

Stakeholder Justification Paper – Ecosystem



| Standi loludi Sustilica | tion Paper – Ecosystem |
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| Output/Commitment | |
| Support the ecosyster | m by planting more native trees in their natural habitat. |
| Detail | We will support local ecosystems by planting over 6,000 native trees each year, improving on our previous goal to plant five trees for every one removed. We will work with community groups and focus on areas where tree removal was necessary for safety, planting native species in their natural habitats, contributing to the region's environmental sustainability. |
| Targets (more stretching than GD2?) | Yes, both in terms of numbers and ambition to plant native trees in areas that provide a greater ecosystem services benefit. For example, we aim to partner with Stump Up For Trees in the Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) so that our tree planting is part of a whole landscape plan. While we will endeavour to replace trees lost in the locality/unitary authority they were removed, the availability of suitable tree planting programmes in a given area may not be compatible with the scale of ambition so we need overflow projects to absorb the numbers we commit to. |
| Strategy Document/ Business Plan Section | Natural Capital section of the Environmental Action Plan |
| Cost & Bill Impact | |
| Proposed | Base |
| Funding Benefits & risks | |
| | Summary: Reduced impact of essential work on the environment and contributes to community wellbeing |
| Summary of Deficition | and ecosystem services |
| | Direct financial benefits: SROI calculation? |
| | Societal benefits: Cleaner air, control of flow of water through landscape (flood prevention), amenity, biodiversity support, climate change adaptation. |
| | Improves on GD2 because tree planting will be part of a whole landscape ecosystem approach although there will still be capacity for parkland/urban tree planting which will give cleaner air but is generally more aesthetic benefits than ecosystem services benefits. |
| Summary of risks | Not doing this risks a negative impact on environmental sustainability including a net increase in CO2 as a result of removing trees without replacement Non-native trees may disrupt local ecosystems, potentially altering habitats and food sources for local wildlife Non native ornamental planting merely aesthetic and not contributing to ecosystem services in the context of whole ecosystem climate change adaptation. Loss of local trees may impact negatively on community wellbeing Planting of trees in rural areas – potential conflict with agricultural community therefore careful selection of sites needed and mediated through well-established and trusted organisations. |
| Stakeholder voice - | |
| Engagement method (what and who) | The WWU Biodiversity Stakeholder Workshop and the WWU Sustainability Strategy Workshop saw participation from a diverse range of stakeholders, each bringing unique perspectives and interests to the discussions. Here is a detailed breakdown of the types of stakeholders who attended each workshop: |
| | Biodiversity Stakeholder Workshop: |
| | Local Authorities: Representing a significant portion of attendees, local authorities were keen on discussing environmental net gain, carbon sequestration, flood management, and nutrient control in water systems. Charities: Many attendees were from charitable organisations, particularly those focused on vulnerability and social value. Business Groups: These stakeholders were interested in collaboration opportunities and the broader impacts of biodiversity projects. Utilities: Representatives from the utility sector provided insights into practical approaches for biodiversity enhancement. Environmental Networks: Participants from various environmental networks and conservation groups |

advocated for strategic and data-driven biodiversity management.

Community Groups: Emphasised the importance of community engagement and the social benefits of environmental projects

Sustainability Strategy Workshop:

Local Authorities: Local authorities were prominently represented, discussing sustainability, environmental impact, and community engagement.

Housing Associations: These stakeholders were particularly interested in sustainability and the implications for housing and local communities.

Consumer Bodies: Represented the interests of consumers, focusing on sustainability and the impact on local communities.

Vulnerability Service Providers: Highlighted the social benefits of sustainability initiatives and proposed collaborations to improve community facilities

Wales Environment Link Roundtable:

Member organisations of WEL: Campaign for National Parks; RSPB Cymru; Wildlife Trusts Wales; Plantlife; Buglife; CIEEM

Stakeholder Views (what they said, regional differences and how we responded)

Opinions, views: Whole Ecosystem Approach: Stakeholders encouraged WWU to consider the wider environmental effects of tree removal and planting, advocating for a whole ecosystem approach and environmental net gain.

Collaboration and Partners: Stakeholders suggested collaborating with local authorities, conservation groups, and exploring opportunities with Forestry Commission grants for tree-planting schemes. This collaboration could help extend the reach and impact of separate funding pots.

Suitable Locations: Opinions varied on the most suitable locations for tree planting. Some stakeholders favoured barren land and hospital grounds, while others preferred urban areas and managed woodlands Community Engagement: Engaging and working with communities was seen as crucial. Business representatives supported direct engagement with local communities and suggested that WWU should consider the broader effects of tree removal on the environment to reassure communities.

