<u>Woodlands for Wales Action Plan</u>

<u>2015-2020</u>

Part 1   **"*Woodlands for Wales*"**

Synopsis of the Welsh Government's strategy for woodlands and trees in Wales.

Part 2   **Action Plan**

Short-term focus on actions and activities to make progress towards delivery of the long-term ambitions of "Woodlands for Wales".

-        ***Underpinning Principles***

-        ***Delivery Mechanisms***

-        ***Priority Actions***

Part 3   **Reporting and Review**

The process for monitoring and reporting on progress against the actions and activities set out in this Action Plan.

Annex 1   **"*Woodlands for Wales*" Vision, Themes and Outcomes**

Annex 2   **Priority Actions – Summary List**

PART 1

"*Woodlands for Wales*" – Synopsis of the Welsh Government's Strategy

1. "*Woodlands for Wales*" is the Welsh Government's fifty-year strategy for woodlands and trees in Wales. It was originally published in 2001 and was revised and published in March 2009. It sets out the Welsh Government's policy aims and objectives for *all* woodlands and trees in Wales, namely those in public and private ownership and whether in rural, peri-urban or urban environments.

2. "*Woodlands for Wales*" recognises that forestry, woodlands and trees are a long-term business capable of providing a range of social, economic and environmental benefits to the people of Wales, including making a significant contribution towards mitigating the impact of climate change. As such, forestry, woodland and trees are a key part of both a more holistic approach to managing Wales's natural resources which is being developed in the Environment Bill, and goals to improve the well-being of Wales described in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill.

3. The foundation of "*Woodlands for* Wales" is the concept of sustainable forests, woodlands and trees delivering a full range of benefits. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe[1] defined sustainable forest management as "*the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local national and global levels, and does not cause damage to other ecosystems*". The sustainable management of Wales's forests, woodlands and trees is the basis on which they can then contribute to the effective delivery of the Welsh Government's national priorities of driving green growth, resilience and safety, a fairer Wales and using resources efficiently.

4. The long-term ambition of "*Woodlands for Wales*" is expressed in the *Vision* set out in the strategy:
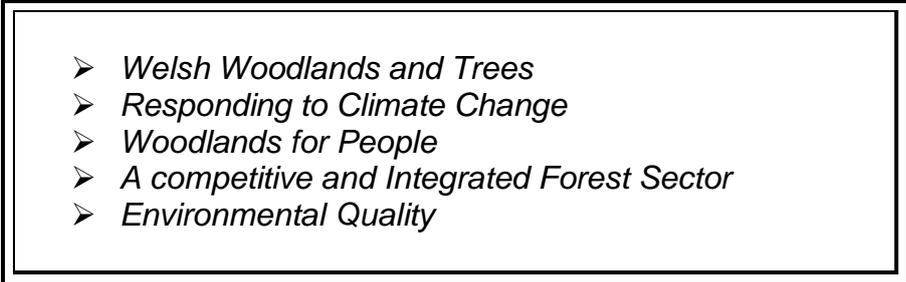
> *Wales will be known for its high-quality woodlands that enhance the landscape, are appropriate to local conditions and have a diverse mixture of species and habitats.*

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[1] Resolution of the Second Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, 16-17 June 1993.

"*Woodlands for Wales*" envisages that delivering the *Vision* will: -

- provide real social and community benefits, both locally and nationally;

- support thriving woodland-based industries; and

- contribute to a better quality environment throughout Wales.
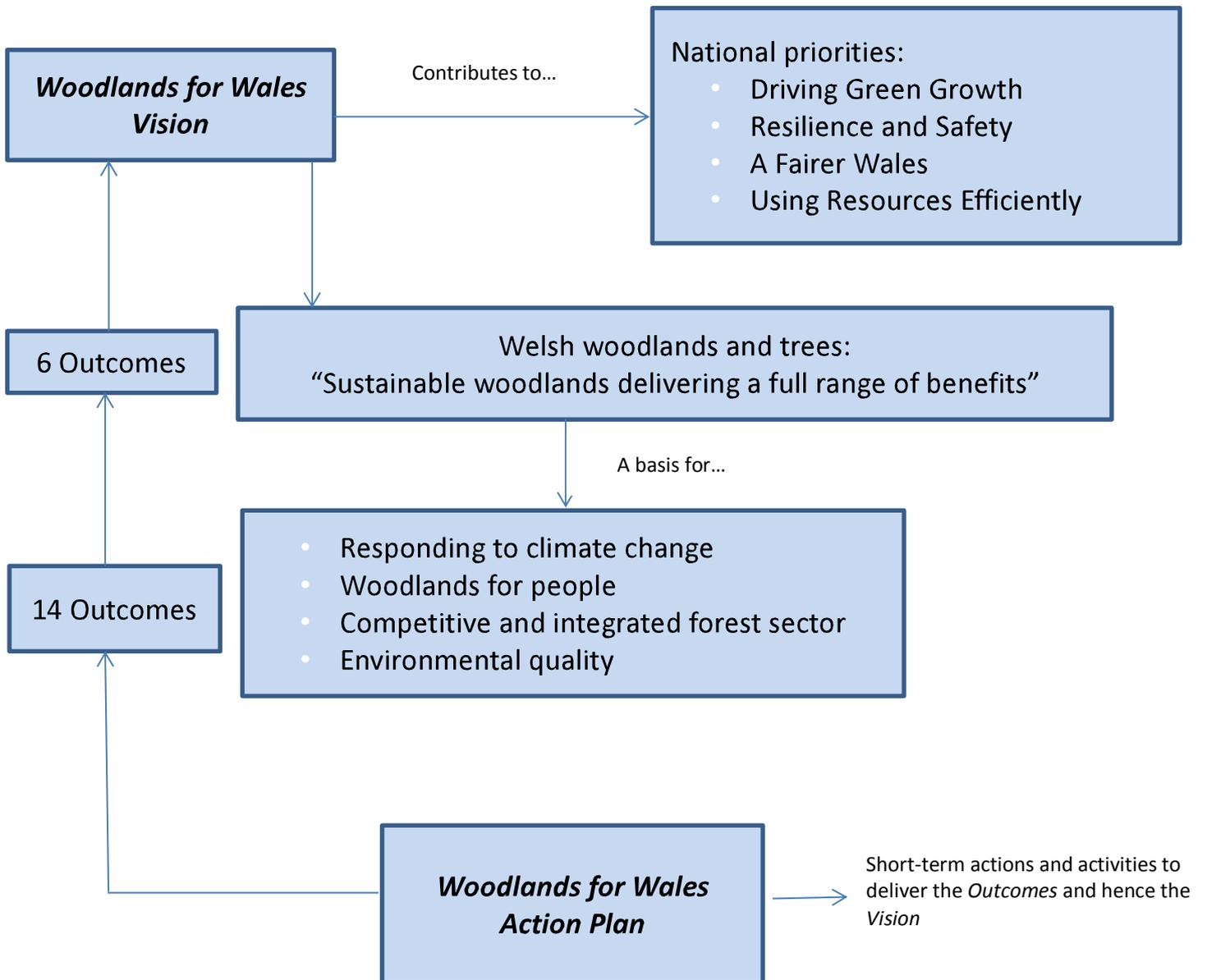
5. "*Woodlands for Wales*" identifies 20 high-level *Outcomes* that act as a long-term focus for implementing the *Vision*. The *Outcomes* are framed around five *Themes*:

