



# BRINGING WALES BACK TO LIFE: WWF CYMRU 2026 SENEDD MANIFESTO



# WILL THE NEXT SENEDD STAND FOR CLIMATE, NATURE AND PEOPLE—OR WILL IT FAIL FUTURE GENERATIONS?

Wales deserves a vibrant economy, clean air, unpolluted water and a reliable supply of nutritious, affordable food. But this is not our reality, and nature is vital to achieve all these things and to our survival. Species and habitat loss are at an all-time high with 1 in 6 species in Wales at risk of extinction. The main driver of this loss is how we produce food. It is time for transformation.

Wales is already feeling the effects of climate change—more floods, droughts, wildfires, and growing food insecurity are all impacting food production and the cost of living for families. Over 273,000 homes are at risk of flooding, and extreme weather threatens our ability to grow and access food.

People are increasingly disconnected with where their food comes from, while we rely too heavily on imports to meet basic dietary needs. An urgent, fair and just transition must support the communities most affected and create new opportunities for all.

## THE STATUS QUO JUST ISN'T AN OPTION

The world faces a triple challenge: preventing climate change, reversing the loss of nature, and meeting the nutritional needs of people. These three areas are deeply interconnected.

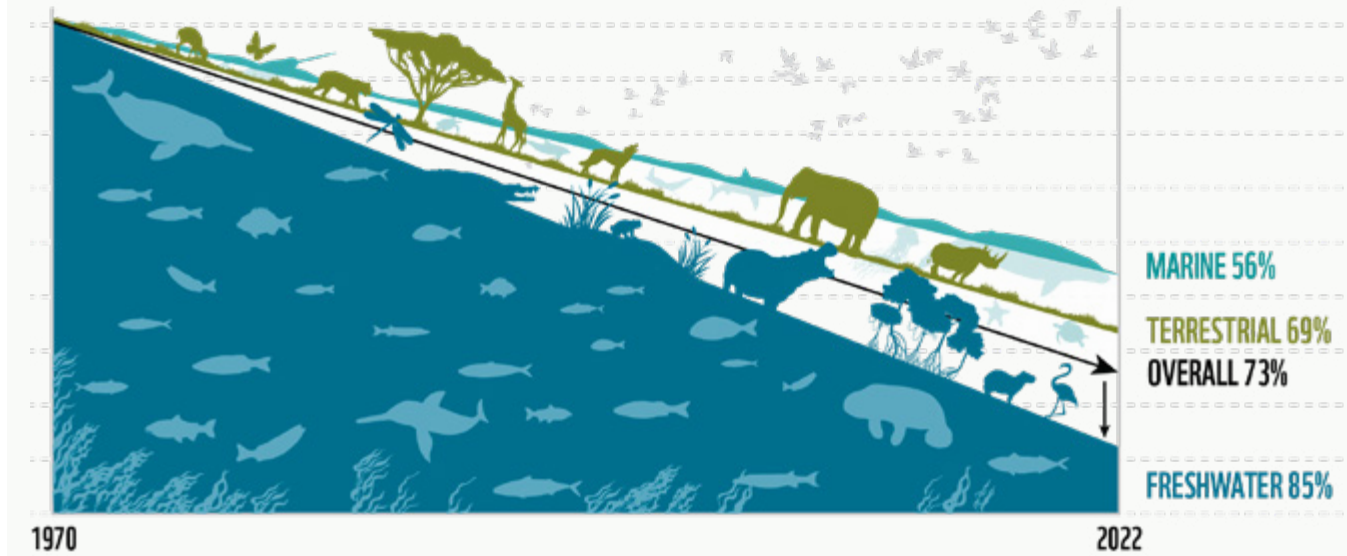
If we meet this 'triple challenge', we will not only restore nature and protect it for future generations, we will also **create new green jobs, secure the future of food production, build our resilience to the impacts of climate change, and tackle growing rates of obesity and food poverty.**

Recognizing that what we do on land affects the rivers and the sea's health is crucial to meeting the triple challenge, so we must think about these in a joined-up way. And crucially, solutions to the triple challenge must support the wider needs of the people who live and work there. WWF is already piloting this integrated vision through our 'Wholescape' programme in Pembrokeshire—a blueprint for transforming how we manage land, rivers and seas.

