

Thursday, 13 September 2012

**Re: Proposed felling at Newborough Forest**

The issues at Newborough are complex so I'll try and briefly outline the current scenario.

The Welsh Government (WG) intervened at the end of the summer last year over concerns with the information they were being fed by CCW regarding the Science Review. They asked for the views and evidence supporting our views to be sent directly to them at the end of August. This information was then sent to the Chief Scientist for Wales who reviewed both CCW's arguments and evidence and ours - the independent scientists in the Science Review. The Chief Scientist and experts he consulted concluded that CCW's position was not supported by the evidence available.

Subsequently WG have commissioned an independent geomorphology consultancy (via CCW) to report on dune dynamics at most Welsh dune sites. This report has been with CCW since the end of March but had until very recently not been forwarded to the WG Environment unit. This report concerned itself mainly with issues of dune mobility/dynamics. At the moment the WG is determining how it will proceed on the basis of the evidence provided in the Science Review and also the commissioned consultancy report. They are also planning a meeting with the independent participants in the Sc. Review to clarify any outstanding views or issues. A date for this has yet to be set.

Regarding the FMP and the '40% clearfelling' issue. You need to understand the history of the clearfelling plans and read between the lines of the FMP. Those within CCW who have driven the clearfelling demand have an 'agenda'. That was defined by their science advisory group as a minimum requirement to clearfell a swath 500m wide along all forest boundaries. The aim being to set the forest back at least half a kilometre from the top of the beach along all coastal sections and along the Warren. The opposition to this has been so intense that CCW have decided to get clever and try and achieve the same aims by stealth. If you look at the FMP planned underplanting to provide a weather robust boundary along the edge of zone 5 you can see the long term objective to create a forest boundary along the edge of zone 5 and this corresponds pretty well to the original '500m' requirement. Once zones 1 are clearfelled the trees of zones 3 & 4 would be newly exposed to salt spray and wind that they are not used to. They have grown up being sheltered by trees of zone 1 and after clearfelling will suffer from salt intolerance, windthrow and lack of new planting means a poor age structure. The 'minimum intervention' for zones 3 & 4 would be better described as malign neglect; no improvement in age structure and no underplanting to provide a wind & weather robust boundary. The FMP long term aim is the destruction of zones 1 (clearfelling), 3 & 4 (malign neglect). Zone 2 has been earmarked for an undefined 'experimental' clearfelling to investigate hydrology along the forest/Warren boundary. This would also be a means to clearfell under the guise of 'hydrology' research that at the moment we have no convincing evidence to support. You should also remember that CCW have not been able to substantiate their rationale for clearfelling zone 1.

The clear objective of the FMP is to achieve more or less the original aim to remove the connection between the forest and the shore and set it back at least 500m from the beach. It must be remembered that CCW have not been able to support their position with sound science or Habitat Directive conservation requirements. The WG is in the processes of determining the way forward and until they have concluded their review of all the evidence and arguments we are all awaiting the outcome.