> - *Welsh Woodlands and Trees*
> - *Responding to Climate Change*
> - *Woodlands for People*
> - *A competitive and Integrated Forest Sector*
> - *Environmental Quality*

The nature, quality, distribution and management of Welsh woodlands and trees underpins the delivery of "*Woodlands for Wales*". The *Welsh Woodlands and Trees* theme is therefore the foundation supporting the other four themes which are focused around specific issues. The "*Woodlands for Wales*" *Themes* and *Outcomes* are, together with the *Vision*, set out at **Annex 1**.

6. This *Action Plan* is designed to set out the short-term actions and activities to deliver the long-term ambitions of "*Woodlands for Wales*". It is part of a series of five-year plans that set out the actions being undertaken over the lifetime of each respective plan. Short-term actions and activities (described as "*priority actions*") are linked in this *Plan* to the high-level *Outcomes* identified in "*Woodlands for Wales*". These *priority actions* together with "*underpinning principles*" and "*delivery mechanisms*" (which are of more of an on-going nature and likely to continue beyond the five-year life of this *Plan* into the next and subsequent plans) form the key components of the *Action Plan*. Collectively, the components provide a focus on actions and activities, to be delivered over the five year lifetime of this *Plan*, to make progress towards achieving the *Outcomes* and *Vision* of "*Woodlands for Wales*".

7. The diagram below illustrates the relationship between this *Action Plan*, *Woodlands for Wales* and the Welsh Government's national priorities.
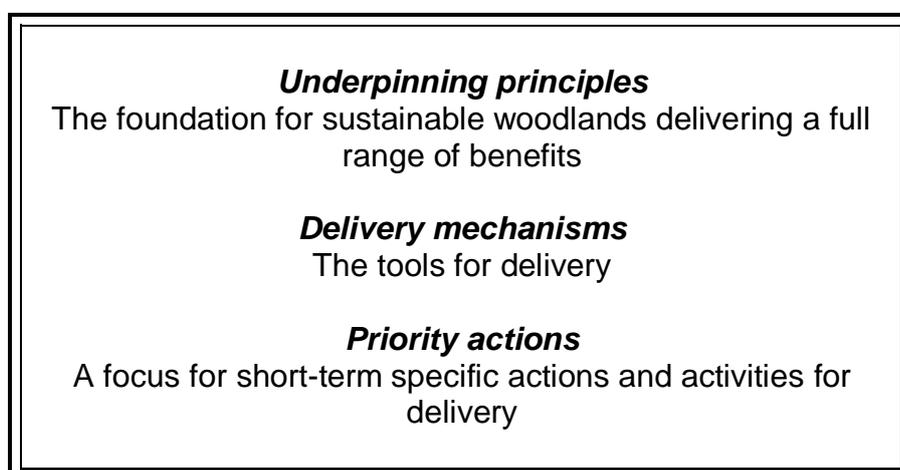
Context for the "*Woodlands for* Wales *Action Plan*"

Woodlands for Wales Vision	*Contributes to...* → **National priorities:** • Driving Green Growth • Resilience and Safety • A Fairer Wales • Using Resources Efficiently

6 Outcomes

Welsh woodlands and trees:
"Sustainable woodlands delivering a full range of benefits"

A basis for...

• Responding to climate change
• Woodlands for people
• Competitive and integrated forest sector
• Environmental quality

14 Outcomes

Woodlands for Wales Action Plan

Short-term actions and activities to deliver the *Outcomes* and hence the *Vision*

PART 2

Action Plan Detail

8. There is wide-ranging cross-sectoral involvement and interest in forestry, woodlands and trees including: the Welsh Government; Natural Resources Wales; local authorities; businesses; woodland and other community groups; charities; landowners; and individuals. They all have a key role to play in achieving the "*Woodlands for Wales*" *Vision* and delivering the actions set out in this *Action Plan*.

9. This *Action Plan* is built around three components which, together, focus the actions and activities of all those organisations, groups and individuals with an involvement and interest in forestry, woodlands and trees. The components are:

Underpinning principles
The foundation for sustainable woodlands delivering a full range of benefits

Delivery mechanisms
The tools for delivery

Priority actions
A focus for short-term specific actions and activities for delivery

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10. This *Action Plan* is a five-year plan. The **underpinning principles** and the **delivery mechanisms** are more enduring and fundamental in nature and will carry forward beyond this *Plan* into the next and subsequent plans. The **priority actions** are specific actions and activities to be actioned during the currency of this *Plan*. There may not always be clear dividing lines between these three components and particular matters could fall within one, two or even all three of them. For example, reference to the UK Forestry Standard is included in this *Plan* as supporting the *underpinning principle* of "sustainable forests and woodlands". Adherence to the Standard also demonstrates "best practice", one of the *delivery mechanisms*. Therefore, **underpinning principles**, **delivery mechanisms** and **priority actions** are not mutually exclusive components. They are very much interlinked and together in this *Plan* provide a focus for activity to achieve the *Outcomes* and *Vision* of "*Woodlands for Wales*".

11. The significance of the **priority actions** is that they are those specific actions that will be undertaken in the short-term (up to 5 years) over the life of this

Plan. They are linked to the "*Woodlands for Wales*" *Outcomes* and progress against them will be reported annually.

12. The ***underpinning principles***, ***delivery mechanisms*** and ***priority actions*** are set out below.

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Underpinning principles

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> ***The foundation for sustainable woodlands delivering a full range of benefits***

13. The ***underpinning principles*** are the key principles that support the delivery of the specific *priority actions* set out in this *Action Plan*. By their nature, they are of a more enduring character and they will continue beyond this *Plan* into the next and future iterations.

