Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru | Wales Environment Link

Strategic Plan 2025 – 2030

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Charitable objects

WEL is established, for the benefit of the public, to promote and enhance the conservation, protection, sustainable management, and quiet and responsible enjoyment of the natural and cultural heritage of Wales.

Vision

A thriving Welsh environment for future generations[1]

Mission Statement

Our mission is for the WEL network to be recognised for our members' expertise and advice, and to be an influential agent for change in the development of environmental policy, legislation and practice in Wales.

Current context

Over the last five years, WEL has operated through a pandemic, and significant global events, that have led to ongoing economic difficulties across the UK. This has resulted in key public services, including Wales' environmental regulators, being increasingly under-resourced. Funding for environmental work has become ever more difficult to find since the UK's exit from the EU. Environmental organisations have had to cut costs and staff to be able to continue to deliver their missions. The current policy environment means we must work faster, reacting to ever shorter deadlines, often with fewer people available across the network to work on key issues facing the Welsh environment. Many WEL member organisations have staff that need to cover policy in multiple UK countries and Wales is losing its specialists across the public and third sectors.

During this period WEL has, with the support of its members, increased its core income from membership subscriptions by changing to a model that tracks member income more fairly and brings in a more sustainable level of income for WEL. Eligibility for WEL membership has been widened to include any fully constituted charitable organisation that works on Wales environmental policy work. This includes local organisations if they want to work at a Wales level on policy. We still

[1] For the purposes of interpretation, "environment" means terrestrial, marine and freshwater environments. It includes urban and rural environments and areas of importance for natural heritage, landscape and public access.

rely on grant funding for the majority of our costs, but we have been making good progress on developing and diversifying our grant funders.

The policy environment has continued to change significantly since 2020, and a move to largely online working has meant that our policy groups now attract a much wider range of participants. The development of online methods of working has also made it easier to work with the other UK Environment Links and other coalitions such as Climate Cymru and Green Alliance. Wales' policy environment continues to diverge from other parts of the UK, but there is also increased pressure to engage with new legislation at UK level that has implications and effects that apply in Wales. This adds further pressure on finite resources.

The next five years present unprecedented challenges as we move towards greater polarisation in political discourse and the possibility of significant changes to the composition of the Welsh Government. Whilst the last five years has seen several important pieces of new environmental legislation passed in the Senedd, these now need to be effectively implemented and enforced. The WEL network will need to work with a larger group of 96 Senedd Members (MSs), many of them completely new to the Senedd. We will need to be resilient, ambitious and adaptable if we want to engage these new decision makers and successfully make the case for progress in tackling the nature and climate emergencies.

Where we want to be in 2030

By 2030 WEL aims to have a sustainable and diverse stream of funding, with unrestricted income able to support a central staff complement of at least 4 FTE members of staff, to provide the network with a stable core from which to provide more capacity and better services to our members. We will continue to be valued for our members' expertise by the Welsh Government, Senedd Members, public bodies and external partners, as well as attracting investment from a diversity of trusts and foundations.

We want our members to feel valued and supported, confident that WEL continues to provide an ambitious and inclusive voice for the Welsh environment, which drives progress on environmental policy and legislation. We will be recognised by decision makers, and we will have a critical role in promoting the priorities of our members to the Welsh Government, politicians and other decision makers. WEL is well-known and our role will be better understood by external partners and stakeholders.

Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Objective 1: An ambitious and equitable voice for the environment

WEL will amplify the impact of our policy voice by providing credible and influential evidence and expert recommendations to decision makers that results in positive change for the Welsh environment, as well as for the benefit of our communities, current and future generations.

Key performance indicators KPI's

- **WEL members value our collective advocacy work, which results in positive change for the environment**: The voice of WEL is unified but also incorporates the necessary complexity and nuance to avoid dilution of message. We will build on ways of achieving consensus whilst developing inclusive processes for managing the diverse and complex views of our members, so everyone feels heard and respected. Our collective advocacy work is influential in the development of effective environmental policy and legislation. This will be monitored in an annual member survey and information captured in Working Group debrief sessions, following the end of specific campaigns or work on legislation. We will track changes to policy and legislation resulting from our advocacy work, along with Senedd Committee recommendations that have been adopted in line with WEL asks.
- **WEL is visible to, and valued by, decision makers and partners:** Decision makers and partners will know who we are and what we do and will want to contact and engage with us. We will sustain good relationships with Welsh media contacts and can promote our collective positions in the media, with good uptake. We will develop an effective inclusive communications and media strategy, and media monitoring will show that our messages have traction. We will also capture the network's involvement in key stakeholder groups, access to Ministers and other key decision makers.