## OUR POLITICIANS HAVE NOT DONE ENOUGH

The 2020s is an international recognised decade of action for nature and climate, but successive governments have **missed vital opportunities** to make progress, **breaking promises**, delaying or **watering down changes**. The independent Climate Change Committee has repeatedly expressed concern about the slow pace of change resulting in Wales being off-track to deliver a 58% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, net zero emissions by 2050, and halting and reversing nature loss by 2030 in line with global biodiversity agreements.

## GLOBAL DECLINE IN BIODIVERSITY SINCE 1970



## THE 2026 SENEDD TERM IS THE FINAL COUNTDOWN TO MEETING OUR 2030 COMMITMENTS

On land, farmers must be supported to produce food in harmony with nature, restore degraded soils, plant more trees and improve hedgerows, all while stopping pollutants entering rivers and flowing to our seas. In our seas we must restore our marine habitats and support our burgeoning aquaculture industry.

Currently, Wales imports large quantities of soy for animal feed and palm oil for food and consumer products—both linked to deforestation and exploitation. By shifting to sustainable, nature-friendly production, we can stop fuelling global harm and take responsibility for our global impact.

## PEOPLE AND NATURE NEED ACTION, NOT PROMISES

In the next election, every political party must pledge bold, meaningful action. 76% of Welsh public believe that current and future governments need to take more action to tackle the loss of nature, and the People's Plan for Nature, shaped by citizen voices, made it clear: people want change.

We call for a government that leads with courage. That delivers action, not warm words. Wales's future depends on it.

A LAND AREA 40% THE SIZE OF WALES IS USED OVERSEAS EACH YEAR TO GROW WELSH IMPORTS OF JUST SEVEN COMMODITIES

Nearly a third of this land is in countries at serious risk of social exploitation, deforestation & habitat loss.





# GREENER JOBS AND ECONOMY

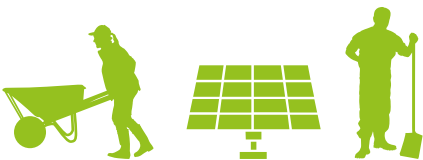
The findings of the [Dasgupta review](#) are clear: nature underpins our economies and our prosperity. We all depend on the natural world – for food, water, air and raw materials. Yet our current approach is failing to deliver the multifunctional landscapes Wales needs to deliver for people, nature and climate.

In response, Wales must transform its economy and decision-making processes, so they prioritise well-being outcomes for current and future generations through fostering an [increased resilience to external shocks and long-term threats](#). One such shock is the impact of climate change, with extreme weather events such as droughts and flooding costing Welsh farmers tens of millions of pounds each year.

Furthermore, the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit found that **the impact of climate change in 2022-23 increased the average household food bill in the UK by £361**. To prevent such shocks and address the cost of living, we must leverage the power of nature based solutions to build resilience to impacts and ensure nature's value is at the heart of our economy.

