

The Gower Society Planning committee submitted a response to the Agriculture (Wales) Bill paper. The Welsh Government had set out their proposal for public consultation early in 2021. Below is the Gower Society's response relating to the proposed forestry legislation.

AGRICULTURE (WALES) BILL

What are your views on the proposed amendments to forestry legislation?

We are extremely interested to read about Sustainable Land Management and how this will be carried through into forestry and woodland management.

And it is Section 6 of the White Paper "Forestry and Woodlands" which is of particular interest to us. Carbon capture by veteran trees (and just as importantly by the ecosystems of woodland floors in ancient woodlands) makes the preservation of native woodlands through sensitive management a pressing need.

In fact, we think that the proposals should go further by recognising the landscape value of such woodlands generally but particularly in designated landscapes such as AONBs and National Parks. Thus, at para. 2.133 when the Paper states "...some trees are so environmentally valuable that illegal felling of them is particularly damaging" might you insert after "environmentally valuable" "...or so significant in landscape terms "etc.?"

We appreciate that the planning system provides for the protection of trees with a high amenity value. But in practice most Tree Preservation Orders (and most of planning authorities' arboriculture resources) are concentrated in and around urban areas, because it is development which is the main trigger for making and managing TPOs.

The amenity and landscape value of native and ancient woodlands should also be one of the objectives in any review of the Forestry Act 1967 (which appears to have had timber production at its heart).

We have a good working example in Gower at the moment, Cheriton Woods (the most significant ancient woodland in western Gower) which is why the proposals in Section 6 of the White Paper are so welcome. (Though whether they will be sufficiently timely to save Cheriton from serious damage remains to be seen; they might just be too late.) At Cheriton two felling licences have been granted for low key, long term woodland management which is now being scaled up with the construction of forestry roads and other forestry peripheral development on an industrial scale, under the Permitted Development powers available to forestry operators. The local planning authority is seemingly powerless to act, and we are currently in dialogue with NRW as to what, if anything, it can do to curtail the worst excesses of what is proposed at Cheriton.

We therefore welcome the introduction of the power to review existing licences which appears to be set out comprehensively in paras. 2.130-2.133. Although, as we say, we believe that the landscape and amenity value of woodland should also be among the criteria to be considered by NRW in the discharge of its licensing functions.

A copy of this response has been sent to Martyn Evans, NRW, Head of Operations South West Wales, Llandarcy, with whom we are currently in correspondence.

The Agriculture (Wales) Paper can be viewed at [Agriculture \(Wales\) Bill | GOV.WALES](#)