



Platfform yr  
Amgylchedd Cymru

Environment  
Platform Wales

# Environment Platform Wales

## Year 1 report



Oct 2019

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## 1. Introduction

Work building Environment Platform Wales began in October of 2018 with the appointment of the Director Dr Jennifer Geroni. Administrator Sue Cody was appointed shortly afterwards, with the most recent addition to the team, comms lead Gemma Treharne-Foose starting work in May 2019.

Much of the initial phase of work involved liaising with designers to build a brand, developing a website and social media channels. We also spent time developing ways of working with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Cardiff University to ensure the smooth running of Platform activities, setting up operating practices and office systems.

### Highlights from our first year of activity include;

- A workshop to development indicators of wellbeing and circular economy for the next State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR).
- A 3-day residential research sandpit addressing the topic of landscape scale social-ecological resilience.
- The submission of a Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) highlight topic developed as a collaboration between several universities and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology with input from the Brecon Beacons National Park and NRW.
- The official launch of Environment Platform Wales in the National Museum of Wales that was attended by more than 70 environment professionals across the public, private and 3<sup>rd</sup> sectors.
- A public lecture by Prof Iain Stewart attended by over 240 people.
- Policy engagement training for early career researchers across Wales.
- Our first conference to support the launch of the Welsh Marine Evidence Strategy.

Having completed the set-up of the office and communications channels during the first part of the year, we moved into a phase that focused on growing our audience and raising awareness of what we can offer.

At the time of writing we have 365 subscribers to our monthly newsletter and nearly 500 followers on Twitter. We are now receiving requests for advice and support from colleagues in Welsh Government and NRW on a weekly basis and have plans for events running well into 2020.

We have been contacted by organisations including the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM), the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and the British Ecological Society (BES), who have expressed an interest in partnering with us on events in Wales and finding other opportunities to work together for the mutual benefit of our members.

We have been approached by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Science, Jacobs and Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) who are keen to explore ways in which they can share data and work with Platform members.

This report provides an update on progress against plans agreed at the Board meeting on 19th November 2018.

## 2. Progress against deliverables

October 2018 to March 2019

Delivery mechanism	Activity/deliverable	Update September 2019
<b>Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop visual identity</li> <li>Set up social media channels</li> <li>Promote Platform through member websites</li> <li>Develop detailed communications plan and strategy</li> </ul>	<p>We developed a visual identity in collaboration with students of the University of South Wales and set up social media channels on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.</p> <p>We worked with our members, in particular Natural Resources Wales, to begin promoting the Platform.</p> <p>A Comms plan is now in place and updates will be presented as a standing agenda item at future Board meetings.</p>

Delivery mechanism	Activity/deliverable	Update September 2019
<b>Grant Capture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder workshop to identify priority research areas</li> <li>Identify potential collaborators outside the Platform members</li> <li>Develop project concepts and identify collaborative opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>In March 2019 we held a 3-day residential research sandpit on the topic of 'landscape scale social-ecological resilience'.</p> <p>The sandpit was attended by researchers from all member organisations as well as Brecon Beacons National Park and NERC.</p> <p>As a result of this multidisciplinary collaboration, researchers submitted a Highlight Topic to NERC and a further collaborative research application is under development.</p> <p>Going forward we will focus on UKRI Strategic Priorities Funds and NERC Highlight topics drawing in external collaborators as appropriate.</p>



Delivery mechanism	Activity/deliverable	Update September 2019
<b>Networks and Working Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify topics and stakeholders for first tranche of thematic groups</li> <li>Develop terms of reference for each group</li> <li>Set schedule for meetings and invite members</li> <li>Identify relevant national and international networks</li> </ul>	<p>We have had a request from Welsh Government to set up an advisory committee for work on air quality and are awaiting further details before convening the group.</p> <p>We have also had discussions with the Strategic Evidence team in Welsh Government about options for scientific advisory groups. This discussion is ongoing as they refine and clarify priority areas.</p> <p>We are developing good links with the British Ecological Society, Wales Environment Link, Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and others.</p>
<b>Knowledge Exchange</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify training needs within NRW and WG</li> <li>Workshop to identify evidence gaps for SoNaRR</li> <li>Identify currently unused data held by NRW and WG</li> <li>Identify opportunities for NRW to collaborate with Centre for Doctorial Training CDT and Doctoral Training Partnership DTP</li> </ul>	<p>We held a successful workshop in collaboration with PDR from Cardiff Metropolitan University for a multidisciplinary group of stakeholders from across Wales. The workshop supported the identification of indicators for the next State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR). The workshop focused on questions around indicators for the circular economy and wellbeing.</p> <p>The outputs from the workshop have been used to inform a “long list” of potential Indicators of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR). The list consists of both currently reported Indicators and possible Indicators that could be developed. NRW staff are currently commenting on this list. The intention is to bring a group of stakeholders together early in 2020 to identify the best Indicators to use as part of the assessment of the extent to which SMNR is being achieved.</p> <p>We have spoken to Richard Cardwell, the lead statistician for NRW about plans to make NRW data more easily accessible and will continue to work with him to promote the use of NRW data as and when it becomes available.</p> <p>We have started conversations with the NERC GW4+ and ENVISION Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP). We will be contacting Stars NERC/BBSRC Centre for Doctoral Training and the ESRC Wales DTP in due course. This work is ongoing.</p>

