Dated: 14 September 2023

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING between Natural Resources Body for Wales (NRW) of 29 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0TP **and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)**, of One Canal Parade, Dumballs Rd, Cardiff, CF10 5BF.

Aim and purpose of the Memorandum

1.1. This Memorandum records the understanding of NRW, WLGA and the 22 local councils in respect of their common objectives relating to matters of mutual interest, primarily operational activity and facilitating strategic and policy collaboration. It will support better working arrangements and communication whilst public sector resources are reducing to ensure efficient and effective provision of frontline services. It sets out a framework through which the parties seek to enhance the delivery of mutual objectives by sharing knowledge and information.

1.2. This Memorandum recites the responsibilities of the parties and establishes the general principles for their cooperation, further details will be set out in specific protocols.

1.3. This Memorandum shall be effective from the date recorded above and it will be reviewed annually in accordance with paragraph 7 of this Memorandum and managed in accordance with the governance arrangements for the MOU and any associated protocols.

2. Roles and functions of the signatories: NRW and councils have a wide range of roles and duties which managed collaboratively can bring mutual benefits for them and the people of Wales.

2.1. **NRW**

2.1.1 NRW is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body. NRW's purpose is to pursue sustainable management of natural resources in relation to Wales and apply the principles of sustainable management of natural resources in the exercise of its functions, so far as consistent with their proper exercise.

2.2. **WLGA**

2.2.1 The WLGA represents the interests of the 22 local authorities in Wales. The three national park authorities and the three fire and rescue authorities are associate members

2.2.2. Each of the 22 **councils** is comprised of elected members, executive Officers and operational staff.

3. Principles of working together

3.1. NRW, the WLGA and the 22 councils each recognise the independent remit of the other parties and the requirement for each party to exercise its own discretion in all decision making, but will aim to:

- work in line with the Principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act i.e. Involve each other; work to prevent issues arising; consider long term implications and opportunities in an integrated way and collaborate and work cooperatively where appropriate in the achievement of their shared and respective objectives in the marine and terrestrial environments.
- engage in open discussion in areas of mutual interest to achieve their respective objectives in contributing to the sustainable development of the marine and terrestrial environments.
- operate in a transparent way while undertaking their responsibilities.
- involve and work with each other in areas of shared interest or concern and work jointly with other delivery partners where relevant and agreed. Work together to develop and share reports, data, research, or other information that either party believes would be helpful to the other in connection with the decisions or activities of either party, taking account of their respective obligations under the General Data Protection Regulations (EU) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018 and subject to any intellectual property or confidentiality restrictions placed on the parties;
- explore further opportunities to develop shared working practices, make improvements to services provided to each other and reduce duplication of effort. Where such opportunities are identified, the specific terms on which the parties will operate will be negotiated and agreed within a separate agreement referred to as a Protocol.
- seek to deliver consistent and coordinated messages when working together on projects and when working with Government, delivery partners and the public.
- Any appraisal of the working practices and relationships will be carried out jointly.

4. Status

4.1 NRW, as a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, is accountable to Ministers and the Welsh Government, as set out in the Establishment Order for the Body and the agreed Governance Framework. WLGA is an unincorporated association of all principal councils in Wales. The WLGA Council is its sovereign body. The Leader of the largest political group is the Leader of the Association and has responsibility for promoting the policies of the Association supported, where there is consensus, by other Officer Holders. Each individual council is a sovereign body with its own governance arrangements as agreed by the full Council. The parties recognise that any relevant requirements in these governance arrangements take precedence over this Memorandum.

4.2 The parties agree that this Memorandum is not legally binding between them and does not create any form of partnership or legal rights or obligations. It is however a statement of their shared intention to work together in a spirit of co-operation in pursuance of the matters outlined above.

4.3 Nothing in this Memorandum of Understanding shall fetter the discretion of NRW, WLGA or any individual council and their duties to be impartial, fair to all affected persons and to exercise (and be seen to exercise) the functions in accordance with the requirements of relevant legislation at all times. Accordingly, nothing in this Memorandum is to be taken as limiting or affecting the exercise of the powers and duties of any party or its members.

5. Ways of working

The agreement will be informed by and reflect the following ways of working

- Managers to communicate the MOU and the protocols where relevant to ensure staff understand the arrangements and the escalation hierarchy.
- Each working protocol will develop an escalation route with named roles and contacts
- Issues will be resolved as far as possible at officer/manager level locally.
- Unresolved Issues will be raised early and resolved at relevant level in organisations through the escalation route
- The parties will endeavour to keep each other informed in advance (taking into account confidentiality and other obligations owed to third parties) of any forthcoming significant public policy announcements on material matters of mutual interest including, for example only, early notice of non-restricted significant business developments and non-routine asset sales.

6. Governance and Communication

NRW and WLGA will each nominate a primary contact. These primary contacts will be responsible for encouraging a fluent and (where the commercial interests of the parties allow) transparent relationship between NRW, WLGA and councils, resolving difficulties and monitoring the smooth operation of this Memorandum. These are the Executive Director for Operations for Natural Resources Wales and Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development for WLGA.
They will be responsible for ensuring a clear, structured programme of WLGA/NRW liaison meetings take place at both a strategic and operational level, as follows:

STRATEGIC

- **Regular meetings (three times per annum to include attendance at the WLGA Annual Conference) between Senior Officers from NRW and the WLGA Leader, a Leader (or Leaders) from each region and an identified senior officer from Welsh Government**

- **Regular meetings (at least twice a year) between relevant NRW officers in each region and the Cabinet members from councils in each region with responsibility for Environmental and Climate Change portfolios, along with local authority Directors of Environment**
- **Biannual meeting between NRW Chief Executive and WLGA Chief Executive**
- **Quarterly meeting between the Executive Director of Operations for Natural Resources Wales and Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development for WLGA**

OPERATIONAL

- **Regular liaison** at LA footprint to continue between NRW Heads of Place and Local Authority Chief Executive or nominated deputy
- **Monthly meetings at Director level between NRW and WLGA** involving other relevant officers as required to discuss emerging policy and operational issues [requiring strategic or tactical discussion]. Directors may elect to delegate responsibility for leading representation at these meetings.

7. Review and appraisal of the Memorandum

7.1 The `Quarterly Meetings' convened by the Executive Director of Operations for Natural Resources Wales and the WLGA Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development and the senior NRW/Leaders' meetings will maintain an overview of the effectiveness of the Memorandum informed by:

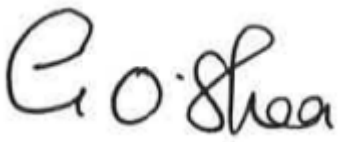
7.1.1 review of the shared wider strategic context and exploration of the emerging opportunities for the improvement of joint working practices, and

7.1.2 any substantial changes which occur to the policies, external relationships and structures of the parties concerned, or to the interaction between governments within the UK.

7.1.3 jointly commissioned evaluation of the ways of working and the implementation of the protocols.

7.2 Any amendments to this Memorandum consequent upon those reviews will be in writing and incorporated into it by the parties by mutual agreement.

8. Signatories

The parties agree to the terms set out in this Memorandum.

Signature	Signature
Gareth O'Shea OBO	
Sir David Henshaw	Councillor Andrew Morgan
Chair of	Leader
Natural Resources Body for Wales	Welsh Local Government Association