



## Land Use in England Committee

### Corrected oral evidence: Land use in England

Monday 20 June 2022

4.30 pm

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Members present: Lord Cameron of Dillington (The Chair); Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville; Lord Borwick; Lord Curry of Kirkharle; Lord Goddard of Stockport; Lord Grantchester; Lord Harlech; The Earl of Leicester; Baroness Mallalieu; Baroness Redfern; Lord Watts; Baroness Young of Old Scone.

Evidence Session No. 17

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Questions 178 - 189

### Witnesses

**I:** Professor Kathryn Monk, Chair, Collaboration for Environmental Evidence, Swansea University; Roisin Willmott, Director, RTPi Wales.

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## Examination of witnesses

Professor Kathryn Monk and Roisin Willmott.

Q178 **The Chair:** Welcome to this evidence session of the Land Use in England Committee, and a very warm welcome to our witnesses, Roisin Willmott, from RTPI Wales, and Professor Kathryn Monk, chair of collaboration for environmental evidence and an honorary professor at Swansea University. You have in front of you a list of interests that have been declared by members of the committee. The meeting is being broadcast live via the parliamentary website, and a transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the committee website, but you will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary before it actually goes public. Thank you both very much for being with us today.

I will ask the first question, if I may. I am not quite sure who is going to answer this, but maybe, Roisin, you could start and Kathryn could continue. Could you describe in broad terms how land use governance works in Wales and how the Welsh Government and institutions seek to ensure effective implementation of land use policies and objectives? I realise that neither of you are speaking for the Welsh Government, but we would love to hear your views anyway.

**Roisin Willmott:** Thank you very much for the invitation to appear in front of you today. There are three key pieces of legislation and policy that help in this area and promote sustainable development. There is the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which gives the public sector a common set of goals and objectives, which really helps embed things so everyone is going in the same direction on that level.

There is the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, which sets out the sustainable management of natural resources, which, of course, is important in this area and introduces Natural Resources Wales, on which, I suspect, my fellow member here today will give more. That is an integrated body and helps with integrating policy as well. Then there is the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, which adds more robustness, if you like, and wide-ranging spatial requirement for delivery at regional and local levels as well, so those three pieces of legislation really draw together and ensure that progress is made on the seven well-being goals that are introduced through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

*Planning Policy Wales*, which is the national planning policy, has been reviewed. Policy has not changed significantly, but the way the policy is presented has really helped in delivering those well-being goals and making them central to national policy. They all pull together, if you like, for that Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and bringing forward those seven well-being goals. Thank you.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** When Wales introduced this trio of legislation in the middle of the last decade, it really was world-leading. It was very innovative. The country was the first to have sustainable development embedded in legislation. As Roisin said, the three Acts really are an

integral whole. One does not work without the other. The well-being goals from the Act<sup>1</sup> come from the international sustainable development goals and are almost a summary of those rearticulated specifically for Wales. They then guide the five ways of working that the Welsh Government and all public bodies must follow, so they must demonstrate how they are following these well-being goals to deliver sustainable development.

Coming through to the Environment Act<sup>2</sup>, Natural Resources Wales was actually brought together from the three agencies, the Environment Agency Wales, the Forestry Commission Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales, plus some actions and roles of the Welsh Government, into a body that was expected to be based on delivering all its work through the ecosystem approach. It is the ecosystem approach that really pushes the work and actions to deliver this legislation that you will see.

There are quite important products that come out of this for Natural Resources Wales, and I wonder if I should describe them briefly now. I would suggest that the committee could see those reports afterwards.

**The Chair:** Please go ahead. Bear in mind that we are the land use committee.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** Indeed. The reason I am going into that is because Natural Resources Wales—as I said, there are three areas—is required under the Environment Act to produce a state of natural resources report every five years on a national scale. I do not know if the committee is familiar with the international work of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the UK National Ecosystem Assessment. This is, in effect, the next stage, what we call *SoNaRR*. It is the assessment of the natural resources in Wales, which then gives the Welsh Government the basis upon which to identify its natural resource policy.

The first *SoNaRR* came out in 2016. The second one came out in 2020. The WG national natural resource policy came out in 2017, which has yet to be updated because there were so many issues, but it does mean that you are getting an integrated assessment of all land use of the various habitats and the impacts of the various uses. The *State of Natural Resources Report* was initially perceived both internally and externally as a monitoring report of resources, but it is actually an assessment of what we have, what it is providing, the multiple benefits to the environment, society and economics, and where it may go.

There has been quite a sophisticated step-up in the second *SoNaRR*. That type of assessment at the national level is then seen at a regional level where Natural Resources Wales produces six land-based area statements and one marine. That gives a very localised evidence base for decision-making, which then feeds into the local strategic development plans,

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<sup>1</sup> The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

<sup>2</sup> Professor Kathryn Monk later clarified that she was referring to the Environment (Wales) Act on each occasion that she referred to the Environment Act.

which comes from the national development framework, which all come from the Planning Act<sup>3</sup>. This is why I suggest we send you some material to see that because it is quite a complicated thing to describe, but it is very integrated.

It means that, from a natural resources point of view, we have assessments of what we have, where it is going, what it is being used for and what it could be used for, which feed into development plans and then back to the well-being plans of something called the public service boards. These bring all the public services of a region together with Natural Resources Wales to talk about the development, use and expectations of an area from a much broader health and wider societal perception. I do not know if you can follow that.

**The Chair:** I followed the general gist of it. It would be helpful if you could send us that information.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** I will, because it is integral into everything that you have been talking about as a mechanism of integration, basically.

**The Chair:** We will come more on to the practical implications of integration and so on.

Q179 **Lord Harlech:** Can you tell us about your own work priorities, your work intersects with the land use agenda and what international, national, regional and local regulation and other guidance you deal with on a regular basis? What are your general observations on the Welsh land use governance frameworks?

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** I retired last year from Natural Resources Wales. I am now an independent adviser and non-executive director. My role in Natural Resources Wales was as its lead scientific adviser developing integrated evidence that would support these quite complicated activities that I have tried to summarise but that are not complicated if you really follow the ecosystem approach. It is all, basically, part of this ecosystem approach, which is an integrated approach to natural resource management focusing on sustainability and equitability for society.

**Lord Harlech:** What do you mean by equitability?

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** We could have development just for financial gain for a particular group, we could have it just for the protection of zebras or we could have an equitable benefit for the majority, which perhaps we can never achieve for everybody. It relies a lot on participation, on co-production and on developing shared understanding and shared values. I was trying to bring in the skills and the interdisciplinarity that are needed for that and to bring in a lot of the skills that are required for that systems approach.

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<sup>3</sup> Planning (Wales) Act

We find that, perhaps, our particular interventions provide an immediate benefit if we work in a very linear fashion. If we have not looked in a broader context, we find that later we are dealing with unintended consequences, be they physical or financial, particularly if they are a societal problem. We then have to change things without recognising why they have not worked in the first place.

That is my focus. It is trying to develop interdisciplinarity and systems thinking into the development of this system of governance.

**Roisin Willmott:** I will say something briefly about the Royal Town Planning Institute. Obviously, we are not involved directly in the delivery of this, but we are very interested in it. We support planners, our members and the organisations involved in trying to deliver this. It is quite ground-breaking work in integrating everything together, and it is not easy, as Professor Monk has alluded to, so it does take a different way of thinking.

We have involved ourselves with trying to support this work and take it forward. The one observation I would make is about resourcing, which is key for delivering this. It takes a new way of thinking and working, which obviously is not easy, so it needs investment and resources, not just with local planning authorities but with Natural Resource Wales, the Welsh Government and others who are involved with it. That is the big highlight I would mention. Thank you.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** In the background papers we received for today, we got lots of diagrams of the planning system and things like that. Is there, somewhere, a map of how all this fits together that is visually simple?

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** I can give you one.

Q180 **Lord Goddard of Stockport:** Developing from your previous answer, how does the Welsh approach to land use integrate and support the Government's wider targets on climate change such as net zero, biodiversity and natural restoration? What lessons, if any, have been learned?

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** That follows on very directly from an explanation that, I hope, was relatively clear but reflects the complexity without the diagram. It is basically an integrated approach to recognise what is on the ground, the state of the environment, what services it is supplying and what benefits there are to different levels of the community. You can look at that from the benefit of somebody growing food, somebody wanting flood control through land management or somebody looking at a cultural heritage of a landscape through to the global benefits that that land can provide.