14. The ***underpinning principles*** *are:* -

- ***Natural Resources Policy Framework:*** long-term planning ensuring the contribution of forestry, woodlands and trees to the environment, economy and communities. The framework includes three main elements: -

   - ➤ the State of Natural Resources Report, a snapshot view of Wales's natural resources and their capacity to sustain benefits for us all;

   - ➤ the Welsh Government's National Natural Resources Policy, taking the evidence from the State of Natural Resources Report to inform our national priorities; and

   - ➤ Area Statements and the area approach to natural resource management, to ensure that local considerations and opportunities are taken into account.

- ***Sustainable forests and woodlands:***

   - ➤ "*One Wales: One Planet*" the Welsh Government's scheme for sustainable development;

- ➢ principles of the UK Forestry Standard;

- ➢ UK Woodland Assurance Standard; and

- *International commitments:*

  - ➢ Wales's contribution to UK, European and Worldwide commitments to sustainable management of forest ecosystems as signatories to the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Forest Europe), the EU Forestry Strategy, the UN Convention of Biological Diversity and EU Birds/Habitat Directives.

- *Multiple benefits of forestry, woodland and trees:*

  - ➢ timber;

  - ➢ carbon capture;

  - ➢ water management;

  - ➢ green energy;

  - ➢ business development and social enterprise;

  - ➢ recreation and access;

  - ➢ health and well-being.

  - ➢ biodiversity and other ecosystem services; and

- *Increasing forest capital:*

  - ➢ increasing woodland cover in Wales; and

  - ➢ relating the management of forestry, woodlands and trees to other land uses and the provision of multiple benefits.

- *Working together to access opportunity:*

  - ➢ Welsh Government;

  - ➢ Natural Resources Wales;

- ➢ local authorities;

- ➢ businesses;

- ➢ woodland and other community groups;

- ➢ charities;

- ➢ landowners; and

- ➢ individuals.

- *Monitoring:*

  - ➢ State of Natural Resources Report;

  - ➢ *Woodlands for Wales* Indicators and surveys;

  - ➢ National Forest Inventory;

  - ➢ Glastir monitoring and evaluation programme;

  - ➢ *Action Plan* reporting/review; and

  - ➢ other evidence.

Delivery mechanisms

> **The tools for delivery**

15. The *delivery mechanisms* are the principal tools for delivering the specific *priority actions* set out in this *Action Plan*. Like the *underpinning principles*, the *delivery mechanisms* are of a more enduring nature and they will continue beyond this *Plan* into the next and future iterations.

16. The *delivery mechanisms* are: -

- ***Legislative framework:*** functions, duties and powers under legislation including the: -

  ➢ Forestry Act 1967;

  ➢ Plant Health Act 1967;

  ➢ Natural Resources Body for Wales (Establishment) Order 2012;

  ➢ Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013; and

  ➢ the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

- ***Best practice:***

  ➢ forest management planning adhering to the principles of the UK Forestry Standard.

- ***Incentives:***

  ➢ timber production;

  ➢ primary and secondary processing;

  ➢ green energy;

  ➢ carbon capture;

  ➢ payments for ecosystem services; and

  ➢ public sector support (Glastir, ERDF and ESF funding, Europe 2020 funding, LEADER, LIFE and other grant funding).

- ***Policy, information and guidance*** including:

  ➢ National Natural Resources Policy;

  ➢ *Woodlands for Wales*;

  ➢ Planning Policy Wales;

  ➢ Wales Spatial Plan;

  ➢ UK Forestry Standard;

- ➤ UKWAS; and

- ➤ Glastir advocacy.

- *Management of the Welsh Woodland Estate:*

  - ➤ exemplar of good forestry practice;

  - ➤ opportunities to take risk to test research and best practice; and

  - ➤ NRW Corporate Plan and annual Business Plan priorities.

- *Research and evidence:*

  - ➤ sound science and robust evidence supporting the delivery of sustainable forests and woodlands.

- *Joined up working:*

  - ➤ working together to deliver agreed outcomes;

  - ➤ creating links between initiatives to maximise available funding and benefits;

  - ➤ working with other land-use sectors towards integrated land-use.

<u>*Priority actions*</u>

> *Creating a focus for short-term specific actions and activities for delivery of the "Woodlands for Wales" Vision.*

17. Within this *Action Plan* there are sixteen **priority actions**. They provide a short-term focus on the specific actions to be delivered over the five-year life of this *Action Plan*. Each year, progress against the *priority actions* will be

monitored and reported on. Part 3 – *Monitoring and Reporting* – explains how this will be done.

18.   New *priority actions* might be identified as circumstances change over the five-year period covered by the *Plan*. But no *priority action* will be removed until it has been reported on.

19.   The sixteen *priority actions* appear below and they are grouped under the following seven areas: -

- ***Tree Health***

- ***Developing support for woodland creation and management***

- ***Enhancing the management and production of Welsh timber and its economic benefits***

- ***Conservation and biodiversity value***

- ***Invasive non-native species***

- ***Non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees***

- ***UK cross-border working***

20.   A consistent format is used for setting out the *priority actions*. There is a brief overview providing an introduction for each area. Each *priority action* is set out, followed by details of the lead organisation and delivery partners, the evidence base for the action and resources required to deliver it. Progress against the action will be reported annually, as noted above. The first progress report will be at the end of 2015.

21.   **Annex 2** summarises the *priority actions* and the "*Woodlands for Wales*" *Outcomes* and national priorities that they each deliver against.

PRIORITY ACTION

Tree Health

Overview

Pests and diseases have significant potential to impact on the health of trees and woodlands and to undermine the Vision of Woodlands for Wales. Over the past decade, several new pests and diseases have been found in the UK and some have become established with serious economic, social and environmental consequences. Wales's reliance on a very narrow range of species makes it particularly vulnerable to the impact of pests and diseases, as the impact of Phytophthora ramorum on larch trees has demonstrated.

The Welsh Government's Tree Health Strategy aims to "preserve the health and vitality of trees and woodland in Wales through strategies which exclude, detect and respond to existing and new pests and pathogens of trees, whether of native or exotic origin". Delivery of the Strategy is managed by the Wales Tree Health Steering Group. The Group comprises of representatives of the Welsh Government, NRW, ConFor and Wales Environment Link. Its purpose is to advise and support the Welsh Government to respond to outbreaks of pests and diseases affecting trees, including their impact on plants in the wider environment.

