geotourism outlined above.

12. How can you best work in partnership with us to deliver these?

Using good knowledge

13. Do you agree with our proposals and suggested ways of delivering them?

The inclusion of innovative approaches to gathering evidence including the use of local communities for monitoring and engaging with the wider public is important. There is a large network of volunteer and local groups such as RIGS groups (Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites) which do a great deal of local geoconservation work and play a helpful and often essential role in environmental monitoring. Effective networking with these groups will improve environmental management and public engagement. Their value should not be underestimated. In addition to the community value of GCR sites protected by SSSI status, a robust and up to date GCR site network is important to Earth science research in the UK and beyond.

14. Have we missed out anything significant?

15. How can you best work in partnership with us to deliver these?

How we will work

16. Do you agree with how we plan to develop our organisation?

17. What would make it easier for you to work with us?

Reporting our delivery

18. Is this the right approach to assessing our delivery?

19. Do you know of specific indicators you think we should track?

20. What will success look like?

Additional comments

21. Are there any further comments you would like to make?

We support the ecosystems approach to environment management outlined in the consultation document. As noted above, the importance and value of geology, the geosphere and abiotic elements of ecosystems in a holistic approach to environmental management should not be underestimated. Sustainable environmental management also depends on effective stakeholder engagement and communication in order to develop successful, sustainable management plans. Geosystem services can contribute to the economy both directly, for example through mining and quarrying, and indirectly, through groundwater usage, flood regulation and pollution prevention. The work of Earth scientists within NRW is essential and it is important that this breadth of work is reflected in the corporate plan.

The Geological Society is the UK's learned and professional body for geoscience, with more than 11,000 Fellows (members) worldwide. The Fellowship encompasses those working in industry, academia and government with a broad range of perspectives on policy-relevant science, and the Society is a leading communicator of this science to government bodies, those in education, and non-technical audiences.

Thank you for taking part in this consultation.

We will publish a summary of the responses on our website and use your views to help develop our Corporate Plan, which will be published in March 2014.

For any further comments, queries or to provide your response in an alternative format please contact corporate.planning@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk