

Summary of Controversies at Newborough Forest

1. Newborough forest is owned by the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) and is managed on behalf of the Welsh Government (WG) by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) formerly Forestry Commission Wales (FCW). Newborough Warren is leased by NRW, formerly Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) from Lord Newborough. The shoreline from high water mark to the base of the dunes is leased by NRW. Isle of Anglesey CC (IoACC) leases Newborough beach from high to low water mark from the Crown Estates. Ynys Llanddwyn is leased and managed by NRW from IoACC.
2. Newborough Forest lies within a Special Conservation Area (SAC). This is a European designation. The objective of a SAC is “to enable vulnerable species and habitats to be maintained or where necessary to be restored to favourable conservation status.” This SAC status underlies most of the issues in dispute at Newborough.
3. Newborough forest was planted between the late 40s and early 70s to stabilise the sand dune system to prevent sand from blowing into Newborough village. The main species is Corsican pine. The forest now produces commercial timber. It attracts 170,000 visits per annum.
4. In 2004 CCW decided that to meet the requirements of the SAC it was necessary to restore the dunes to “favourable conservation status” and that this required the permanent removal of areas of the forest. Various figures for the areas to be clear-felled were mentioned by CCW. There was strong opposition to the felling plans by several groups, campaigns were mounted and there was a public petition.
5. In 2006 FCW established the Newborough Liaison Partnership (NLP) as a means of consulting the local community and other interested groups about the future of the forest.
<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-62fln6>
6. In an effort to resolve the scientific differences between CCW and the objectors about the proposals to remove trees a Science Review was established. The review focussed on ways in which the forest affected the condition of the dunes and the hydrology of the Warren. Both parties submitted their evidence and it was agreed at the outset that if they were unable to reach a consensus the matter would be referred to an independent arbiter. The objectors claim this process has not been completed as there has been no independent arbitration.
7. While the Science Review was underway FCW issued a Newborough Forest Management Plan for 2010-2015. (FMP). This followed long consultations with the NLP, CCW, IoACC and other interested parties. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/infd-7umeg8> The plan was accepted by all the key parties. It states categorically that no felling in areas 1 and 2 on map1 (areas bounding the dunes and the Warren) would occur until completion of the Science Review
8. During this summer local residents noted that trees in the areas highlighted on map 2 had been marked for clear-felling and they understood this was to take place in winter 2012/13. The Newborough Forest Protection Group (NFPG) and others claim this contravenes the Management Plan because no independent arbitration on the science underlying the justification for felling has occurred.
9. The NFPG organised an open meeting on September 5th to inform the public of recent developments and NRW’s plans. It was attended by about 130 people. The main points raised by the three speakers (Emlyn Parry- Williams local resident; Craig Shuttleworth, Red Squirrel Project manager; Ian Miller, coastal marine scientist) and the audience were:
 - a. failure by WG/NRW to follow the agree process on the science review
 - b. failure by WG/NRW to implement certain parts of the forest management plan, particularly to prepare a red squirrel plan
 - c. failure by WG/NRW to justify the “pilot” fellings on map 2 for this winter
 - d. failure by WG/NRW to consult with local people. The NLP had not met since 2011

- e. failure by WG/NRW to ensure economic benefits of the forest/beach flowed to the local community. (employment, income from the £3 car parking fee, etc)

Two resolutions were passed with a large majority.

First resolution

“ Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government must:

1. implement the promised independent arbitration on the Newborough forest science review and
2. publicly justify and consult with the local community on any plans they have for permanent removal of trees in Newborough forest”

Second resolution

“ Measures must be taken by Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government to ensure that Newborough Forest yields greater economic benefits to the local community”

The meeting was attended by Albert Owen and Rhun ap Iorwerth.

10. NRW/WG held a meeting on September 11th. This was probably a reaction to the previous week's meeting. Attendance was by invitation. It was not billed as a NLP meeting. The main item at the meeting was a tabling and presentation of a document entitled “Welsh Government's Review of The Newborough Review of Science and Consideration of Proposals for Shifting Dune Rejuvenation and Hydrological Monitoring Work for 2013/14”. This is the first official confirmation of the felling plans for this winter and the reasoning to justify the felling. Many of those present challenged the science and legality of the proposals. After considerable pressure the NRW representative assured the meeting that no more clear felling after this winter's operations along the western shore line would occur (see map 1) until the results of these pilot fellings had been fully monitored and discussed with the local community.

A press release on the plans is on the NRW web site. http://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/our-work/news/work-to-improve-dunes/?lang=en#UjWGpX_uTs

NRW promised to put the report on their web site but as of 15/9/13 it is not there.

11. In conclusion. The main issues are not resolved and the NFPG intends to take the matters further.

15 September 2013