Environmental Net Gain: There was a consensus that broader environmental benefits could be achieved through biodiversity enhancements. This includes educational initiatives and collaborative projects that align with existing local and regional biodiversity projects and frameworks

Broader Benefits: The broader benefits of environmental net gain, including emotional, psychological, social, and recreational benefits, were highlighted.

Overall, stakeholders stressed the need for a committed and thoughtful approach to tree planting and removal, emphasising early communication, collaboration, and consideration of broader environmental impacts.

Associated facts: Planting native trees in native regions offers multiple tangible benefits, including environmental, economic, and social advantages. Here are some key benefits:

Environmental Benefits

Biodiversity Enhancement: Native trees support local wildlife, providing habitat and food sources for birds, insects, and other animals. This helps maintain and enhance biodiversity.

Soil Health Improvement: Native trees contribute to soil stabilization and prevent erosion. Their root systems help maintain soil structure and fertility.

Water Management: Native trees play a crucial role in water regulation. They can improve groundwater recharge, reduce runoff, and enhance the quality of water by filtering pollutants. Carbon Sequestration: Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, helping to mitigate climate change by acting as carbon sinks.

Air Quality Improvement: Native trees help improve air quality by absorbing pollutants such as nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide, and ozone.

Economic Benefits

Cost-Effectiveness: Native trees are generally more adapted to local conditions, requiring less water, fertilizers, and pesticides, which reduces maintenance costs.

Local Economy Support: Planting and maintaining native trees can create job opportunities within local communities, supporting the economy.

Energy Savings: Strategically planting native trees around buildings can reduce energy costs by providing shade in the summer and windbreaks in the winter.

Social Benefits

Recreational Spaces: Native trees enhance the beauty of landscapes, making them more attractive for recreational activities and improving the quality of life for local residents. Cultural Value: Native trees often have cultural and historical significance for local communities, preserving heritage and traditions.

Educational Opportunities: Tree planting projects can serve as educational tools, teaching communities about local ecosystems and the importance of biodiversity.

Health Benefits: Access to green spaces with native trees has been shown to improve mental and physical health, reducing stress and promoting well-being.

Ecosystem Services

Pollination Support: Native trees often support pollinators like bees and butterflies, which are critical for the reproduction of many plants and crops.

Climate Regulation: By influencing local climate conditions, native trees can help moderate temperatures and reduce the urban heat island effect.

Flood Mitigation: Native trees can reduce the risk of flooding by absorbing significant amounts of water during heavy rains.

Conflicts: Opinions varied on the most suitable locations for tree planting. Some stakeholders favoured barren land and hospital grounds, while others preferred urban areas and managed woodlands.

Regional differences: Stakeholders suggested exploring possibilities with the Forestry Commission for tree planting grants – This would be relevant to south west England. In Wales, the appropriate organisation is Natural Resources Wales, but stakeholders were unclear if there are similar potential opportunities in relation to grants.

Options considered: Three options were considered for GD3

- 1. Continue in line with GD2 and plant five native trees for every one we cut down (avg. 1,800 during GD2), focusing on the local authority area where tree felling took place, and support tree planting with local community groups.
- 2. Commit to 6,000 native trees per year ensuring this number exceeds the highest recorded annual 5 for 1 number in GD2 and would include tree planting partnerships with community groups.
- 3. Go further and commit to 8,000 native trees per year.

How we responded: Taking into account stakeholder feedback and the factual information linked to planting native trees in native environments, it was determined that while there are benefits of planting trees in a range of locations, the most benefit could be derived from planting native trees in native environments. We decided to commit to planting 6,000 trees because this is financially optimum. It is likely to exceed the numbers we have to remove for safety reasons while not be an excessive use of public money. This decision is backed up by our Business Plan Acceptability Research (1,251 online and 150 in person 20-minute interviews) where 95% of participants found this commitment to be acceptable.

Performance

GD2 Performance, Benchmarking/ Industry comparison

We are proposing to make a strategic shift from our current "five for one" tree felling policy to a more efficient fixed planting target over GD3. This transition aims to address process adherence challenges, enhance compliance with our publicly reported ambitions, improve transparency, and provide better financial predictability in our environmental initiatives. This is also in line with NGN's current GD2 ambition to plant 40,000 trees in their region.

Our current challenges

1. Process - The existing reporting process faces adherence challenges with the forms not being

completed as required. This is in part due to the way tree felling is organised through a third-party provider, but we are also waiting for this form to be included as part of the field app upgrades with Link so currently, it sits outside of existing systems in MS Forms. There are also issues with understanding when to report and as tree felling is completed as a part of operational work, unless it is explicitly identified in the scope or description, we don't know when to follow up on missing forms.

