Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT
BY
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Summary of the responses received to the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources consultation**

DATE **19 June 2018**

BY **Hannah Blythyn, Minister for Environment**

Our consultation on the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) last year attracted a large number of responses from stakeholder organisations and individual citizens.

In total, 17,391 responses were recorded during the consultation period and all of these have been considered in preparing the Welsh Government's summary document.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to contribute to the consultation. Some of the proposals secured wide public support where others generated a range of views. Nevertheless, the responses have allowed the Welsh Government to gain a better understanding of stakeholder views and positions across Wales informing how we take forward our ground-breaking legislation enabling us to optimise the opportunities our natural resources provide, whilst ensuring their long-term resilience.

The consultation fulfilled its purpose to collate evidence and propositions on how we can develop our policies to manage sustainably our natural resources, which underpin our long-term prosperity and well-being

The exercise also provided an opportunity to hear views on the possible benefits and challenges the UK's exit from the EU represents, as well as gain views on the regulatory approaches, which may be required in the short and long term.

It is encouraging to see that in general there is wide support for delivering a sustainable management of Wales' natural resources. Stakeholders offered new and innovative approaches for utilising and also protecting our environment, some of which could present longer term solutions in the context of regulatory reforms post EU Exit.

The summary published today presents both a quantitative assessment and an objective synopsis of the comments and views expressed by the respondents. Representative organisations and groups initiated 17 campaigns associated with specific proposals within the SMNR consultation. The campaign responses and individual contributions have all been taken into consideration during the analysis and finalising the published document.

The individual elements of the consultation document have been and will be further considered by my officials in light of the evidence and views provided.

The next stage of the process will be setting out the appropriate timescales for policy development over the short and long term, in the context of the Welsh Government's wider objectives and the UK's exit from the EU.

I have already issued a statement that our existing designated landscapes will be retained and their purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty will not be weakened, and a further priorities statement will be issued following the wide range of comments in response to the Future Landscapes Wales report and the SMNR consultation.

I look forward to in the coming days to providing a statement on the refreshed Forestry Strategy which takes into account the principles of SMNR and new legislation since its last update in 2009.

Doing even more to develop a more resource efficient, 'circular' economy will be taken forward in our planned consultation later in 2018 on an update of our waste strategy, 'Towards Zero Waste' and on a draft route map for a more resource efficient Wales.

Useful contributions have been received in response to smarter regulation proposals; these and other views in relation to appropriate regulatory needs for land management post EU Exit have been considered in the "Brexit and our Land" consultation document scheduled for publication in early July.

There were strong but differing views on how best to reform access legislation. We therefore believe that now is not the right time for substantive reform. But we are committed to exploring selected aspects of change where there was greater consensus, including on some of the administrative arrangements and multi-use paths. We will continue to facilitate further discussions through established groups such as the National Access Forum.

Likewise, I recognise there was strong support for the introduction of new financial penalties to help address littering from vehicles, the consultation identified a number of issues with the proposed new powers and these require further consideration. On this basis we will continue to engage with stakeholders and will explore how best to support Local Authorities in implementing their existing powers.

Marine planning for Wales is making good progress and I look forward to introducing the first Welsh National Marine Plan and will give further consideration to regional plans once we have experience from implementing the national plan.

Stakeholders and the wider public will be updated on any future developments through established working groups and other Welsh Government communications channels.

The published summary of the responses can be accessed at the following link:

https://beta.gov.wales/taking-forward-wales-sustainable-management-natural-resources