

Coed Cadw – the Woodland Trust

Coed Cadw Woodland Trust the UK's largest woodland conservation charity, working for a UK rich in native woods and trees, for people and wildlife. In Wales we have over 14,000 members and 85,000 supporters. We manage over 100 sites in Wales covering 2,697 hectares (6,664 acres). Wales is one of the least wooded countries in Europe, with woodland making up just 14% of the landscape and less than half of this is native woodland.

Whether Wales is adopting a sustainable approach to the maintenance and enhancement of its road network in the context of key legislation such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

1. Coed Cadw – the Woodland Trust would like to make the following brief comment In relation to this question.
2. As regards to the protection of the biodiversity and other values of ancient woodland and veteran trees our evidence is that road building has continued to be a significant causes of damage and destruction to 63 ancient woods in Wales that have been damaged or destroyed since 1999. The Welsh Government's own road building programme is a significant contributor to this.
3. The fundamental fact is that ancient woodlands and ancient trees and the soils that support them cannot be replaced and their loss cannot be mitigated for by compensating habitat creation, even for example on a 30 ha of new habitat for every hectare destroyed, as is proposed for HS2. Every case of loss represents a permanent reduction to the biodiversity heritage passed to the next generation and contributes to the on-going widespread and continuing decline in biodiversity - which the Welsh Government has made commitments to address.
4. This inevitably creates a fundamental conflict with sustainably policy. In the Trust's judgement a sustainable approach to the delivery of road building and road enhancement schemes has not been undertaken across Wales in recent years.
5. This has been highlighted by such proposals as the Welsh Government's plan for an M4 corridor around Newport that as well as cutting through four SSSI's and the Gwent Levels, will also result in the loss and damage of four irreplaceable ancient woodlands. This proposal, currently at public enquiry, has been roundly criticised by conservation organisations. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, has highlighted critical concerns such as ecological resilience, failure to meet the definition of sustainable and appropriate economic growth (in line with the

“Prosperous Wales” goal in the Act), not providing evidence of proportionate and responsible resource use, ecological footprint and carbon emissions.

6. Other schemes such as the A55/A494/A548 Deeside Corridor in Flintshire, has seen the Welsh Government propose to drive a new road through irreplaceable ancient woodland between Northop and Flint, known as Leadbrook Wood (and Oakenholt Wood), contrary to its own planning policy. This unsustainable approach was further highlighted, by the two route options offered during a public consultation on the scheme, both of which resulted in ancient woodland destruction.
7. We now see there is another proposal to link the M4 and A48 in the Vale of Glamorgan which offers routes which will both cause loss of more ancient woodlands.
8. Our ask of the Welsh Government and the Welsh Assembly is to be entirely honest and transparent about the permanent damage that these schemes cause and the conflicts this creates with sustainability aspirations. We suggest that such damaging infrastructure developments need to be made much more exceptional and clearly become the last resort of sustainable development policies rather than the first resort of economic development delivery.

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Coed Cadw – the Woodland Trust
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