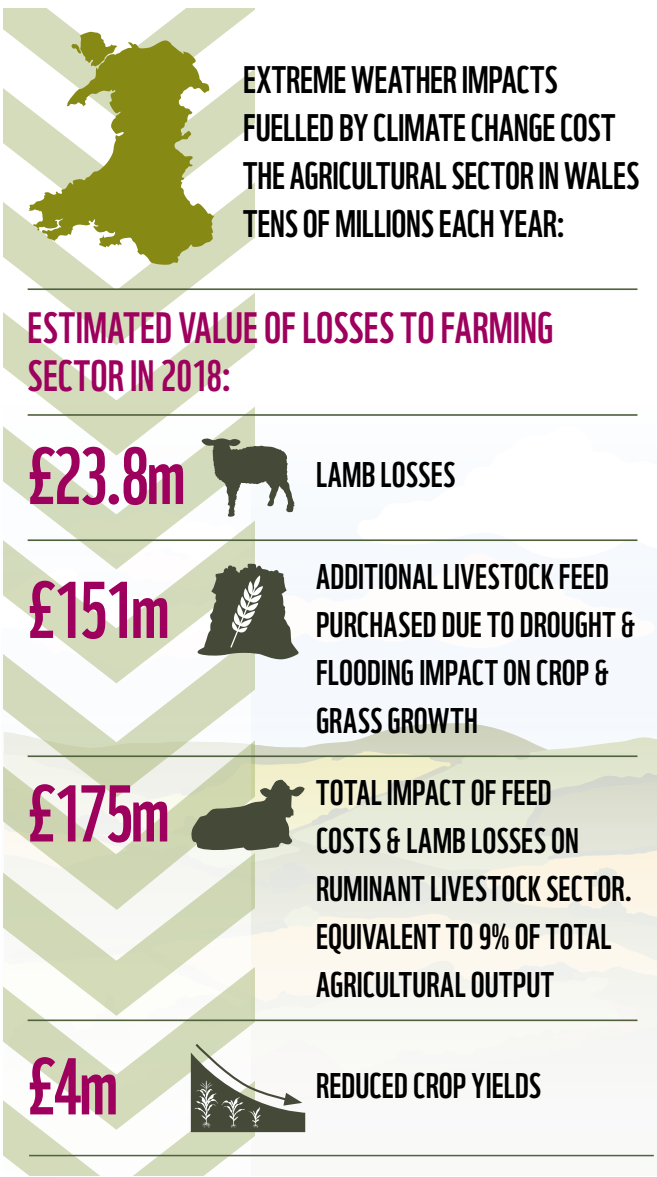
[Significant nature-based jobs growth](#) exists in areas such as conservation, local infrastructure, supply chains (e.g. food hubs), sustainable land management, energy, retrofitting housing, nature education and community engagement. Investing in a Nature Service Wales will provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities in nature conservation and restoration. **It could create 7,000 nature-based jobs over the next decade.**

The next Welsh Government must begin by maximising the effectiveness of public investment and better integrate private capital to deliver a real terms, cross government increase in spending on nature to meet an [estimated £594 million annual need](#).



**WALES HAS THE POTENTIAL TO  
CREATE 60,000 GREEN JOBS**

(Future Generations Report 2025)



## 3 URGENT ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT

- 1 Deliver a Nature Finance Plan and a new **Net Zero & Nature Test** on future budgets to ensure spending puts Wales on track to meet climate and nature goals.
- 2 Work with financial institutions and supply chains to leverage private finance to **alleviate the recognised monetary risk of transition to nature friendly farming**, supporting nature recovery, climate resilience and improved farm business resilience. Private markets for nature and carbon should also be designed and regulated to reward nature-friendly production and ecosystem services.
- 3 Strengthen the Nature Service Wales to increase Eco literacy, build skills and capacity, and connect people and communities with opportunities to take part in nature recovery, have access to green jobs and benefit from the green transition.

