

This Advisory Note has been written to help you better understand the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WFGA) goals and the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) principles. It suggests ways that you can incorporate them into a management plan which you can use to deliver your group's activities, and when applying for funding. It draws on the experience of community woodland groups in Wales identified in the report *Scoping the delivery of Welsh Government policy goals by Community Woodland Groups*, which is available from Llais y Goedwig.

### What is the WFGA?

This Act was passed in 2015 with the aim of improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, now and for the future. It is intended to guide public organisations to think more about the long-term, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach between government, its organisations and you. There is a duty on public sector bodies to show how they are meeting WFGA aims in their current and future plans.

Our research with CWGs has shown that most groups are already aligned to a number of the WFGA goals and SMNR principles, but this is often not deliberate but as a result of good planning and the very nature of CWGs being community-led organisations. The tables below show some activities we have identified through the interviews with community woodland groups and how these match against the WFGA goals and SMNR principles.

Guidance on WFGA can be found at:  
<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf>

### What is SMNR?

The Environment (Wales) Act passed in 2016 sets out nine principles for sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR). SMNR is a management approach that promotes action to build resilience into our natural resources (in our case woodlands) so that the benefits they provide will be sustained to benefit us and generations to come. The WFGA and SMNR need to work together because our natural resources underpin our cultural, social, economic, and environmental well-being.

Guidance on SMNR can be found at:  
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/sustainable-management-of-natural-resources-guide.pdf>

### What's in it for me?

The report by LlyG has shown that as a Community Woodland Group (CWG) whether you know it or not you are likely contributing to achievement of the goals of the WFGA and if you are following good practice in woodland management you are also likely meeting many of the SMNR principles. Being more aware of how your CWG lives up to WFGA and SMNR can help you identify where improvement might be needed and provide you with a framework for reporting your work to people beyond your group and local area.



Awareness of the structure and language of WFGA and SMNR can help you communicate with public bodies, for grant applications and to build partnerships. You may be looking for funding or partnership working to help you carry out planned activities or to initiate new projects within your woodlands to achieve your goals. In either case it will be important for you to look at what you do and express this in terms of policies and objectives of government and your prospective partners.

We suggest that this can be done within a management plan to match what you want to achieve against the WFGA goals and what you do in the woodland against the SMNR principles. Your management plan will help keep you on track, assess how well you are doing and report on your group's activities and outcomes.

There is unlikely to be a simple correspondence between your objectives and way of working with WFGA and SMNR. You should align what you do with the goals and principles most meaningful to your group and feel free to add, extend and use it to suit your needs. As long as you have cross-references to WFGA and SMNR you will be able to quickly present what you are doing to an external audience.

### What is a management plan?

A management plan (MP) is a tool to help you plan and deliver your activities. Llais y Goedwig Advisory Notes 1 - 4 contain useful guidance to help you to develop a MP. With the inclusion of WFGA and SMNR links described here, your MP will be up to date with current policy and best practice. A MP should define your aims, describe your strategy and day-to-day action plans. It should consider the risks involved, it must have a timeline, and it should describe how you will monitor and evaluate what you have done.

There is no one set template for this as the plan should be tailored to your group, or even to specific projects you are running. The detail in the plan will reflect the size of your group or project. For large projects, the plan may need to be broken down into sections based on activities or outcomes.

Below is a simple example of what a management plan should cover:

**Aim** – what is it you want to achieve, e.g. create new path for a woodland walk.

**Actions to be taken** – plan route, tree and vegetation clearance, path construction. Undertake a site assessment or Woodland Health Survey to identify what you have on site, including and endangered or protected species.

**Contribution to national wellbeing goals** – A healthier Wales (more people walking in wood), A more equal Wales (all-ability path), A Wales of cohesive communities (your community has come together to support and work on the new paths), A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language (information panels describing history and culture of the area, Welsh language versions).

**Contribution to national SMNR principles** – Collaboration and engagement (work done with other organisations), Public participation (input from your community), Multiple benefits (health, education).

**Method** – how are you going to do this (use contractors, volunteers, buy in materials or create them from existing resources, how are the paths mapped out)? How long will it take?

**Risk assessment** – what are the risks (lack of support, use of tools, heavy materials, weather) and how will they be mitigated?

