

SOR 6

Business Committee

Response to the Review of Standing Orders

RSPB Cymru



The RSPB is Europe's largest wildlife charity with over one million members, with more than 50,000 of them living in Wales. The Society manages one of the largest conservation estates in the UK, covering more than 130,000 hectares; 16,000 of these in Wales.

Below is our response to the assembly review of Standing Orders.

Committees

- RSPB Cymru would like to see a new Standing Order to allow for the creation of a Sustainability Committee after each Assembly Election. Wales has had a duty to promote sustainable development since the first Government of Wales Act 1998, and ensuring proper scrutiny of this duty through the consistent creation of a Sustainability Committee after each Assembly election would improve the Assembly's way of working and help it to become more effective in its role of holding the government to account. By stating the need for a Sustainability Committee in Standing Orders, it ensures that this commitment to sustainable development and the Sustainability Committee is awarded the same level of importance as other committees currently required by SO's e.g. Finance Committee.
- RSPB Cymru would welcome more transparency in Standing Orders on the process of selecting issues to undertake inquiries into. We feel that this would enable organisations and stakeholders to better prepare requests for inquiries, and ensure that information is tailored to the Assembly's needs. RSPB would like to see a consultation held over the summer recess on possible topics for committee inquiries, to allow for input and for stakeholders to comment on the most appropriate subjects for the committees to discuss.
- We believe that if Standing Orders set out the need for the forward work programme to be published by Committees and to be kept up to date, this would ensure a better quality of evidence from third sector organisations as it would enable more effective time management.
- RSPB Cymru would welcome guidance within the Standing Orders on the expectations by the Assembly for the appearance and content of evidence needed for committees. This would enable organisations and external

stakeholders to create a consistent template for providing information and evidence that is useful to the Assembly.

Statements of Opinion (SO 9.9-9.10)

- RSPB Cymru would welcome guidance in Standing Orders as to how Statements of Opinion can lead to further scrutiny or debate if they receive enough support and attention. This would ensure that the statements of opinions are utilised as an effective way for groups to raise and draw attention to issues.

Cross Party Groups

- RSPB Cymru would like to see guidance in Standing Orders as to the basic minimum requirements for the operation of a CPG. As an organisation that has just become involved with the set up and running of a CPG we know from experience the amount of time and resources needed to make the CPG a success. Guidance in the Standing Orders would allow third sector organisations to fully engage in this area of Assembly Business.
- We would also welcome Standing Order guidance as to the publication of CPG meetings on the Assembly website to ensure that third sector organisations are easily able to find and engage with a CPG that relates to them.

Legislation

- As with Committees, we would welcome, where possible, for Standing Orders to set out guidance for a consultation period that allows external organisations sufficient time to contribute to the scrutiny of both LCO's and Assembly measures.
- RSPB Cymru would also welcome further guidance in Standing Orders as to the expected layout/content of the evidence as to ensure a consistent quality of information.