Priority Action 1:	**Develop and maintain a risk register of pests and diseases and their threat to tree health in Wales.**
Lead and Partners:	• Welsh Government, FR, NRW. • Wales Tree Health Steering Group.
Evidence base:	There are many pathways for pests and diseases to enter the UK and the impact of environmental factors, and particularly climate change, will have a major influence on the behaviour and population dynamics of those organisms. The creation and maintenance of a risk register for Wales is central to monitoring current and future threats and informing decisions about tree species selection, effective tree health control methods and woodland management within the umbrella of sustainable woodland management and woodland certification. The risk register will enable timely development of disease management strategies in response to any emerging biotic threat to woodlands and trees in Wales.
Resources required:	

Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Priority Action 2:	***Develop and implement the Phytophthora ramorum recovery programme.***
<u>*Lead*</u> *and Partners:*	• <u>Welsh Government</u> and <u>NRW</u>. • ConFor (others, particularly private growers and primary processors?).
Evidence base:	Whilst *P.ramorum* is a disaster for larch in Wales, and its management presents a continuing problem for the woodland sector, it is also an opportunity to improve the age structure and increase the species diversity of Welsh woodlands to meet the *Vision* of *Woodlands for Wales*. The recovery programme assesses the impact on and recovery of all infected woodlands in Wales, both publicly and privately owned, with the objective of enabling those woodlands to continue to make a positive contribution to the delivery of the Welsh Government's Green Growth agenda and *Woodlands for Wales*
Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

<u>*Relationship to government priorities*</u>

Priority Actions 1 and 2 deliver against:

• *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 1; 2; 3; 16; and 18*

• *National priorities of:* ***driving green growth; resilience and safety*** *of Wales's natural resources; and* ***using resources efficiently***.

PRIORITY ACTION

Developing support for woodland creation and management

Overview

Woodlands and trees, in public and private ownership and whether in rural, peri-urban or urban environments, are an integral part of the functioning of the Welsh environment. "Woodlands for Wales" envisages that woodland cover in Wales will increase and that it will provide a range of ecosystem services, including woodland as a resource for people in terms of recreation, access and amenity and woodland as a source of raw material supporting a thriving forestry sector.

Almost half (46%) of woodland in Wales is certified under the Forest Stewardship Council Scheme and managed under the UK Forestry Standard and its associated suite of guidelines. But a significant proportion of woodland is unmanaged or undermanaged. The challenge is bringing more woodland, including that which is small in scale and often fragmented, into management in accordance with the principles of the UK Forestry Standard.

The right species of tree planted in the right place and properly managed, can help to regulate water flows, alleviate flooding and intercept both diffuse pollution from agriculture and air pollution in towns and cities. Trees can reduce soil erosion, protect soil carbon stores and increase water perculation reducing run-off. They provide shade to livestock and watercourses, act as windbreaks and landscaping, and provide valuable habitats supporting a wide range of biodiversity. They sequester carbon and provide a renewable source of material, as well as giving rise to recreation and health opportunities.

In short, woodland has the potential to create economic activity, create employment opportunities and improve the biodiversity and functioning of Wales's environment. In particular, we need to make special efforts to encourage farmers, through the Wales Rural Development Plan for example, to bring their woodlands into sustainable management for biodiversity, timber, woodfuel and other environmental benefits. Such activity will provide a range of ecosystem services, as well as enabling farmers to diversify their businesses.

But woodland creation and management must be guided by the need to protect semi-natural habitats, historic features and characteristic landscapes. Whilst "Woodlands for Wales" has a strong presumption against the permanent removal of woodland, in certain circumstances it may be justified.

Priority Action 3:	***Implement "Glastir", the Welsh Government's key sustainable land management scheme available to land managers across Wales, and improve long-standing processes for making woodland creation decisions that will be taken under the new scheme.***

Lead and Partners:	<u>Welsh Government</u>, NRW, Rural Payments Wales, Local Authorities, Archaeological Trusts.
Evidence base:	Under the Wales Rural Development Plan 2014-2020, the Welsh Government will be supporting woodland creation and management with grant-funding through Glastir. The objectives of Glastir are: - • managing soils to help conserve carbon stocks and reduce soil erosion; • improving water quality and reducing surface run-off; • managing water to help reduce flood risks; • conserving and enhancing wildlife and biodiversity; • managing and protecting landscapes and the historic environment; and • creating new opportunities to improve access and understanding of the countryside There is a long standing practice of carrying out public consultation on woodland creation proposals supported by public funding. There is a need to refresh practices as part of implementing Glastir by improving consultation arrangements, including revising the woodland opportunities map.
Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Priority Action 4:	***Embed woodlands and trees in the Natural Resources Policy Framework and develop a policy for woodland removal and replacement***
Lead and Partners:	<u>NRW, WG</u>
Evidence base:	The UK National Ecosystem Assessment and the 2013 State of Nature Report provide evidence of the declining ecosystem services and biodiversity of UK ecosystems. The Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy Framework ("NRPF") is a means of planning and prioritising natural resource management ("NRM") to capture the value of and opportunities presented by natural resources in Wales. The Welsh Government's Environment Bill aims to put in place a legislative

framework around NRPF and NRM.

There is a strong presumption against the permanent removal of woodland except for the restoration of high priority open habitats. In Wales, all of the major Welsh rivers arise in peat dominated catchments. Peatland therefore plays an important role in regulating water chemistry and flow as well as providing a valuable ecological resources and carbon store. Drainage of peatland can lead to the release of carbon and peatland restoration can be a cost effective means of reducing such emissions. Where permanent woodland removal is contemplated, alternatives to removal, for example modifying management systems, should be explored.

In addition, there are pressures on woodland as a result of measures being taken to meet Water Framework Directive requirements. A WFD Priority Action Plan has been developed focusing on 44 water bodies where forestry has been identified as the reason for failing catchments. Measures to manage the impact of forestry on the water environment have been identified and those measures will be rolled out across the Welsh Government Woodland Estate.

All of this has the potential to reduce both woodland cover and the production potential of the Welsh national forest – and this is particularly pertinent in light of recent 50 year production forecasts for Wales. A clear and informed policy on woodland removal and replacement will help embed the importance of woodlands and trees into the NRPF.

Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Priority Action 5:	***Develop a policy to address the future shortfall in timber production as outlined in the recent 50 year production forecast.***
Lead and Partners:	<u>WG, NRW, Confor, processing sector</u>
Evidence base:	NFI 50-year forecast data of softwood timber availability indicates that there is a significant gap in softwood timber supplies in the medium to long-term. The reasons for this are varied including the creation of open habitats, PAWS restoration

and emphasis on broadleaf planting. There is a risk that this gap may indeed broaden through the need for species diversification for forest resilience in order to combat the effects of climate change and tree pests and diseases. But the gap has the potential to impact on the Welsh economy in terms of less investment in the forestry sector and fewer employment opportunities created.