- 2. ISO14001 Audit Risks The current policy has resulted in minor findings of improvement during a previous ISO14001 audits however given challenges with adherence to the process we are at risk of other findings.
- 3. Public Reporting Risks (AER) Fluctuations and lack of confidence in tree felling numbers undermine the reliability of our public reports, potentially affecting our reputation but also means we cannot confidently confirm our compliance with our ambitions and internal policies.
- 4. Budgeting Uncertainty The current process is susceptible to fluctuations in volumes meaning accurate budgeting for tree planting may not always be possible.

Transitioning to a fixed number of trees to be planted over a five-year period offers strategic advantages. This would streamline our reporting process as we'd only need to record numbers planted against the target which would provide us with more reliable information whilst also removing the collective business effort of administering and assuring the existing process. Removing this from a documented policy/procedure would also reduce the risk of ISO14001 audit scrutiny, it would still however be open to internal audit assurance when producing external reports but with only one controlled element being captured, this would be more robust.

The fixed planting target also provides better budgeting predictability, mitigating the impact of fluctuating tree felling numbers on financial planning and allowing for phased spend across the year. Our current process requires us to validate the felled numbers throughout the year to be in a position to accrue costs before the end of the reporting year.

The new approach would also allow for the integration of social tree planting projects in our overall targets, aligning with our broader Environmental Action Plan ambitions around culture and society. Having a broader target not directly connected to impacting works also allows us to account for the wider environmental benefits such as ecosystem services (e.g air quality/ carbon sequestration). We would still continue to separately offset our unavoidable carbon emissions through verified sources, which may include tree planting depending on the schemes available in the reporting year.

Deliverability & Whole Systems Impact

Deliverability & viability implications

Follows practice established by NGN.

Devolves expertise on right tree in right place to expert partners and is part of a whole-ecosystem approach rather than piecemeal planting.

Risk that we cannot guarantee to replace same numbers of trees removed in a particular location because there may not be suitable opportunity in that location. The alternative is that trees would be planted where they could provide little benefit or be vulnerable to removal in the near future – a tokenistic approach. Planting trees as part of a long-term managed programme that delivers ecosystem services is the preferred option and benefits our (sub) region as a whole. A catchment or bioregional approach rather than a local authority boundary approach would bring the greatest benefit to customers. There would be a more scientifically valid link between methane gas > climate change > adaption /mitigation if trees were planted where they could, for example, contribute to flood control or urban cooling.

Triangulation scorecard

Our engagement scoring methodology leverages the information from the HM Treasury's Magenta Book, Quality in Qualitative Evaluation framework and various weighing methodologies used by networks to assess how much impact each piece of evidence should have on their decision-making process.

Each piece of evidence is given a score between 0-2 against a scoring criteria including Relevance to

topic, Level of stakeholder knowledge, Quality of engagement, Rigour of feedback collection and Credibility of analysis and interpretation.

The table below outlines how the evidence used to produce this document scored against each criteria and its overall score. An average and modal score is then provided, which is associated to a grading system that demonstrates the feedback robustness and quality.

| | | | Score | | | Final Score |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|----------------|
| Document Name | Relevance to Topic | Level of Stakeholder Knowledge | Quality of Engagement | Rigour of Feedback Collection | Credibility of Analysis and Interpretation | 00010 |
| 2023-The-Trussell-Trust Hunger-in-the-UK-report-web updated-10Aug23 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| _NESO engagement event | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| _Powering Up Britain_ announcements | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| 11920 CR Plus SWIC Cluster Report | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 20230213 - HJ – HyCymru and Wales Hydrogen Infrastructure Group | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| 20240605_Draft Technical Report_Denbighshire | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 20240617_LAEPTechnical_Report_Wrexham | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 220209 DAR St. Athan Hydrogen Aviation Cluster Workshop | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| 220722 DAR NIC and Bristol City Council | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| 3037 LCT Tracker W4 Report WWU FV | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 3039 LCT Tracker W5 Report WWU FV2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 3564 WWU Customer Business Priorities FV2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 3636 WWU Customer Priorities Report_Debrief_v3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| 3830_NEA_Fuel-Poverty-Monitor-Report- 2022_V2-1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |

