

The biggest single threat to nature in Wales is climate change.

Natural Resources Wales is charged with protecting the environment, and acknowledges the impact of climate change and aims to tackle it.

However, in practice NRW attempts to protect the environment through micro-management policies preventing change to a local environment unless it can be proved unequivocally to be a positive benefit to all flora and fauna in the immediate area.

Through this micro-management it fails to see the whole picture – while it can prevent all development around a small patch of rare moss, that rare moss is going to die out anyway in a few years, together with vast areas of the flora and fauna in Wales, if climate change either reduces or increases water flow in a particular river, or it gets significantly hotter, colder, wetter or drier.

The environment will change and nature will be affected.

NRW should be actively encouraging policies that help to reduce climate change such as renewable energy rather than putting blocks on them.

The rivers in Wales represent a huge untapped resource of hydro-power which can be used at a local level to provide energy security for communities. There is sufficient power in the rivers of Wales to provide enough electricity for whole of Wales. If this was tapped it would make a significant impact on reducing CO₂ generation and set an exemplar to other countries to follow and lead to a global reduction in CO₂.

However, in practice NRW's policies lead to a blanket ban on all hydro-electricity projects on most rivers in Wales, even if they can be proved to have negligible negative impact.

NRW has a difficult task as it must balance the needs of short term and long term conservation of the environment. It must also comply with EU directives and local management directives.

We recommend funding for exemplar projects which will provide a framework for NRW to provide approval for certain types of hydro power schemes which do negligible damage to the local environment and have a great positive benefit to the global environment.

The projects will investigate new forms of hydro power that do not have the damaging effect of conventional schemes that include depleted reaches.

These may include gravitational water vortexes (www.zotloeterer.com) or hydro-electric barrels (www.hydro-electric-barrel.com). These systems have not been used in UK before, and on the face of it will have no negative impact the environment.

These projects will work with NRW to ensure that that the environment is protected and all EU and local directives are complied with.

The aim will be to demonstrate that the technologies have no negative impact and allow NRW to assume a default policy of accepting similar schemes without having to go through lengthy and expensive impact analyses and approval processes for each one, which currently deter most communities from even starting down the route of a hydro-electric project.

The exemplar projects will pave the way to make hydro-power affordable and simple to set up for communities across Wales.

This will allow local energy security at a time when the National Grid is under great strain and large power plants are closing. Hydro power is also far more beneficial to National Grid as it provides a steady continuous power, unlike wind and solar power which fluctuate rapidly.

The projects could be augmented by additional aspects that will improve nature and environment and how people interact with it. E.g. educational resources, nature walks, free electric car charging to encourage more electric vehicles and community funding to encourage other projects for improving the natural environment.

Llandysul & Pont-Tyweli Ymlaen (www.llandysul-ponttyweli.co.uk) would be keen to proceed with such proposals for the benefit of the local community, the country and the planet. Please contact Ann Jones, info@dolenteifi.org.uk, 01559 362 403 for more information.