There a number of factors to consider in addressing the matter, including the scope to bring land into production through more effective crop rotation cycles. As an alternative to clear felling, continuous cover forestry techniques or lower impact silvicultural systems are examples of forest management systems that can be evaluated to increase the timber output from Welsh woodlands. Short rotation forestry techniques, using the UKFS as a benchmark, can be a means to contribute to woodfuel markets, supporting the use of other raw material as timber.

Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Priority Action 6:	***Develop a strategic approach to increasing tree cover in towns and cities.***
Lead and Partners:	WG, NRW, local authorities
Evidence base:	Trees in urban settings play an important role in providing a clean, attractive and resilient built environment. Evidence in favour of urban tree planting has shown the role of trees in reducing air pollution, regulating against urban flooding and reducing surface temperatures. As in rural areas, trees in urban settings are likely to become important tools in future efforts to adapt to a changing climate whilst also improving well-being and standards of living, for example as a means of addressing the prevalence of illnesses like asthma. NRW has collected evidence in favour of the management of urban trees and increased tree cover in urban areas. Building on this, and through working in partnership with planners, local authorities and other key partners, there is an opportunity to adopt a strategic approach to managing urban trees and to support sustainable urban tree management.
Resources required:	

Progress:	To be reported annually.

Priority Action 7:	*Explore the issues associated with transferring woodland management responsibilities to community groups and enterprises to realise community development objectives.*
Lead and Partners:	NRW; Llais y Goedwig; WG; WFBP
Evidence base:	Woodland is a valuable resource for communities capable of providing a range of potential benefits. Woodland can be used for training opportunities, enterprise ventures and recreational health and well-being initiatives. Through the "*Woodlands and You*" initiative, NRW provide an opportunity for people and communities to come forward with proposals for activities, events or projects on or involving the Welsh Ministers Woodland Estate. There are significant issues to explore in terms of the transfer of woodland management responsibilities to community groups, but this may be a means of increasing active management of areas of woodland that are currently undermanaged.
Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Relationship to government priorities

Priority Actions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 deliver against:

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11;13;14; 15; 16; 18; 19; and 20.*

- *National priorities of: **driving green growth; resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources; a **fairer Wales** tackling poverty; and **using resources efficiently**.*

PRIORITY ACTION

Enhancing the management and production of Welsh timber and its economic benefits.

Overview

Woodlands and trees in Wales provide important economic benefits, not least as a source of sustainable material for construction. This is not only a benefit for growers and primary processors of timber, but also for the wider construction sector in terms of skilled future employment opportunities. Economic activity in Welsh woodlands has the potential to stimulate sustainable woodland management that will help to support a thriving forestry sector and deliver green growth, tackle poverty and provide a valuable recreational resource for the people of Wales.

Priority Action 8:	**Promote Welsh timber as an essential material for sustainable construction and central to the delivery of new affordable housing.**
Lead and Partners:	• Welsh Government (a cross-departmental working group comprising EST, Housing and Natural Resources). • WFBP (and the Timber in Housing Group administered by WFPB), Coed Cymru, NRW, FR.
Evidence base:	There are a number of barriers to the use of Welsh home-grown timber as a sustainable material for construction. First, the comparative weakness of the supply chain as compared with established, and competing, supply chains for other materials used in construction. Second, compliance with procurement requirements, particularly for public authorities engaged in the provision of social housing. Third, the skills gaps to meet work-force requirements. There are outdated perceptions that militate against home-grown timber as a material of choice, particularly for housing. Timber houses can be considered as expensive to construct. Welsh timber is often regarded as inferior, suitable only for low values products like fencing. The integrity of the supply chain in terms of volume and continuity of supply is perceived as a problem. Locally sourced engineered home-grown timber components have the capacity to provide a sustainable method of construction. There is therefore scope to promote Welsh timber as an essential construction material to policy makers, planners, Registered Social Landlords, architects, developers and other

end users. Promotion includes providing information on the properties of tree species and the quality of timber that they produce in order to inform effective business decisions.

Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Priority Action 9:	***Develop models for woodland related enterprises and provide opportunities for employment and training across the forestry sector by developing sector relevant skills and providing work experience as pathways to employment.***
Lead and Partners:	WFBP, Coed Cymru, Llais y Goedwig, ConFor, Welsh Government, NRW (***DN*** *– others to be added*).
Evidence base:	Healthy and resilient woodlands and trees provide the foundation for the forestry sector. There are many examples of enterprises that are supported by woodlands, including producers, specialist forestry contractors and primary and secondary processors. But in order to thrive, the sector needs people with a wide range of skills: practical skills for growing, maintaining, harvesting and processing timber; management skills to achieve good environmental stewardship; and agents and entrepreneurs with sound business skills. A buoyant forestry sector and well managed woodlands and forests will provide wider benefits and opportunities that require people with skills related to tourism, specialist recreation activities and community work. At present there are skill shortages across most of the forestry sector and a lack of opportunities for new entrants to enter the market. Initiatives like apprenticeships could help by providing training opportunities running concurrently with employment and providing young people with skills that they can use elsewhere in the sector. By working in partnership with local authorities and third sector organisations, there is opportunity to encourage more use of woodlands for education and training. There is scope to encourage woodland-based small and emerging enterprises, including social enterprises, to access community support elements of the Wales Rural Development Plan and other services to support their business models.
Resources	

required:
Progress: *To be reported annually.*

Relationship to government priorities

Priority Actions 8 and 9 deliver against:

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 1; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13 and 15.*

- *National priorities of: **driving green growth**; **resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources; a **fairer Wales** tackling poverty; and **using resources efficiently**.*

PRIORITY ACTION

Conservation and biodiversity value

Overview

Ancient woodlands and other species rich habitats have a vital role in providing ecosystem services. The quality of woodland habitats is determined by the condition of woodland soils, water, biodiversity, landscape and heritage. Improving the condition of woodlands is a key to healthy and resilient woodland ecosystems. Ancient and veteran trees can be of high biodiversity value as species rich habitats for some increasingly rare lichens, mosses and fungi; and they can also be a cultural resource linking people and communities to place, environment and culture. Ancient, veteran and heritage trees are particularly important for the range of ecosystem services that they are able to provide. Such trees are literally irreplaceable and it is not without foundation that they are often described as "green monuments".