Obviously, you look at these services at different scales, but you can identify that, so absolutely the Welsh approach integrates and supports targets for climate change directly relating back, for example, to peatland restoration programmes and tree-planting. There are a number of

restoration programmes going on, but they also feed across to public health, for example. This integrated system that we have in Wales allows much more engagement with Public Health Wales, with economic discussions and with environmental access, than would have ever happened before the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and Environment Act.

The Environment Act itself has Section 6, which is one of the strongest parts of it in that it has teeth, in that all public bodies are required to improve biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in Wales, which are essential to our well-being. That feeds across to all sectors. Indeed, it is in *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040*, which was published last year, which is a national development framework. It very specifically cites that duty.

**Lord Goddard of Stockport:** You have not come into conflict with government policies.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** Yes.

**Lord Goddard of Stockport:** We would be quite interested in any of those.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** I suppose, from the beginning, it is not surprising that there was a lot of conflict and a lot of concern when the three bodies were brought together into Natural Resources Wales. That was at least three different cultures and three different ways of working. Bringing them together has allowed a much more intense discussion, which brings better recognition of other perspectives. Quite often, you might be asking a question you might have answered yourself, but by having that multiplicity of perspective you get answers that you may not even have thought about that might be much better.

Even if they are not better, you are being made much more aware of what would otherwise be unintended consequences, so even if the discussion or agreement is not necessarily 100% of benefit for the environment, if that is what you want, you have recognised it and you have also discussed the risk and uncertainty around not dealing with it.

**Roisin Willmott:** I will add in a few things. Professor Monk mentioned the cultural side. It is just worth noting that, while it might not be of direct relevance, what does have some relevance is that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act introduced culture as a third arm of sustainable development in addition to the economic, social and environmental arms, so culture is part of the legal framework to this. That is actually quite important when it comes to rural and farming communities et cetera in this as well.

Professor Monk has covered it quite well in terms of that integration and the approach to it. It is still developing, and it will take time to develop and become mainstream, but it is there and being worked through. The one highlight I would mention, again, is the planning profession and the

planning function, which has been hit very hard at the local level in terms of supporting this. That is quite key. It is not just the planning profession; it is others as well.

Q181 **Lord Curry of Kirkharle:** When you say that planning has been hit hard, did you mean that that put additional resource pressures on the planning system?

**Roisin Willmott:** Yes. The whole change in how things are working means that people have to think differently, which can be more challenging than just getting your head down and processing your planning applications or writing your local development plan. They have been financially hit as well. The Wales Audit Office released a report in, I believe, 2018, which showed that, over the last five years, there has been a 50% reduction in resources for local planning authorities in Wales. Wales is not alone in this. This has been seen across the United Kingdom, but it certainly proves to be difficult when trying to change how people work.

**Lord Curry of Kirkharle:** We have heard as a committee that a spatial plan is a key way of achieving more integrated land use, and you have hinted at that even if you may not have used the terminology. What lessons were learned in Wales from that approach to land use planning and management?

**Roisin Willmott:** *Future Wales* was published last year, so that gives us the national spatial plan—the national development framework as it is described in the legislation. That is a very integrated plan and forms part of the development plan for Wales, so it gives that high-level development planning. Planning applications are determined against that, particularly at the more strategic level, so your larger energy projects et cetera, but not just those. There has been work to embed the area statements, which have already been referred to, to ensure that they talk across the different policy areas.

*Future Wales* was a key document and programme in bringing that forward because of the time that has passed. A lot of learning has been taken forward, so that really helps to try to embed this. It is one of the more modern newer plans if you like that will bring that forward.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** As I mentioned, I do not have the specifics, so I am afraid these will be more comments on the processes that are involved or required for this type of application. With the spatial plan, in essence, if you are going to look at the land and what the resources are providing you, you need to know where they come from and where you are going to change those resources, if indeed you are going to interfere or intervene, so by default it is spatial.

There is a spatial plan for Wales, which, as Roisin said, is *Future Wales*. It identifies key areas for both development and direct conservation. It does recognise that, for land use or land management, conservation, biodiversity and production are across the landscape. They are not in

discrete units. Particularly going back to the question on climate change, one of the main drivers from the *State of Natural Resources Report* for Wales was the resilience of the environment in many ways but particularly in providing corridors and buffer areas for the future movement of species and protection of the environment.