Objective 2: A cohesive network that delivers collective expertise and support

This objective focuses on the internal mechanisms for productivity and collaboration within our member network. We will enhance the collective capacity of our members by continuing to build strong, trust-based relationships, recognising that we have a diverse range of members both from the perspective of their size, policy priorities and capacity to influence policy. We will develop new processes and tools to address challenge of bringing together diverse expert opinions. We will achieve

this by facilitating collaboration and providing high quality and relevant information and training opportunities that will enable good collaboration between member organisations. Our Diversity Action Plan will ensure all our procedures are inclusive, supportive, and reflective of our members' needs.

Key performance indicators KPI's

- **Perceived fairness, involvement and trust:** Focusing on trust and impartiality, we will prioritise strong relationships and mutual understanding and ensure our members perceive WEL staff and processes as impartial, fair, and trustworthy. Focusing on procedures, we will commit to inclusive and shared ways of working that define how members and staff manage collaboration and decision making.
- **Inclusive dialogue and perspective:** Focusing on respect, we will facilitate respectful and structured dialogue that ensures all perspectives (policy, research, field based etc) are equitably heard and integrated into our final positions.
- **Equitable capacity building:** Focusing on targeted support, we will ensure training and capacity support is delivered inclusively and effectively to the members that need it most, helping smaller charities to "do more with less". Within the first 12 months of the new Strategic Plan time period, we will conduct training needs analysis for members, focused on skills relevant to working within a network, so that we identify and agree on specialised training where support is most needed. We will monitor member satisfaction with training.

Objective 3: **A resilient, diverse and viable network**

To meet our vision and mission, we will need to achieve resilience across several areas. We will need to maintain financial stability and ensure that our staff and Board of Trustees bring breadth and experience of knowledge, as well as reflecting the diversity of the environmental sector and of communities in Wales.

Key performance indicators KPI's

- **A financially viable network, with a diversity of funding streams:** WEL must maintain enough unrestricted funding to support a core team of no less than 4FTE staff to provide a good service to its members. We aim to grow our staff team steadily by 2030 to provide more policy, advocacy and comms support for the network. We will hold a 12-18 month financial reserve to ensure that

WEL can continue operating during periods of grant scarcity. We will also champion the need to bring more funding to Wales to support the work of our member organisations in tackling the nature and climate emergency.

- **Inclusive leadership and representation**: Build on the current representation of individuals on the board of trustees and management team and increase this by the end of 2030. Rather than setting a quota, our focus and aim is to be inclusive of those that can bring diverse skills, experiences and perspectives. This will help us foster a more robust, innovative, risk-aware, and data driven, decision making process and more effectively ensure our advocacy addresses intersectional challenges of environmental justice and social equity.
- **Diverse membership engagement**: To ensure our membership is also diverse, we will ensure our membership application processes are equitable. Our Diversity Action Plan will set out how we will develop our internal processes to ensure that members are supported in their work with us and that any barriers to participation are addressed. We will measure the health of the network, including member satisfaction and retention, and which new organisations we attract. This will be measured by member collaboration in campaigns, annual member value surveys, member involvement at WEL meetings and qualitative reviews with external partners.

Monitoring our Key Performance Indicators

We have set out above ways that we can monitor our KPIs. The main ways that we will measure our success are:

1. **Trustees' quarterly review of financial projections:** this will include monitoring of diversity of funding achieved.
2. **Annual member survey**: this will ask for views on the range of WEL services provided, how inclusive and collaborative our processes are and how well supported members feel in achieving their policy priorities.
3. **Member and stakeholder qualitative review**: in-depth interviews to be undertaken by an independent researcher every 3 years with members, decision makers and external stakeholders and partners.
4. **Member data survey:** every 3 years, to capture membership and staffing levels, along with area of land owned and managed across the network.
5. **WEL Annual Report and Accounts**: financial reporting and summary of WEL policy and advocacy work and impact, our comms and media impact, benefits in kind and representation on stakeholder groups.

6. **Annual demographic and skills audit of board and management team members:** to track progress towards a broader representation. This will include a qualitative analysis of the diverse skills, perspectives and experiences our staff and trustees bring.
7. **Uptake of WEL policy recommendations in policy and legislation:** by recording direct changes and WEL recommendations in Senedd Committee reports.