Priority Action 10:	**Examine the adequacy of and scope to improve existing measures and procedures for the protection of valued trees, particularly ancient, veteran and heritage trees.**
Lead and Partners:	• Welsh Government • A Task and Finish Group drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors supports the Welsh Government.
Evidence base:	The biodiversity, cultural and landscape value particularly of ancient, veteran and heritage trees is well documented. Mechanisms for the protection of trees are in place (principally via the Tree Preservation Order and Felling Licence regimes). Anecdotal evidence indicates that existing protections are insufficient in terms of the grounds on which protection can be conferred, particularly on ancient, veteran and heritage trees, and the care and maintenance requirements for particular trees that can be put in place. Woodlands for Wales Indicator 18 "Woodland Habitats and Ancient Trees" indicates that the percentage of both area and number of woodland features in Special Areas of Conservation which are in favourable condition has declined in the 2007-2012 reporting round compared to the 2002-2006 reporting round.
Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Priority Action 11:	*Continue to bring identified special sites, prioritised PAWS, native woodlands and priority habitats into favourable management on WGWE and encourage private landowners to do so.*
Lead and Partners:	NRW, Welsh Government, Woodland Trust, Coed Cymru, Local Authorities.
Evidence base:	There is a continued need for the gradual restoration of important woodland habitats through appropriate management, and where possible, expansion. Improving their health and resilience in our changing climate will help to ensure they continue to accommodate priority species, provide ecosystem benefits and remain a valuable resource in our landscapes. Information, advice and financial incentives to the private sector will be provided through Glastir and partners (cross-refer to priority actions 3 and 4).
Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Relationship to government priorities

Priority Actions 10 and 11 deliver against:

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 10; 17; 18; 19; and 20.*

- *National priorities of enhancing the **resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources; a **fairer Wales** tackling poverty; and **using resources efficiently**.*

PRIORITY ACTION

Invasive Non-Native Species

Overview

Invasive non-native species (INNS) – organisms not native to Great Britain and with the potential to have negative effects on Wales's economy, environment and/or health – are a substantial environmental and economic threat to Wales. INNS that are already established represent a significant threat to native fauna and flora and currently cost approximately £125 million per year to tackle. But with growing globalisation in terms of increasing movement of people and in the context of the impact of climate change there are increasing threats from INNS in the coming years and decades.

Priority Action 12:	*Develop a strategic approach to the issue of invasive species which damage woodland habitats.*
Lead and Partners:	NRW, Welsh Government, FR, Wales Biodiversity Partnership, Non-native Species Forum, GB Non-native Species Secretariat, Wales Squirrel Forum, Deer Initiative Partnership in Wales, Confor, WFBP.
Evidence base:	Forests, woodlands and trees and the wider environment are exposed to the detrimental effects of a number of non-native species that are currently established in Wales and the UK, including rhododendron, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and grey squirrel. Damage caused by native and non-native deer, which can "bark-strip" large areas of woodland, is becoming more apparent, as is the risk of collision between deer and vehicles.
	There is also a risk that other non-native species with the potential to impact adversely on woodland habitats can establish themselves in the future.
	Present and future risks from INNS are assessed against the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain, which provides the framework delivery of invasive alien species policy in Great Britain.
	A new European Regulation seeks to address the problems of invasive alien species in a comprehensive manner so as to protect native biodiversity and ecosystem services across Europe, as well as mitigating the health and economic impact that those species can have. Member States will be required to compile lists of invasive alien species that are of concern to the European Union.

Cross refer to priority action 1.

Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Relationship to government priorities

Priority Action 12 delivers against:

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 1; 2; 16; 17; 18; and 19.*

- *National priorities of enhancing the **resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources; and **using resources efficiently**.*

PRIORITY ACTION

Non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees

Overview

Forestry, woodlands and trees encompass a broad range of values. In addition to the "timber value" to the forestry sector (growers and primary and secondary processors), forestry has a significant "non-timber value" beneficial to people, communities and the natural environment in Wales: -

- *non-timber forest products, produce and resources;*

- *employment in non-timber forest related activities;*

- *ecosystem services of forestry;*

- *recreation and access - a "green prescription" improving the health well-being and fitness of people.*

Whilst there is data and information relating to "timber value", there is scope to explore the "non-timber value" of forestry in order to inform forestry policy and management.

Priority Action 13:	*Gather evidence to measure and evaluate the non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees.*
Lead and Partners:	<u>FR</u>, NRW, Welsh Government.
Evidence base:	The UK National Ecosystem Assessment was published in June 2011 and provides the first analysis of the UK's natural environment in terms of the benefits provided to society and to continuing economic prosperity. It recognises a range of ecosystem services provided by forestry and forms a basis for further understanding of the value of wider benefits provided by woodlands and trees.
	But although the idea of multi-purpose woodland management is widely accepted, the value of all of the benefits that woodlands and trees can provide for society is often overlooked: recreational, health, aesthetic and spiritual benefits for people living near or visiting woodlands; biodiversity and landscape value; and heritage and cultural value.
	Forestry and ecosystem services relating to forestry, woodlands and trees will be a central tenet to natural resource management and the planning and prioritising framework

proposed by the Environment Bill. Management of woodland aligned with health, economic and environmental benefits which go beyond the value of timber itself, underpinned by a better understanding of the non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees, could potentially lead to new markets developing in the future.

Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Priority Action 14:	***Assess, under the umbrella of the European StarTree project and by other means, the economic potential and employment opportunities arising from non-timber forest products supported by forests and woodlands in Wales.***
<u>*Lead*</u> *and Partners:*	<u>Llais y Goedwig</u>; others…………...
Evidence base:	There are approximately 306,000 hectares of forests and woodlands in Wales. Traditionally, the economic importance of forestry has focused on timber and timber based products. The economic value of non-timber forest products and the potential for developing sustainable economic activity in local communities has not been fully assessed. There are small businesses and individuals in Wales engaged in economic activity relating to non-timber forest products including wildflower honey production, berry collection and moss harvesting. The extent and value of the activity is not well understood and there is a need to fully assess its potential for development at the local community level.
Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Priority Action 15:	***Promote and enhance access and recreation opportunities that forestry and woodlands in Wales can offer to provide health, well-being and economic benefits to people and communities.***