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| Energy Networks Innovation Strategy 2022 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
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| Eliolgy Notworks inflovation offacegy 2022 | ۷ | | | | | |
| EUSP Council Dec 23_ Delivery Board Briefing | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| Final version WWU - Critical Friends Panel - Feb 2023 - Feedback Report | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| House of Commons - Support for Innovation to Deliver Net Zero | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| HyRES Open event summary report v2 23- 01-26 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| ICS-UKCSI-Exec- Summary_Jan22_INTERACTIVE-h2d26m | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| June 2022 - Hybrid Working Policy | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| LAEP Technical Report Merthyr Tydfil DRAFT 160524 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| LAEP_BG_Technical-report_v1.1DRAFT- REVIEW_20240604 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| LAEP_Flintshire_Technical-report_v1(DRAFT-REVIEW)_20240611 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| LCP Delta - Online consultation responses summary | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| LCT Tracker results for WWU FV | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Marie Curie Quality Account Report 22-23 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| Minutes - Council 14.12.23 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| NEA Cymru - VCMA DAR | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| NEA-Impact-Report-2023-FINAL-1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| Neath Port Talbot LAEP Technical Annex - Client V1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |

| Non-Domestic Consumer Research Report V Final for siteNov 2022 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Ofgem-consumer-standards - NEA Response | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| HyRES Open event summary report v2 23- 01-26 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| PE21199 Understanding consumers' attitudes to safety measures when using 100_ hydrogen in the home v1.0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Permit Schemes Statutory Guidance July 2022 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| Powys LAEP Draft A | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| PSR Code Group Report. DRAFT w exec summary 21.11.23 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| RCT LAEP Technical Report DRAFT 280524 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Report - CCC - Delivering a reliable decarbonised | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| RP-FGS-Monmouthshire Technical Report- 070624-DRAFT-ISSUED | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| RP-FGS-Torfaen Technical Report-240520- DRAFT-ISSUED-v2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Safeguarding the switch to domestic hydrogen WWU Report 1.0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| Stakeholder workshop - Actions Responsibilities P2 - PRESENTATION PACK - CCR_bilingual | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Stakeholder Workshop - Baseline and setting p_Lewis Garvey | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |

| Swansea LAEP Technical Annex - V2 - Client Copy1 - WWU Feedback | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Sweco workshop notes_ waste and carbon | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Technical Report Cardiff DRAFT 2024_05_24 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Technical_Report - Gwynedd draft issue 07.06.24 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Technical_Report_Anglesey_draft issue 14.6.24 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Technical_Report_Caerphilly_v.1(d) | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Technical_Report_Vale of Glamorgan_2024_05_24 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| UK-Hydrogen-Strategy_web | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| UKRI Culture of innovation_Full report_Oct 2023_Pdf_version | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| UKRI-141123-EnablingNet ZeroPlanUKIndustrial ClusterDecarbonisation | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| UKRI-PA-InnovationCultureReport | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| VCMA Collaborative Report Year 1 21-22 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| VCMA Collaborative Report Year 2 22-23 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| VCMA Year 1 Showcase Stakeholder Workshop - Feedback Report | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| WGP Hydrogen Strategy v2.0 (Summary and Technical Reports) FINAL | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Workshop - Actions & Responsibilities P2 - PRESENTATION PACK - NW_shared | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |

| Workshop 2 Cummany Euturoproofing the | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Workshop 2 Summary - Futureproofing the networks | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Workshop 4 Summary - Transforming how networks interact with industry | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Workshop 6 Summary - Network investment | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| WWU - Critical Friends Panel - Feb 2024 - Feedback Report v5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| WWU Biodiversity Stakeholder Workshop Feedback Report | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU Business Panel_full report with appendix | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU Citizen Panel full Report_V1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU Citizens Panel report Decarbonisation of home heat March 2022 FINAL | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU Customer Satisfaction_full report | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| WWU Customer Service Trends Secondary Research - Findings report - Final | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU Employer of Choice Qualitative Follow- up Findings report v1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| WWU FW strategy workshop 180721 final | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| WWU GD3 Business Planning Workshop Feedback Report | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU LAEP Stakeholder Workshop Feedback Report | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| WWU qual priorities report FINAL | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU Report Cardiff November 2022 LW Comments | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |

| WWU Safety Stakeholder Workshop Feedback Report | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| WWU SSMC response – 6th March | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU Sustainability Strategy Workshop - Feedback Report | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| WWU Vulnerability Panel Report_V3_060923 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| WWU_EVP_Insights_Report_Aug22_v1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| WWU_Improving the CEX research programme_Stage 1_Report of findings_17.01.23 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| Average Score of Sources | | | | 1 | | 8.81 |
| Mode | | | | | | 10 |

| Score | Grade | Description |
|-------|-----------|--|
| 0-3 | Poor | Feedback should not be used for triangulation as it does not meet the minimum quality standards. |
| 4-6 | Average | Feedback could be used for triangulation but possible lacks robustness. |
| 7-8 | Good | Feedback meets the standards necessary for credible triangulation. |
| 9-10 | Excellent | Feedback meets the best standards of rigour and quality. |