April 2019 to September 2019

Delivery mechanism	Activity/deliverable	Update September 2019
<b>Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold official launch event in the Senedd</li> <li>Launch dedicated website</li> <li>Begin publication of quarterly newsletter</li> <li>Deliver ongoing communications plan</li> </ul>	<p>The official launch event was held on 26th June 2019 in the National Museum of Wales. It included policy engagement training for ECRs, an evening reception for over 70 VIPs and environment professionals and a public lecture by Prof Iain Stewart that attracted over 240 people.</p> <p>The website is live with information about our aims, our members, our events and more. We have a sign-up form for our newsletter and updates on events.</p> <p>Comms activity has taken a big step forward since the appointment of our 0.5FTE Comms officer. Gemma has developed and is overseeing the delivery of the comms plan.</p> <p>We are producing monthly newsletters (365 subscribers at the time of writing) and regular blog posts with interviews and guest blogs from our members.</p>



Delivery mechanism	Activity/deliverable	Update September 2019
<b>Grant Capture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold sandpit for researchers to develop new project ideas in collaboration with other platform partners</li> <li>• Prioritise research topics according to the needs of NRW and WG.</li> <li>• Meet with UKRI to update and identify upcoming opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p>Following the success of the sandpit held in March 2019 we are planning to hold these events at least biannually. The next sandpit in the pipeline is to be held in Bangor 12th – 14th November 2019 and will address the Strategic Priority Fund call on Constructing a Digital Environment.</p> <p>We have been building links with UKRI who have expressed a strong interest in participating in these sandpits in the future.</p> <p>We intend to time the sandpits to coincide with the calls for Strategic Priority Fund Programmes and/or NERC Highlight Topics as a way to provide focus and improve our relationship and influence with funders.</p> <p>Due to ongoing political and organisational change and uncertainty we have not made as much progress with identifying research priorities for NRW and WG as we had anticipated. This work will continue to evolve and we anticipate faster progress next year as the evidence team within NRW grows.</p>

Delivery mechanism	Activity/deliverable	Update September 2019
<b>Networks and Working Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First round of reporting from thematic groups.</li> <li>• Review work of thematic groups and adjust themes/priorities if required</li> <li>• Director and members to attend local, national and international networking events to promote the network</li> </ul>	<p>As yet we have been unable to set up thematic groups. We now have a range of suggested topics. At this point the main hurdles to overcome are a lack of capacity of Platform staff and a need for clarity from the members about which areas to prioritise. The best way to move this workstream forward will be discussed at future meetings of the Board.</p> <p>The Director presented at the Research and Innovation in our Dynamic Environment (RIDE) forum in May 2019 and received positive feedback from representatives of other devolved administrations.</p> <p>The Director also presented to the Welsh Higher Education Liaison Officers group to raise the profile of our work amongst the academic community.</p>
<b>Knowledge Exchange</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEIs scope out training activities to meet the needs of NRW and WG</li> <li>• Set priorities for analysing existing data held by NRW and WG</li> <li>• Formalise mechanism for NRW to work with HEIs on student projects.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for secondments between Platform partners.</li> </ul>	<p>Scoping of training activities has taken a back seat as a result of other work focused on research and evidence needs. We hope to pick up on this over the next 12 months.</p> <p>We have had initial discussions with colleagues in NRW about their data. We are now waiting for new posts within the NRW evidence team to be filled before taking things forward.</p> <p>A web page has been set up on the EPWales website to host project proposals for doctoral policy and evidence placements. A form and guidelines are available via the webpage to provide a structure for proposing new projects. Funding and hosting of doctoral students will be decided on a case by case basis.</p> <p>We have not yet had the opportunity to explore options for secondments and will move this forward as an activity for Year 2.</p> <p>We held our first conference to support the launch of the Wales Marine Evidence Strategy. Over 180 delegates representing more than 50 organisations across the UK and Ireland registered to attend. Sixty-five presentations were given on a range of topics from water quality to marine renewable energy and climate change resilience. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.</p>

### 3. Additional benefits from Year 1

#### New cross disciplinary teaching at Swansea University.

Following the research sandpit in March, researchers Ruth Callaway and Victoria Jenkins made new connections across environmental science and environmental law. They have since conducted a pilot study exploring the teaching of law in science. They plan to apply for funding for a post-grad student to carry out more research. The long-term aim is to create an online platform for academics teaching science that allows them to download environmental law materials and to teach themselves about the topic.