It is a very messy problem, and there are a lot of people involved. It is embedded in a co-production and participatory process, and it is about adaptive management, having those discussions and recognising what might be possible. As it is very much an integrated system that we do not fully understand, it has to be very adaptive, and that challenges traditional leadership and management styles. As we have mentioned here and as was mentioned in your previous session, people talk about the skills that are needed for this. One of the things that was not fully recognised from the beginning was the amount of time involved up front in this type of planning. People are very keen to make decisions very quickly and then perhaps spend lot of time later trying to patch up the system.

This structure and support system is intended to provide a much clearer assessment of the system up front so that we can avoid the unintended consequences that we have had to cope with. The most dramatic unintended consequences, of course, are the climate crisis and the nature crisis. These softer skills have to come through across government and public bodies, and the awareness and ability of involvement of communities is essential as well. These are all happening. The skills are coming in. Awareness is building, but the sophistication of the tools to allow those discussions are still not being recognised, so there are things that are evolving.

It is important to recognise that this is probably one of the first times that you have seen the ecosystem approach, this internationally recognised and used approach, being institutionalised into a government and public body system.

**Lord Curry of Kirkharle:** You have the national higher-level plan as you described it. What happens underneath that? How far does the national plan go in determining land use? To what extent does the responsibility devolve to regions or sub-regions?

**The Chair:** How are they expected to implement the plan? Do they have extra money to purchase the services? How does it work?

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** I am looking at Roisin to see whether she has more intimate detail than me.

**Roisin Willmott:** In Wales, we have the development plan, *Future Wales*, which is that national development framework. Below that, you have *Planning Policy Wales*, which is national planning policy and not of development plan status, but that is really important. That very much integrates policy across different areas. It brings forward that new way of

thinking on how you integrate these services together, whether they be economic, environmental, social, housing or transport et cetera.

There is a tier allowed for under the Planning (Wales Act) for regional plans. This is a work in progress if you like, so the corporate joint committees, which are required to bring those forward, are in the process and early days of being set up. There will be one for each of the four regions that have been set out for Wales. These have not come forward yet. These are the strategic development plans, but they will be that regional tier.

Below that, there are the local development plans, which have been in operation for many years now. They provide your more local details planning policy. In time, as they become renewed, they will reflect the national development framework, *Future Wales*. You will always have a problem or a factor to build in when you bring in new systems. There were some plans that were already in place, and it takes time for them to catch up with newer plans that come in, so we are in that cycle at the moment.

The local development plans at the local level will also feed across to the community plans delivered by the local service boards, so all of these will, ultimately, read together. It takes time to bring them up to date. It takes quite a long time to bring plans forward. When a new one—perhaps *Future Wales*, at a higher tier—comes forward, there is a trickle through for the local development plans to be in accordance with that.

**Q182 Baroness Mallalieu:** My question relates to both of you. There is an ecosystem approach that you are aiming at throughout. You are trying to get integrated assessment, but it does sound as if there are a huge number of different bodies and frameworks and that you have added more and not taken any away. With hindsight, should the matter have been more simplified and is that something that could be looked at now?

**Roisin Willmott:** No. They provide the answers for the spatial level, if you like, that they are addressing. In a local development plan, you would need to go into finer granularity about certain things about particular housing sites and local nature reserves, perhaps, where, at the national level, you need to think about bigger, more strategic and infrastructure projects as well. They need to read together, but it is a long process and it is more difficult to get this new way of thinking of integrating everything together. It does feel difficult in that sense. I completely agree with that sentiment.

Once these plans are in place and are singing together, it will make things more straightforward, because you have different answers at different spatial levels.

**Q183 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Could I ask a practical question? I have the scars from the conflict between planting trees for climate change and agriculture in Wales, which is a pretty hot topic right now. Where would all that be resolved? Who makes the decision, and how is it resolved?

