

June 2014 Newborough Forest update

Over the last twelve months significant developments have taken place that should be of serious concern to the public and those that wish to see the forest well maintained and managed, as well as appropriate conservation and protection of the open dunes for which the SAC was set up. In concert with the Welsh Government NRW, the successor to CCW, has proceeded with permanent removal of two areas of the forest; one just to the north of Llanddwyn Island behind Traeth Penrhos along the Cefni estuary and also in the SE corner of the forest where the forest meets the open dunes of the Warren. This action follows from NRW and the Welsh Government reneging on their commitment to ensure that **impartial and independent arbitration** would resolve disputed issues that arose from the Newborough Science Review. This arbitration was to determine whether CCW/NRW had substantiated the claims made to support a clearfelling agenda.

When the Newborough Science Review was set up to review the claims that CCW made to support their agenda to clearfell areas of the forest it was recognized that there would be significant areas of disagreement. It was agreed by all parties to the Review that impartial and independent arbitration would be used to resolve the disputed issues that arose from the Review. This agreement was fully supported by the Welsh Government who had required CCW to set up the Review.

In the summer of 2013 the Welsh Government decided not to honour the commitment made to the public and the independent participants in the Science Review. The 5th Science Review meeting (17th Aug., 2010), chaired by Dr David Parker (CCW's Director Evidence & Advice) had agreed a format for impartial & independent arbitration. It was agreed that an arbitration panel should be made up of three appropriately qualified independent scientists chaired by a fourth senior scientist of appropriate standing in the scientific community. NRW(CCW) and the Welsh Government have failed to ensure that such a panel was set up and in doing so have failed to honour their commitment to ensure fair, impartial and independent arbitration would resolve disputed issues regarding Newborough Forest and the conservation of the open dunes of the SAC.

In August 2013 the Welsh Government produced a document that they called an 'adjudication' of the Newborough Science Review. It claimed to be impartial and objective but in almost every respect failed to be so. It was produced by a member of staff of the Welsh Government's Dept. for Natural Resources & Food, the department responsible for NRW. In other words it was written by someone who would consider NRW as colleagues. This document has been used by NRW and the Welsh Government as a justification for proceeding with permanently removing sections of Newborough Forest.

In Jan./Feb. 2014 contractors acting on behalf of NRW began clearfelling sections of forest and also creating cuttings through the foredune ridge of protected mobile dunes adjacent to the clearfell area. In creating the 'cuttings' NRW have destroyed the physical structure and plant community of sections of protected mobile dune habitat backing Traeth Penrhos. In the clearfelled area the shelter formally enjoyed by the public and the windbreak protection for landward sections of forest has now been destroyed. The severe winter storms of Nov/Dec. have felled a number of trees already and we can be sure future weather events will ensure more damage is done now that the sheltering effects of wind robust trees has been removed. A combination of poor timing and the death of one of the felling contractors meant planned work was never completed before animal & bird welfare restrictions on spring/summer activity began and the clearfell sites are in an appalling state. This whole exercise has been a master stroke of expensive and unjustified

'conservation' nonsense.

The permanent removal of sections of the forest has been euphemistically called a 'trial' by NRW. The public might well ask: 'A trial of what?' The clearfelled sections of forest had no impact on the mobile dunes adjacent to the felled areas; the actual area of dune habitat the conservation agency is required to protect. The forest lies downwind and inland of the foredune ridge and had no impact on the dynamic processes necessary for the good condition of the existing mobile dune habitat. There was never any substantiated conservation argument for removing sections of forest. This so-called 'trial' is an attempt to create new areas of dune habitat at the expense of the forest; an attempt to turn the clock back to the pre-1940s. This is not a requirement of the Habitats Directive which requires the conservation agency to ensure the good conservation status of the area and range of dune habitat present at the time the SAC was created in 2002. There is no remit in the Directive to create new areas of dune habitat.

The removal of sections of the forest and planned further removal are not supported by substantiated conservation argument or the requirements of the Habitats Directive. The public should be very concerned about the failure of the conservation agency and the Welsh Government to honour their commitment to substantiate their claims before an impartial and independent arbitration panel. NRW's conservation of the dune habitats should be based on sound science and robust conservation requirements. The current actions and planned future removal of sections of forest follow none of these principles.

At the 11th September 2013 meeting in Newborough when NRW announced the decision to proceed with forest removal Tim Jones, the head of NRW's North & Mid-Wales divisions, stated that the agency would have a new approach to dealing with the public. He stated that the agency would work with the community and have an open and transparent approach in its decision making and relationship with the public. What we have seen is far from that stated policy. If you have concerns about NRW's actions and the planned further permanent removal of areas of Newborough Forest email NRW's CEO and/or contact the island's AM and MP. Contact details are:

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