In September 2019 Victoria took over Ruth's environmental law lecture with the aim of providing a more in depth and critical view of the subject. In return, Ruth will go out with the environmental law students in January 2020 to look at a coastal SSSI, to provide the students with an impression of what conservation designation means and the challenges in managing designated areas.

#### Design work with Cardiff Metropolitan and University of South Wales.

We worked with University of South Wales students to design our brand and visual identity. We have continued to work with new graduate Rita Papdi to develop conference branding and other promotional materials.

We worked with Cardiff Met students as part of a live project to design the theme and branding for our conference. We provided a live client brief and feedback for the students. There were some excellent students who we hope to be able to work with again in the future.

#### Supporting a GO Wales intern to gain experience and find work

We provided a placement for a GO Wales intern during May and June. Following that we kept her on through the student job shop to support our Comms officer. Ellie subsequently gained a permanent post as a comms assistant with a reference from us.

### 4. Finances - Oct 2018 – Sept 2019

**Income from membership fees Year 1** **£ 139,000**

<b>Salaries</b>	£ 101,911.93
<b>Travel and subsistence</b>	£ 1,862.99
<b>Design</b>	£ 1,810.00
<b>Website and comms</b>	£ 2,506.54
<b>Events</b>	£ 11,369.50
<b>Sundries</b>	£ 2,985.88

**Total Spend** **£ 122,446.84**

Funds carried over to Year 2 £16,553.16

Additional funding during Year 1

Source	Value	Type of contribution
<b>National Museum of Wales</b>	£ 1,500	In kind contribution towards the launch event through use of rooms and galleries at no charge
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>	£ 3,500	Purchase of IT equipment for Platform Staff.
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>	£ 3,000	Contribution to costs of workshop for the SoNaRR indicators.

Additional funding for the 2019 conference was provided by Platform members.

- Welsh Government £ 3,000
- Natural Resources Wales £ 3,000



## 5. Activities and deliverables for Year 2

### Delivery mechanism

### Activity/deliverable

#### Communications

- Continue to build the brand through social media presence
- Produce a newsletter at least once a month.
- Build collaborative relationships with Comms teams in all our member organisations.
- Build collaborative relationships with Welsh Research Organisation Liaison Officers (WROLOs) to support promotion of our research focused activities.
- Partner with NERC for Cardiff showcase event Spring/Summer 2020.
- Partner with Living Wales (Sêr Cymru) project and National Museum to promote citizen science across Wales.

#### Grant Capture

- Hold research sandpits to address Strategic Priority Fund calls at least twice a year, up to 4 times a year if budget allows.
- Continue to work with Welsh Government, NRW and others to identify long term research needs to inform UKRI priorities.
- Continue to develop relationships with UKRI to identify upcoming opportunities and feed into their plans.
- Work in partnership with National Research Network Low Carbon Energy and Environment (NRN LCEE) to develop a programme of complementary activities.

#### Networks and Working Groups

- Identify policy areas with Welsh Government and NRW that would benefit from advice from working groups.
- Review work of thematic groups and adjust themes/priorities if required
- Continue to build relationships with NGOs, e.g. RSPB, and membership organisations such as CIWEM, CIEEM and BES.
- Director and members to attend local, national and international networking events to promote the Platform

#### Knowledge Exchange

- Hold 2020 conference at Aberystwyth University on themes related to the future of the Welsh uplands.
- Co-host a 1-day conference in collaboration with CIWEM Welsh branch.
- Hold public engagement event in collaboration with the National Museum and Living Wales to share the work of the Platform with the widest possible audience.
- Set priorities for analysing data held by NRW and WG
- Continue to work with NRW, Welsh Government and HEIs to formalise mechanism for partnering on doctoral student projects.
- Engage with NRW during the development of their Higher Education Policy over the next 12 months.
- Explore opportunities for secondments between Platform partners.
- Continue to work with members to identify opportunities for research fellowships, either externally or internally funded, to synthesise and translate evidence.

## 6. Budget – Oct 2019 – Sept 2020

Income from membership fees	£ 139,000
Income carried over from Year 1	£ 16,533

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**Total income Year 2** **£ 155,533**

Salaries	£ 128,500
Travel and subsistence	£ 3,000
Design	£ 1,500
Website	£ 1,000
Comms & Marketing	£ 2,000
Workshops and events	£ 17,500
Sundries	£ 2,033

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**Total** **£155,533**

Additional funding from NRW

Residential research sandpit - Constructing a digital environment	£ 6,500
Workshop on sustainable farming	£ 2,500

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**Total** **£ 9,000**







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**Oct 2019**

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