**Monitoring and evaluation** – what data can be captured (numbers of volunteers, visitors)? How will you know if you have been successful (volunteer/visitor feedback forms, community open days/evaluations)?



## Area Statements

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has produced Area Statements (ASs) which contribute to implementing WFGA and SMNR in a local context. They term this as taking a place-based approach. It may help you and your partners to contextualise what you are doing as a contribution to the AS for your region.

Your management plan would be a useful concise way of presenting what you are doing for input into the AS.

The focus of an AS is on collaborative working to deliver better results at a local level. There are seven regional area statements across Wales that outline the key challenges facing that particular locality, what we can do to meet those challenges, and how we can better manage our natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

Communities are best placed to shape local priorities and opportunities and find practical solutions that bring the widest possible benefits, to that end NRW has already consulted widely on the development of ASs. If you have not already been involved with NRW on AS development, it would be worth contacting your regional AS group (they all have a Facebook presence) and contribute to local plans. Further information can be found at: <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/area-statements/?lang=en>



## Reporting how well are you doing

You need some numbers and evidence to report on your contribution to WFGA goals and delivery of SMNR. Your management plan describes your actions and activities and helps you assess how well you are doing. To do this you need to keep a record of participants, activities and outputs/outcomes. There is no set recording tool so you can focus on those areas you think important for your group. If you are in a partnership, or in receipt of a grant, then what you record may be prescribed for you.

Ideally, at the start of a project, you will make a record of your project as it is at that time. This is called a baseline measure and may include numbers of visitors, volunteers or membership, it could include length of existing pathways, or a count of tree species. From this you will update your records periodically so you can see how things have progressed. Remember that a baseline is at a set point in time in relation to a specific project, but improvement is continual – if you are keeping good records in your MP then your baseline could simply be your last annual report – not a hugely expensive or difficult one-off exercise for each project.

Some records are numbers: people, activities, instances of vandalism, sales. Others may be more subjective: increase in happiness, improved habitat, increase in biodiversity. The important thing is to be consistent with your measurements and how you do them, i.e. if you use a metre square frame to count insect species or wild flowers then keep to the same measure in the same location. You can be creative with your records, photographs of activities, new paths and structures all count as useful evidence even if they are not strictly “data”. Also, aerial photography/drones are great for showing what you are achieving in your wider areas.

If you do not have a presence on site all the time, then a snapshot may be the only way to measure numbers like visitors. If you are lucky enough to partner with a larger organisation like a National Park, then they may have mechanical means of counting footfall already, they may be able to supply you with a counter and they may have historical data available for you to use as a baseline.

Choose what to record carefully. Some actions, i.e. improving water quality, reduced risk of flooding, require a more scientific approach and can be costly (unless you partner with a University or National Park). Better to keep your recording parameters to within what your community can manage with the skills it has.

Once you have collated records over time you can assess how well you are doing and whether you are meeting expectations or targets. You also now have something from which you can learn, i.e. Was it the right activity for the right audience? Did your promotion of events work? Was the activity achievable? Addressing such questions will help you improve management and performance as well as fulfilling the SMNR principles.

### It's getting better all the time ...








Your management framework links your project plans and targets to records and can show progress against WFGA and SMNR. It doesn't stop there! There will be benefits you have not foreseen: increasing biodiversity and habitat will make for a more attractive woodland, a more attractive woodland will attract more visitors, more visitors out and about in nature will increase health and wellbeing, better links to the natural environment and wellbeing will improve your community and people will be happier. So, here we have it, more cohesive and resilient communities: socially, economically, environmentally, and culturally. **That's wellbeing!**



This Advisory Note has been prepared for Llais y Goedwig by Roger Davies from Golygfa Gwydyr and Jenny Wong from Coetir Mynydd. Llais y Goedwig is a voluntary association of community woodland groups that formed in November 2009 to provide a voice for community woodlands. We want to share experiences, support each other and enhance local woodlands to benefit the people of Wales. This resource is part of a growing series that we hope will be useful to our members, and others interested in community woodlands in Wales. Contact us: Llais y Goedwig Unit 1, Dyfi Eco Park, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 8AX Tel: 01654 700061 [www.llaisygoedwig.org.uk](http://www.llaisygoedwig.org.uk)



