

ANNEX 9

Review of Science - – timeline of events

In **2009** the (then) Welsh Assembly Government requested a 'Review of Science' to consider the queries being raised concerning the CCW's advice on the conservation status of the Annex I and Annex II habitats and species in the Abermenai to Aberffraw SAC, and the most appropriate management of the forest and habitats adjacent to it. The reviewing panel was unable to reach a consensus on some issues.

The communicant met with the Chief Executive of CCW on 16 checklist 2009 to consider various issues in relation to this (see **Annex 11**).

Implementation of several actions in the Newborough Forest Management Plan (FMP) 2010-2015 (published in 2010) was subject to the conclusions of the Review of Science, which remained partly unresolved.

Fifth Meeting of Newborough Science Review at 10.00, **17 August 2010**: It was agreed that the Newborough Science Review should move to independent arbitration.

There was agreement in **November 2010** on the general composition of the arbitration panel, though the note of the meeting indicates a panel of 2-3, lists 5 roles and suggests 8 possible members. However, there was no agreement on the specific membership or on the terms of reference.

December 2010 Felling licence approved for Newborough (**Annex 4**)

August 2011 – Minister's letter to Albert Owen MP

I understand that the terms of reference for the Review made provision for arbitration by a single independent scientist if a consensus was not forthcoming. I have seen CCW's subsequent proposal to convene an expert panel of scientists (agreed by both parties) but I am not convinced that it represents the best way forward.

Given the already protracted nature of the Newborough case, I believe a more cost-effective and streamlined approach is necessary. I have asked the Welsh Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor John Harries to examine the scientific aspects of the case and determine what if any arbitration is necessary.

The Forestry Commission's Forest Management Plan for 2010-2015 has been running for over six months, and requires clarity on some of the scientific issues in order to progress. My officials have been in contact with representatives of Newborough Forest Partnership and CCW and it appears that there is considerable potential for agreement on a way forward. Both parties have been asked to outline their scientific concerns and submit them for the consideration of Professor Harries. I look forward to receiving his advice and expect that it will lead to the development of appropriate management measures for the site.

Welsh Government (WG) met its Chief Scientific advisor Dr John Harries **on 6 December 2011**, to conduct an initial overview of the evidence then available in the Newborough Forest Review of Science.

In **late 2011** those parties which had contributed to the Review of Science were asked to document their positions for consideration by the Welsh Government's Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA). ANNEX 1 contains the summary of the documents submitted by the Newborough Forest Partnership to the CSA.

From this information the CSA concluded there was insufficient evidence to support decision-making and advised that further scientific work, including on-site trials and research, should be undertaken to help guide future management.

The results of subsequent scientific work were published (Pye & Blott 2012) in a CCW science report on Welsh dune geomorphology and best methods for dune rejuvenation at ten protected sites across Wales (including Aberffraw to Abermenai).

For Newborough the report concluded that direct vegetation clearance, accompanied by local topographical re-profiling to enhance wind flow, will be required in order to stand any chance of creating significant areas of bare sand and mobile dunes.

In addition to the '10 sites report', a paper (by Dr Lawrence Jones of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)) submitted with the package of documents for review, included recommendations for work in the area around the boundary between Newborough Warren and Newborough Forest (Zone 1 east) arguing that clearing within this area would be most likely to benefit the Warren through benefits from both changes to hydrology and wind-speeds.

Taken together the areas highlighted in the 10 sites report and suggestions in Lawrence Jones' additional paper (southern end of Zone 1 west and Zone 1 east) broadly corresponded with areas proposed for clear felling to restore dune mobility in the FMP.

In **2013** Welsh Government commissioned Professor Ken Pye to provide a detailed specification for the proposals for pilot works in the relevant areas of Zone 1 east and Zone 1 west.

An internal examination of the Newborough Review of Science documents was undertaken by a qualified Welsh Government official. The internal report "Consideration of Proposals for Shifting Dune Rejuvenation and Hydrological Monitoring Work for Winters 2013-14 & 2014-15" (**Aug 2013**) concluded that, within the material presented for review, no specific objections were identified to the works proposed in Zone 1 east and Zone 1 west for winter 2013-14.

The Welsh Government was therefore of the view that the proposals outlined were measured and balanced, i.e. proportionate, and focused on specific outcomes in respect of restoring FCS, and advancing scientific knowledge of mobilisation techniques. The WG therefore raised no objections to the proposal to proceed with operations as outlined in the Forest Management Plan 2010-15 (FMP) and to further consider the matters relevant to the FMP that were to be referred for review. The proposed trials in Zone 1 east and Zone 1 west (southern end) began in **January 2014**.

As part of its work to consider the other matters that were to be referred for review, the WG has asked the JNCC to support it and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in taking forward the Review of Science for Newborough. As the authors of the Common Standards Monitoring Guidance WG has sought further clarification from JNCC regarding what constitutes the inland boundaries of dune systems and the application of principles to define shoreline integrity (the '95%' principle you refer to). JNCC's view reflected the consensus of the four UK Statutory Nature Conservation Organisations that decisions regarding common standards across the UK and EU may be informed by expert knowledge and professional judgement regarding a specific site and the experience of managing that site.

April 2014 – JNCC response to WG clarification regarding what constitutes the inland boundaries of dune systems and the application of principles to define shoreline integrity; on issues concerning small-scale clearance and restoration; and on the management of high conservation-value, “non SAC” features

September 2014 – WG letter to NRW stated that WG consider that the Review of Science that has been undertaken is now concluded in relation to the FMP