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** I will step back from that a little bit, because I cannot give you the precise behaviours that are going on now. As we have both said several times, there is a very well-integrated overall approach, which is challenging and very difficult to implement because it goes against what appears, at first sight, to be much simpler, linear project management. You have your project. A bridge is built in place, on time, in budget, but because the approach has not taken a whole-systems approach, perhaps very quickly or later on, you find the bridge perhaps was not needed at all, was built in the wrong place, or was the wrong design.

Introducing that complexity in decision-making, particularly in government, is very complicated. It goes against tradition, but we know from so much experience elsewhere that this is one of the ways in which you can avoid the unintended consequences and deliver sustainable development. In terms of the complexity of the system, I understand that it must seem very complex in the table because we need a picture. We need to show you a picture. We need to show you the system.

One of the things that is happening in Wales is that the underlying evidence base is becoming a consistent base for Welsh Government and all public bodies, so at least we are starting to develop that. We go back to *SoNaRR*. We go back to the area statements, and then inform the local development plans, the strategic development plans, and—indeed, I will refer to it again—*Future Wales* as to how government, at various levels, allows for this broader conversation and then come to a more consensual decision is in process.

In some areas, it works very well. The inclusion in the past of Natural Resource Wales in decisions with Public Health Wales, for example, would never have occurred or we may never have sat down and talked to the fire services, but now we know that there is a lot of very good work between Natural Resources Wales and the fire services around wildfires. That would not have happened if we had not been sitting together on the public services boards that bring all these people together. We know the ecosystem approach is a major tool if not the core tool for sustainable development. We know that it is predicated on human behaviour, and it is really difficult, but this is where we need to bring in the other resources.

I would like to say this if it is okay. We talk about systems approach, sociology, psychology and these area statements with data and monitoring. There is a move towards trying to update quite seriously our approach to data monitoring and modelling because we cannot provide good decisions in many areas because the response is that we do not have enough data or we cannot monitor everything. The situation is that we have neither the resources nor the time, and we need to utilise quite a lot of the progress, particularly in, say, AI for modelling to avoid this data trap so that we can make good decisions in an iterative way with less data.

If we cannot do that in the UK, it is highly unlikely that many countries in the world will be able to make good natural resource management decisions, because they have less than half the data we have.

Q184 **Lord Harlech:** You have talked about ecosystems and integrated approaches. As you know, Wales has a number of national parks, and in my experience they have their own planning policy frameworks and basically set the rules. How are you integrating this new theory with the parks? Where we are in particular, we have Gwynedd Council and Cadw for the heritage side, Natural Resources Wales and Snowdonia National Park. None of them speak to each other, and they all have a different agenda.

**Roisin Willmott:** I would like to think that they do have a common agenda to an extent in that they are all caught within the Well-being of Future of Generations (Wales) Act, so they are all required to follow the five ways of working because they are all public bodies as well, so they are caught by the Act. They are required to do that to achieve the seven well-being goals. Snowdonia National Park is the local planning authority, so it will lead on the planning policies, which will conform with planning policy Wales if there are local needs. Of course, *Planning Policy Wales* puts in policies for national parks and takes account of that as well.

They will have different agendas in that they have different reasons to be, if you like, so Cadw will be thinking about built heritage. NRW will be thinking about the natural heritage, and it is how you pull those together. They should come together through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, I would like to think.

Q185 **Lord Watts:** One of the advantages that Wales has is its size. It is smaller relative to England. You already have the national bodies. You have the regional bodies and the sub-regional bodies. Then you have all sorts of other organisations that need to be consulted. In a past life, I was involved in an RDA, which was attempting to do something similar but for economic development purposes. That was a structure that made decisions, but it was not always popular because local people, local organisations, organisations and even government departments did not like the idea that someone was, as they regarded it, taking over their areas of responsibility.

Do we need to think about completely new structures of bringing together organisations that can make decisions? I can see the conflicts arising. I do not understand, in your system, who makes the final decision. Is it national, regional, sub-regional government, small organisations or small local organisations? At the end of the day, there will be conflict. How do you resolve conflict?

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** The direction that Wales has taken in bringing a more integrated approach to natural resource management and land use management is through this ecosystem approach. That is, by definition, more participatory, more systems thinking, and more discussion. It will be very difficult to change the culture of the Government and multiple partners, but there are ways in which we do

this. We have done this very successfully, and unsuccessfully obviously, in various parts of the world where you had to have that discussion and agreement.