## Mapping of CWG activities against WFGA goals

Wellbeing of future generations goals	Characteristics and actions of CWG contributions
 <p><b>A prosperous Wales</b></p> <p><i>An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</i></p>	<p>CWGs act locally to benefit the environment through efficient use of resources.</p> <p>CWGs generate wealth from woodland resources through direct sales, hosting educational services and training provision and from site rental.</p> <p>CWGs employ people directly or through contracting and partnership working.</p>
 <p><b>A resilient Wales</b></p> <p><i>A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.</i></p>	<p>CWGs manage woodland to enhance biodiversity and healthy ecosystems through planting diverse species which reduces monoculture crops, clear invasive species, manage surface water, create habitat and nurture rare and endangered species.</p> <p>Through management practices, CWGs provide activities and community-based platform to develop future plans.</p>
 <p><b>A more equal Wales</b></p> <p><i>A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances)</i></p>	<p>CWGs have membership/beneficiary opportunities open to all and who seek to reduce social isolation and deprivation.</p> <p>CWGs have activities that are accessible to all.</p>
 <p><b>A healthier Wales</b></p> <p><i>A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood</i></p>	<p>CWGs engage people in activities which promote social, mental and physical wellbeing.</p> <p>CWGs stimulate learning to help people decide on future choices and behaviours.</p>
 <p><b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b></p> <p><i>Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities</i></p>	<p>CWGs are active within the community providing support and active engagement.</p> <p>CWGs enhance woodlands for community benefit.</p>
 <p><b>A Wales of vibrant culture &amp; thriving Welsh language</b></p> <p><i>A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.</i></p>	<p>CWGs stimulate actions that together are building on traditions to create a Welsh woodland culture for future generations.</p> <p>CWGs provide an opportunity for Welsh first language communities to express their connection to local landscape and nature.</p>
 <p><b>A globally responsible Wales</b></p> <p><i>A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being</i></p>	<p>CWGs take account of their actions in the context of any contributions that may have global implications, e.g. climate change actions, local vs international trade, protection of endangered species.</p>

## Mapping of CWG actions against the SMNR principles

SMNR principles	What CWG need to do to comply with this principle
<p><b>Adaptive management</b></p> <p><i>Manage adaptively by planning, monitoring, reviewing and where appropriate, changing action</i></p>	<p>Collect evidence and feedback from monitoring activities and have a process of review to inform future action and change.</p>
<p><b>Scale</b></p> <p><i>Consider the appropriate spatial scale for action</i></p>	<p>Either have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a large area to manage</li> <li>- work across multiple sites</li> <li>- work in partnership with other landowners</li> <li>- secure areas with high impact (e.g. prominent woodland in urban area)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaboration and engagement</b></p> <p><i>Promote and engage in collaboration and cooperation</i></p>	<p>Work with other organisations (partnerships or otherwise) to achieve their aims.</p>
<p><b>Public Participation</b></p> <p><i>Make appropriate arrangements for public participation in decision-making</i></p>	<p>Enable input and direction from community members. This can be informal or formal: consultation, ongoing feedback, AGMs and project reviews.</p>
<p><b>Evidence</b></p> <p><i>Take account of all relevant evidence, and gather evidence in respect of uncertainties</i></p>	<p>Community needs – analysis based on feedback (as above).</p> <p>Management actions – technical evidence from desk research or site surveys.</p>
<p><b>Multiple benefits</b></p> <p><i>Take account of the benefits and intrinsic value of natural resources and ecosystems</i></p>	<p>Use sites for more than one socio, economic or environmental outcome. This is always the case for a woodland which is open to the public (biodiversity &amp; well-being) but many groups have multiple activities which deliver many benefits.</p>
<p><b>Long term</b></p> <p><i>Take account of the short, medium and long term consequences of actions</i></p>	<p>Monitoring and review over longer periods of time. Woodland management plans are usually 20 yrs+ and are often required for grants, leases and management agreements. However, short term agreements can make it difficult to develop long-term plans.</p>
<p><b>Preventative action</b></p> <p><i>Take action to prevent significant damage to ecosystems</i></p>	<p>Take management actions which reduce risk – invasive species, fire, contamination, water retention, collapse (tree, boundary, structure). This requires funding support which is difficult to access.</p>
<p><b>Building resilience</b></p> <p><i>Take account of the resilience of ecosystems</i></p>	<p>Actions include – improvements to biodiversity, development of connections with neighboring land, landscape scale operations, condition/silviculture, and adaptability.</p>