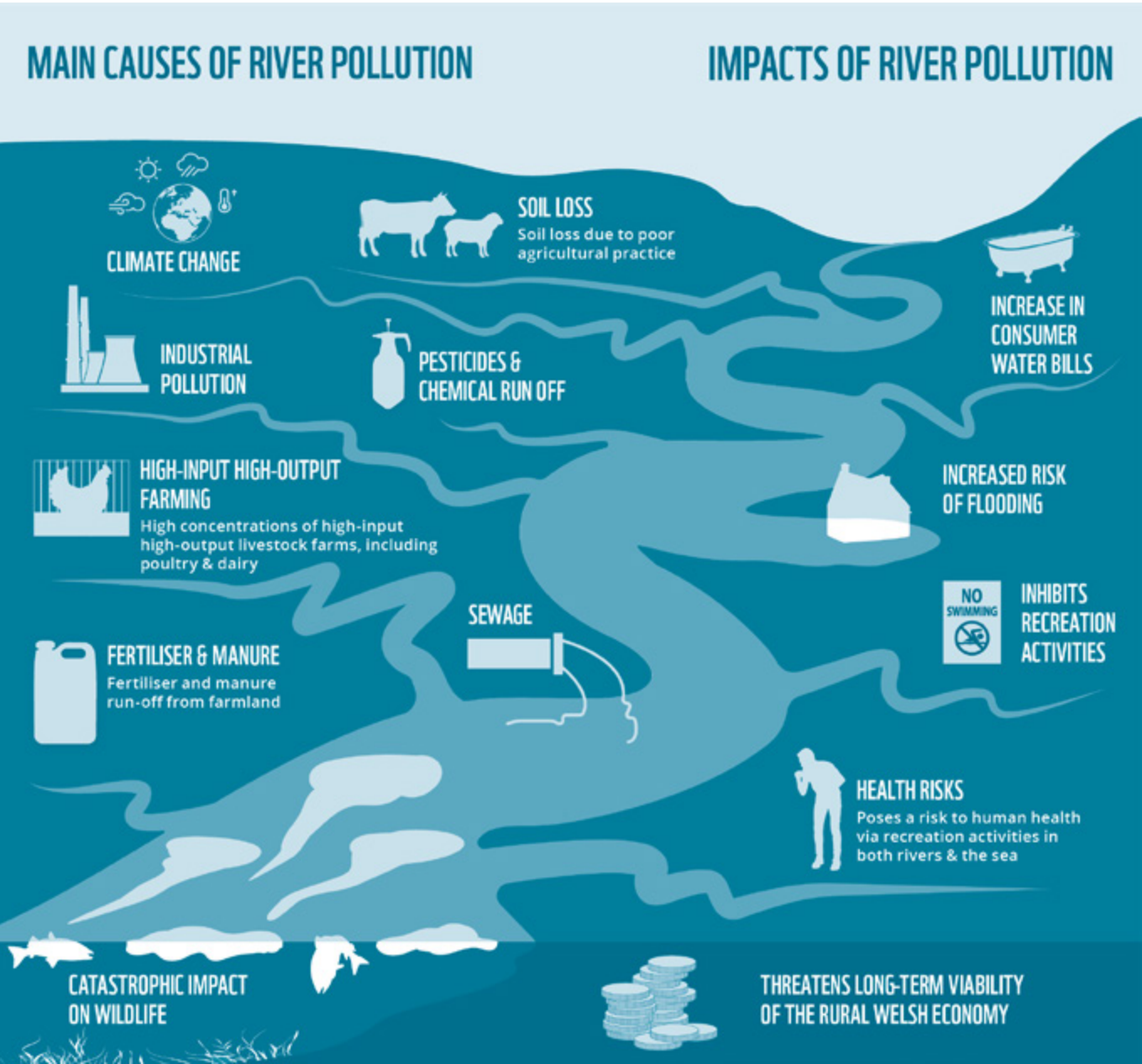


# CLEANER RIVERS

Welsh rivers are in a dire state. Pollution has poisoned many of our waterways, and freshwater biodiversity is suffering. Salmon and Sea Trout (which migrate between rivers and the sea) numbers are in freefall, with 70% lost over the past decade and every salmon river now recognized as being at the highest risk.

Welsh Government must act urgently to bring our rivers back to life. This means sustained action to restore ecosystems and prevent all sources of river pollution, focusing on the two biggest sources: agriculture and sewage.