There are many excellent tools and an increasing research programme of tools for bringing together shared values and people to recognise the problem and then hopefully come to shared values. It is not an example that is directly related here, but for climate change we have had national juries or discussions that have started with a very polarised view, but by simply having that process of discussion with consistent data and information, at least there is recognition of different perspectives<sup>4</sup>. Sometimes there is quite a change in the position of an individual or of an individual group. That is embedded in the structure of Wales.

Quite often, the final decision—and I am saying this quite broadly—is still with the original group or department or body. This forces people to open doors to multiple perspectives, and that will change people’s decisions, hopefully for the better. There are many examples where NRW has gone into discussions, as it did with the Cardiff city deal, for example. It is now involved in those discussions. This is my personal assumption, but in the past there may well have been no access from the Environment Agency or one of the other agencies into that type of discussion. That is not necessarily becoming the norm, but it is certainly much more frequent.

**Roisin Willmott:** The only thing I would add is to look at the Welsh ministerial portfolios. There is now a Minister for Climate Change, which takes a lot of these different factors within its portfolio, so they cannot argue with each other. That might support this further.

Q186 **Baroness Redfern:** We have heard about possibly looking at new structures, lots of integrating sectors and multi-functional approaches. I am still not clear how it all really fits together to deliver a better outcome for nature and society. I wonder if Roisin can go first please to explain it a bit better for me.

**Roisin Willmott:** It is complex. We are dealing with complex factors as well, and I would say that planning is a key part of it. It is not the only part though, because obviously with agricultural and forestry use it would not necessarily have a say in that, but planning is a key part. Land use is not just about visual impact. It is about places and how they work more generally. The planning process looks at all these different factors. *Planning Policy Wales, Future Wales* and the local development plans are all working in the same direction of trying to integrate all these uses to bring forward good places and strong places.

Nutrient management could be a challenge, so I might just leave that hanging there because that is challenging England as well, but it is about having these different strategies at different spatial levels and different purposes but they all come together. They might deal with different things, but they come with the same essence, if you like, to try to

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address the different problems but from the same principles and with a view to a nature-based solution, which is a key factor in that, which is your topic today. I hope that helps.

**Baroness Redfern:** Planning can be a bit volatile depending on who is in charge locally. Can it not just change things totally?

**Roisin Willmott:** There are factors there, and I would not want to disagree with the local democratic process. Local development plans are really important in this. They belong to that local planning authority, so the elected members, or appointed members if it is a national park, would have had a big role in developing those plans. Those plans should be seen as the key in determining your decisions. It is about investing in your local development plans and then implementing them in your decisions.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** It may seem as if it is a lot of scattered pieces, but they are actually nested. It is about doing the same process, using consistent databases at different scales, having that overarching vision of where Wales wants to be and having that national spatial plan. It just breaks down into smaller and smaller units to allow, in effect, the same conversations to happen at those different levels, because they might obviously happen very effectively in one area but may be inappropriate in another, so you have to have the processes at those local levels as well. They are guided by the overarching structure.

Q187 **Lord Borwick:** The committee has heard that the planning system is not fit for purpose in England, although I am not sure there is complete unanimity on what the purpose is, at least between an applicant and an objector, for example. In your experience, how does the Welsh planning system and wider policies on planning and infrastructure work, and how well does it support Wales's land use strategy? Does it need changing?

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** I can start and then let Roisin correct me, because I am not a planner. All the work that Natural Resources Wales does is in land use management and obviously planning. It produces the data and guidance that is then fed into the other systems that we have heard about, such as the local, regional and national plans. That has been augmented, and it is working. It sounds woolly, but it is a complex and messy problem. It is augmented by these assessments that come through from the area statements that give an evidence base at the regional and local level. They feed into these well-being plans, which come from the combined vision and discussions of the public services in an area. That then affects the local development plans.

These well-being plans are all future-focused. They are using the same type of data, and they are learning how to bring in these multiple perspectives and to recognise the consequences of traditional decision-making, and trying to apply this broader discussion in coming to decisions. From my perspective, certainly, a planning system is better than no planning system, but it has to recognise that it can take on this mission of creating a nature-positive and more sustainable environment.

It is doing that. There is a very strong relationship between the work of Natural Resources Wales and the planning system.