Lead and Partners:	<u>NRW</u>, <u>Visit Wales</u>, Public Health Wales. Coed Lleol, Actif Woods, Ramblers Association, WATO, Community Development Foundation.
Evidence base:	Healthy and resilient woodlands and trees provide a wide range of community benefits, enabling people to use and enjoy woodlands, lead healthier lives and engage in economic activity related to woodland enterprises. Successful mountain bike trail centres will continue to attract visitors to Wales as well as providing recreational and economic opportunities for local communities. But a wider audience can also enjoy the access, recreation and economic benefits that woodlands can offer. Spending time and exercising outside can have a positive impact on health and well-being. The "Active Woods Scheme" operates at four sites in Wales and provides activities tailored to meet the needs of participants with chronic health conditions. The "Come Outside" programme engages with communities to encourage use of green space, including woodlands, to deliver health and well-being benefits. Communities can be supported to identify the benefits that woodlands and trees can provide to them, particularly through local access and recreation opportunities.
Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Relationship to government priorities

Priority Actions 13, 14 and 15 deliver against:

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 3; 6; 8; 9; 10; and 11.*

- *National priorities of **driving green growth**; enhancing the **resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources; a **fairer Wales** tackling poverty; and **using resources efficiently**.*

PRIORITY ACTION

UK cross-border working

Overview

In April 2013, the functions of the Forestry Commissioners in relation to Wales transferred to NRW. In England in 2013, and in response to the Westminster Government's "Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement", the Forestry Commission England and DEFRA commissioned a project to consider the future of: -

- *the Forest Service in England;*

- *the Public Forest Estate in England; and*

- *cross-border functions that were, prior to April 2013, delivered by the Forestry Commissioners for Great Britain as a whole.*

The Welsh Government is participating with the other GB administrations in the Woodland Policy Enabling Programme which has been established in response to the future delivery of cross-border functions at a GB level. The objective of the Programme is to identify what cross-border functions delivered by the Forestry Commissioners (including functions delivered by Forest Research) should continue to be delivered on a collaborative GB basis for the foreseeable future and how best to do that.

Priority Action 16:	***Participate in the Woodland Policy Enabling Programme to shape the future delivery of GB cross-border forestry functions ensuring that the needs of Wales, and of the other GB administrations, are accommodated.***
Lead and Partners:	<u>Welsh Government</u>, <u>Forestry Commission GB</u>, Forest Research, NRW
Evidence base:	The Forestry Commissioners' functions in relation to Wales have transferred to NRW and the management of forestry in other parts of GB is subject to review and probable change. The first phase of the Woodland Policy Enabling Programme identified cross-border functions that should continue to be delivered on a GB basis, namely: strategic engagement; horizon scanning; research commissioning; forest biodiversity, ecosystems and environment; sustainable forest management; forests and society; publications and knowledge transfer; plant health; economic analysis; climate change; statistics; international forestry; governance; National Forest Inventory; and provision of forestry research.

The next stage of the Programme will focus on the most appropriate models for the delivery of the identified cross-border functions across each of the GB administrations.

Resources required:	
Progress:	*To be reported annually.*

Relationship to government priorities
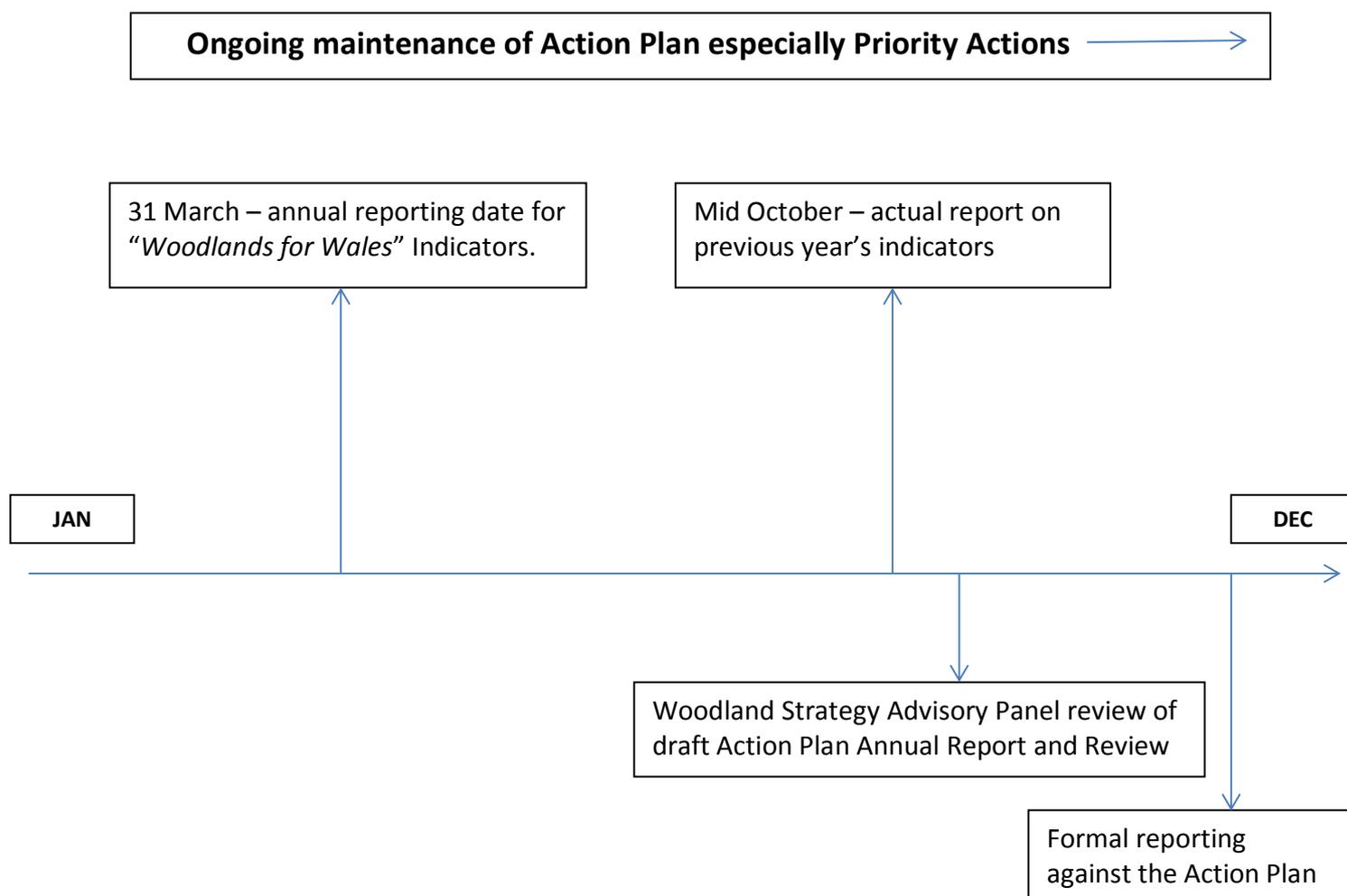
Priority Action 16 delivers against:

- *Woodlands for Wales Outcomes: 2; 3; 5; 6; 13; 14; 16; and 18.*

- *National priorities of **driving green growth**; a **fairer Wales** tackling poverty; and **using resources efficiently**.*

PART 3

Reporting and Review

22. Progress against *priority actions* will be up-dated on an ad hoc basis (the template above includes a reporting element). In each calendar year, the Welsh Government will prepare and publish an annual report of overall progress against the *priority actions* set out in this *Plan*. Each annual report will be an opportunity to review and to update actions in response to the "*Woodlands for Wales*" performance indicators and other evidence. The diagram below illustrates the reporting and review cycle.