Agricultural run-off from farmland accounts for most phosphorous and nitrogen pollution in rivers, and 93% of ammonia emissions to air. The UK government has committed to halve pollution from excess nutrient loss by 2030, as part of the Global Biodiversity Framework. **Wales must play its part in meeting this commitment and bring Welsh rivers back to full health.**



## 3 URGENT ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT

- 1 Use the new Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) Bill to set specific targets, in line with the Global Biodiversity Framework, to:
  - Reduce pollution to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity by at least halving excess nutrients lost to the environment by 2030.
  - Ensure that 100% of rivers and other water bodies are under active yearly monitoring by 2030.
  - Publish an action plan to achieve these targets which supports a catchment level approach, with appropriate funding and accountability.
- 2 Substantially **increase monitoring and enforcement of pollution regulations, including prosecuting all serious and serial offenders**. Alongside this there must be better oversight of activities in river catchments by:
  - Including all high input-high output livestock farming in Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR).
  - Reducing the threshold at which poultry units fall within EPR.
  - Introducing effective requirements, including in the planning system, to prevent the cumulative effect of multiple livestock units.
- 3 **Use the Sustainable Farming Scheme to improve river health** by:
  - Expanding and restoring riverbank habitats to reduce the flow of pollutants into rivers and provide additional flood defences.
  - Require the adoption of farming practices that restore soil health.
  - Ensure that actions paid for in scheme work towards delivery of targets set in Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) Bill.





# HEALTHIER SEAS

Our seas and coastlines are a huge part of Welsh life and important part of our economy. Our abundant marine life includes globally significant populations of seabirds, seals and dolphins. Our seas support vital industries such as fishing, tourism, offshore energy and shipping, as well as being deeply embedded in our cultural heritage. **Restoring our seas to health is good for communities, wildlife and climate.**

The reality is, after decades of pollution from land, unsustainable activities at sea, and the effects of climate change, our marine environments are in a perilous condition.

New evidence highlights the massive role that our seas play in tackling the climate and nature emergency. Huge quantities of carbon are captured and stored in marine ecosystems, collectively known as 'blue carbon

habitats'. These include seabed sediments, seagrass, saltmarsh and oyster reefs. Tragically, these vital habitats are disappearing. Up to 90% of seagrass and 85% of saltmarsh has been lost around the UK.

The next Welsh Government must take bold action to improve the health and future of our marine habitats.

3 URGENT ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT

1

**Restore and protect important blue carbon habitats** by:

- Creating a world-leading ocean recovery programme backed by legal commitments and investment.
- Embedding the needs of local communities and preventing pollution from land and rivers from entering our seas.
- Fully implementing the National Seagrass Action Plan developed by [Seagrass Network Cymru](#).

2

Create enabling policy to **accelerate and enhance marine habitat restoration and protection** across Wales by:

- Removing barriers to marine habitat restoration within the marine licencing system.
- Adding seagrass and saltmarsh to Wales' Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory to track and monitor emissions

3

Urgently **complete the network of Marine Conservation Zones** around Wales. We must protect all marine sites against destructive activities that damage blue carbon habitats and threaten marine life. This must be supported by improved strategic planning of all activities in our seas by:

- Considering blue carbon and habitat restoration areas in marine planning.
- Undertaking blue carbon impact assessments and restrict activities that damage key areas.







# FAIRER FOOD AND FARMING

Farmers and seafood industries must be supported so they can restore nature and address climate change, while providing Wales with nutritious food.

**Almost 90% of Welsh land, and much of our sea, is used for food production.** Yet most of that food is not consumed in Wales. Family farms have spent decades working under agricultural policies that have skewed the balance towards intensive production that require export markets, at the expense of food that could meet nutritional needs at home.

**At sea we are seeing new types of aquaculture develop (e.g. seaweed and shellfish farming). Seaweed has the potential to be worth** at least £105 million per annum by 2030 and create close to 1,000 jobs in some of Wales’ most deprived communities. Seaweed is also full of nutrients. It can be used to replace plastic packaging, reduce the environmental impact of agriculture by acting as a natural fertiliser and as livestock feed, and has the potential to fight climate change and create habitat for marine life.