**Roisin Willmott:** I would agree with that statement. It takes time for policies to become up to date. Investing in local development plans and the regional strategic development plans, when they are coming forward, are really important and would save time at the local level when making decisions on specific developments in an integrated way. It is really important to invest in those plans and support local communities to engage in that to get those local views. You will never get total agreement. Everyone will have a different view, but it is really important that we invest in those and invest in those delivering the services. That is very important.

**The Chair:** Forgive me for suggesting this, but I am forming an impression of an as yet slightly chaotic system with different bodies, levels, ambitions and Acts all being piled on top of one another. I am not forming an impression of any clear priorities or system of arriving at your priorities at the local level and what happens on the ground that is going to be effective. Correct me if I am wrong. Maybe you are in the embryonic stage and you are developing.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** I can understand why you might think that from the way we have to present here. We need to provide you with material to look at—some systems, diagrams and examples. My apologies. I find it complicated to describe it with no aids. It might sound chaotic, but there are three Acts. You have the overarching Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, which means that we must take account of actions, to be sustainable and to deliver sustainable development. There are seven well-being goals, which are quite clear in many ways, although there is no system analysis of them as yet, which obviously would help to map them out. There are five clear ways of working, and that is important. We perhaps have not mentioned that.

**The Chair:** There is the interface between your overall framework and the planning and what happens on the ground. There does not seem to me to be any practical resolution of these issues. It is all very well having five policies, as you just mentioned.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** The five ways of workings are very much focussed on the long term, the inclusive discussions, and the co-ordination with other people. Certainly the Environment Act provides a consistent database and consistent assessment for the planning to refer to.

Q188 **Lord Harlech:** Do you think that by putting well-being in everything or making it the overarching thing there are some unintended consequences? For example, in the Glastir Woodland Creation Scheme, the main goal of which I would have thought to be to increase tree cover, there was a requirement for there to be public access in order to access the grant funding. I cannot see why people would want to walk around a load of saplings. It is not a fully formed forest yet. From everyone I have

spoken to, a lot of people did not want to access that scheme or plant trees because the public access requirements were too onerous.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** Obviously, I cannot comment on an individual case. I do not know anything about it.

**Lord Harlech:** You know about the Glastir Woodland Creation Scheme.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** If you are saying, “Are all these goals compulsory for every condition?” the answer is no.

Q189 **The Earl of Leicester:** We have heard a lot of all the various systems and Acts that contribute to the Welsh land use strategy. I will ask each of you to pick just one good thing from the Welsh system that you think might be useful to our committee as we try to develop an English land use strategy.

**The Chair:** It is a difficult question.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** Yes. It might be slightly irritating, and I preface this with my apologies, because that probably reflects precisely the problem we are facing in bringing this change about, because focusing on one specific issue as opposed to looking at the system—

**The Earl of Leicester:** Yes, indeed, but there must be one that is your favourite child.

**Professor Kathryn Monk:** No. I really do think it is a system. I do not know much about car engines, but if the engine is not working and you just take one bit out and do not recognise the interrelationship between that piece and something else, it may well not work. Perhaps in an engine it is a little more linear, but we are dealing with an ecological system here with a hugely complex human environment and behaviours on top of it, and it is no longer possible to deal with that in our traditional linear fashion. Unfortunately, we are dealing with much more complex, messy problems.

To do that, you need to have this holistic approach. You need to bring in the systems thinking, and you need a whole range of different skills in terms of the evidence base, dealing with the problem of teasing it out, and bringing people together so that they recognise what the problem really is. The system they have there with those three elements would not work if you took any one of those elements out. It sounds very complicated, partly because of the way we are presenting it in this format but partly because it is still very new. As we said at the beginning, this is the first time it has been institutionalised into government. Inevitably, it is going to feel very awkward for quite a while.

**Roisin Willmott:** I would pick lots of things, but my top one would be the long-term integration of policy across public bodies—giving it time as to have a long-term trajectory. As Kathryn has said, this is quite new, but actually we have had the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act since 2015, so it is a few years old, not a couple of years old, but we still

see it as new, so it is about giving that time to work out and become embedded across public bodies and integrated across public bodies.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That is very good. Thank you both very much indeed for coming all the way from Wales to talk to us.