Action Plan – Annual Reporting and Review Cycle

Ongoing maintenance of Action Plan especially Priority Actions ——————→

31 March – annual reporting date for "*Woodlands for Wales*" Indicators.		Mid October – actual report on previous year's indicators

JAN		DEC

Woodland Strategy Advisory Panel review of draft Action Plan Annual Report and Review

Formal reporting against the Action Plan

"Woodland for Wales" Vision, Themes and Outcomes

Our Vision:

"Wales will be known for its high-quality woodlands that enhance the landscape, are appropriate to local conditions and have a diverse mixture of species and habitats."

***Themes* and Outcomes:**

Welsh Woodlands & Trees

1. More woodlands and trees are managed sustainably
2. Woodland ecosystems are healthy and resilient
3. Woodlands are better adapted to deliver a full range of benefits
4. Woodland cover in Wales increases
5. The management of woodland and trees is more closely related to other land uses
6. Urban woodlands and trees deliver a full range of benefits

Responding to Climate Change

7. Welsh woodlands contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of Wales   Many of the outcomes in the other sections also relate to climate change, which can be thought of as cross cutting

Woodlands for People

8. More communities benefit from woodlands and trees
9. More people enjoy the life long learning benefits of woodlands and their products
10. More people live healthier lives as a result of their use and enjoyment of woodlands
11. More people benefit from woodland related enterprises

A Competitive & Integrated Forest Sector

12. More welsh-grown timber is used in Wales
13. The forest sector is better integrated and more competitive, supporting the welsh economy
14. Increased use of timber as a key renewable resource
15. A thriving, skilled workforce in the forestry sector

Environmental Quality
16. Woodland management achieves high standards of environmental stewardship
17. Woodlands and trees of special conservation value are in favourable management
18. Woodland biodiversity is supported & native Woodland is in favourable management
19. Woodlands and trees make a positive contribution to the special landscape character of Wales and to sites of heritage and cultural importance
20. New and existing woodlands and trees contribute to water and soil management

Annex 2

Priority Actions – Summary List

Area	No	Priority Action	Delivers:	
			"W4W" Outcomes	**National Priorities**
Tree Health	1	Develop and maintain a risk register of pests and diseases and their threat to tree health in Wales.	1; 2; 3; 16; and 18	• **Driving green growth**. • **Resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources. • **A fairer Wales** tackling poverty. • **Using resources efficiently**.
	2	Develop and implement the Phytophthora ramorum recovery programme.		
Developing support for woodland creation and management	3	Implement "Glastir", the Welsh Government's key sustainable land management scheme available to land managers across Wales, and improve long-standing processes for making woodland creation decisions that will be taken under the new scheme.	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 13; 14; 15; 16; 18; 19; and 20	• **Driving green growth**. • **Resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources. • **Using resources efficiently**.
	4	Embed woodlands and trees in the Natural Resources Policy Framework and develop a policy for woodland removal and replacement.		
	5	Develop a policy to address the future shortfall in timber production as outlined in the recent 50 year production forecast.		

Area	No.	Priority Action	Delivers:	
			"W4W" Outcomes	**National Priorities**
	6	Develop a strategic approach to increasing tree cover in towns and cities.		
	7	Explore the issues associated with transferring woodland management responsibilities to community groups and enterprises to realise community development objectives.		
Enhancing the management and production of Welsh timber and its economic benefits	**8**	Promote Welsh timber as an essential material for sustainable construction and central to the delivery of new affordable housing.	1; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13; and 15	• **Driving green growth**. • **Resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources. • **A fairer Wales** tackling poverty. • **Using resources efficiently**.
	9	Develop models for woodland related enterprises and provide opportunities for employment and training across the forestry sector by developing sector relevant skills and providing work experience as pathways to employment.		

Area	No.	Priority Action	Delivers:	
			"W4W" Outcomes	National Priorities
Conservation and biodiversity value	**10**	Examine the adequacy of and scope to improve existing measures and procedures for the protection of valued trees, particularly ancient, veteran and heritage trees.	2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 10; 17; 18; 19; and 20	• **Resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources. • **A fairer Wales** tackling poverty. • **Using resources efficiently**.
	11	Continue to bring identified special sites, prioritised PAWS, native woodlands and priority habitats into favourable management on WGWE and encourage private landowners to do so.		
Invasive non-native species	**12**	Develop a strategic approach to the issue of invasive species which damage woodland habitats.	1; 2; 16; 17; 18; and 19	• **Resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources. • **Using resources efficiently**.
Non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees	**13**	Gather evidence to measure and evaluate the non-timber value of forestry, woodlands and trees.	3; 6; 8; 9; 10; and 11	• **Driving green growth**. • **Resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources. • **A fairer Wales** tackling poverty. • **Using resources efficiently**.
	14	Assess, under the umbrella of the European StarTree project and by other means, the economic potential and employment opportunities arising from non-timber forest products supported by forests and woodlands in Wales.		

Area	No.	Priority Action	Delivers:	
			"W4W" Outcomes	National Priorities
	15	Promote and enhance access and recreation opportunities that forestry and woodlands in Wales can offer to provide health, well-being and economic benefits to people and communities.		
UK cross-border working	16	Participate in the Woodland Policy Enabling Programme to shape the future delivery of GB cross-border forestry functions ensuring that the needs of Wales, and of the other GB administrations, are accommodated.	2; 3; 5; 6; 13; 14; 16; and 18	• **Driving green growth**. • **Resilience and safety** of Wales's natural resources. • **A fairer Wales** tackling poverty. • **Using resources efficiently**.