If Wales is to support new sectors, protect family farms and increase nutritional security while improving resilience to climate change and nature loss, Welsh Government policy needs to change.

**The next government must have the strength to reform the wider food system**, to reconnect food Wales produces with our nutritional needs. This isn’t a quest for self-sufficiency, however domestic food production must do more to improve nutritional security, reduce food poverty rates, whilst delivering a better deal for farmers and other food producers.



**SEAWEED AND SHELLFISH FARMING COULD CREATE UP TO 1000 JOBS BY 2030**

## BENEFITS OF AGROECOLOGY

Agroecology is a science & practice which improves food & farming systems, supports regenerative farming, & puts people - farmers, food producers, citizens – at the heart of solutions.

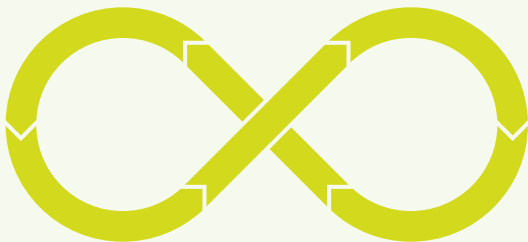
MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE

FAIR & SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS

IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH

BOOSTING LOCAL ECONOMIES, EQUITY AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

HEALTHY, SEASONAL & DIVERSIFIED DIETS



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & POWER

SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE/ ELIMINATE CHEMICAL INPUTS

ENSURE ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE

MAINTAIN & ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY

CO-CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE eg. farmer-to-farmer



# 3 URGENT ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT

**1** Recognise the economic role of seaweed and shellfish farming by **growing the regenerative aquaculture industry** through a comprehensive National Plan that includes:

- Removing marine licensing barriers.
- Establishing initiatives for market development; training and education (including establishing a National Centre of Excellence).
- Providing financial incentives such as tax relief, business advisory and mentor programmes.

**2** Use the Sustainable Farming Scheme to **incentivise, and where necessary require the adoption of nature and climate friendly farming methods** (such as organic, regenerative, agroecological or agroforestry systems) by:

- Ensuring all layers of the Sustainable Farming Scheme are operational in 2026 and full transition to the scheme is complete by 2030.
- Committing at least 50% of the Sustainable Farming Scheme budget to the Optional Tier by 2030.
- Meeting national tree planting recommendations set out by the Climate Change Committee and revisiting mandatory farm level tree cover targets if annual planting rates remain off track in 2028.
- Prioritising investment in nature-based solutions which help to build climate resilience and protect farmers and communities from the impacts of flooding and drought.
- Increasing investment in advice, knowledge transfer and skills services for agriculture through peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.
- Eliminate imported livestock feed such as soy and palm that is linked to deforestation and habitat conversion overseas.

**3** Develop a **National Food Resilience Plan** which **fosters new connections between production and consumption**, while maximising local and national procurement opportunities for Welsh produce by:

- Setting a target of at least 20% of Wales' farmland to be farmed organically by 2030.
- Significantly increasing the use of organic fruit and vegetables produced in Wales in public sector catering - to reach 75% of the Eatwell Guide's recommended fruit and vegetable consumption level by 2030.
- Promoting a dietary shift in line with [WWF's LiveWell diet](#), which promotes sustainable and nature-friendly, healthy diets.
- Mandate public bodies to procure foods that are certified ethical, including Fairtrade, sustainable palm oil, organic and grass fed, diverse plant proteins, and a reduction in ultra-processed foods.
- Integrating food and diets into the duties, goals, and indicators of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- Supporting the development of resilient local food systems by expanding food hubs and community-owned initiatives and the roll-out of Sustainable Food Partnerships between local government and communities. Enabling better community access/opportunities to purchase land, such as allotments, community gardens, farms, and orchards.



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# IT'S TIME TO BRING WALES, AND OUR WORLD, BACK TO LIFE

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