

BBC News

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Elin Cadifor

Wales: Ecological footprint

Most Welsh people are ready to make lifestyles changes to help the environment according to a new survey by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The survey coincides with a new report which analyses the impact of the entire Welsh population on the planet.



Is the Welsh life style damaging the environment?

In the WWF survey 75% of Welsh people believe that lifestyles damage the environment, and six out of 10 say they are willing to make lifestyle changes such as buying more energy efficient appliances and sharing car trips.

The findings were presented on Thursday, 10 March 2005, when 15 organisations from the private, public and academic sectors came together to launch the "Reducing Wales' Ecological Footprint" report.

It was presented to Rhodri Morgan, First Minister for Wales at the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff.

Resource use

An Ecological Footprint is a measure of how much land and sea area we use to support our lifestyles, compared with what is available.

Wales's ecological footprint is measured as 5.25 global hectares.

The capacity of the planet is only 1.8 global hectares per person - which, according to WWF, means that we would need nearly three planets if everyone lived like the Welsh.



Wales' lifestyle requires 3x the earth's resources

First Minister Rhodri Morgan welcomed the report.

He said: "We are pleased that it confirms the early estimates that were made two to three years ago on the ecological footprint measure.

"If the whole world was consuming at Welsh levels in terms of environmental impact, we would need three planets not one to sustain ourselves.

"It is obviously much worse in the USA because if everyone consumed at American levels we would need five planets to sustain all mankind ..."

Sustainable policy

The report identifies a range of policy recommendations for the Welsh Assembly Government to use as tools to shrink the nation's footprint.

These include promoting organic food production, energy efficiency in homes and minimising waste.

Dr John Barrett is one of the report's authors.

Dr Barrett said: "While some good work has been done in Wales to bring about a more sustainable society, present policies will not be sufficient to reduce the consumption of materials, the production of waste and the Ecological Footprint to a sustainable level.

"A more radical agenda is required that helps to prepare Wales for a more sustainable future."

Stark choices

Transport is of key importance to a sustainable ecology.

According to the report the Welsh Assembly Government is facing a stark choice in how it deals with transport.

It can either continue with modes of transport such as the proposed new intra-Wales air service which it describes as environmentally damaging, or adopt a radically different transport agenda which would invest in public transport and encourage walking and cycling.

First Minister Rhodri Morgan says that the Assembly Government does have a balanced transport policy.

"I do not think anyone could fault the balance of our transport spending, we are spending heavily on public transport, we are opening railway lines as never before ...

"You still have to have faster links for those who really need to make the journey between north

Ecological footprint

More than 6bn people live on the planet earth

There is a need to understand how much of the planet's natural resources can be shared

The Ecological Footprint is a measure of how lifestyle impacts on the planet

The Footprint calculates how much productive land and sea is needed to provide the energy, water and materials used in everyday life

It calculates the emissions generated from the burning of oil, coal and gas

It determines how much land is required to absorb waste

The total is expressed in globes



First Minister Rhodri Morgan: Leading from the front

really need to make the journey between north Wales and south Wales.

"Using video conferencing as much as possible would be one way to minimise the number of people who do need to travel in order to do their job.

"We have a very balanced programme now of investment in railways, air travel and encouraging cycling and walking, safer routes to schools.

"That agenda is being pushed very strongly, but in the end you have to provide some improvements in the motor transport side and in aviation."

The Wales Ecological Footprint project is made up of a wide range of partners including WWF Cymru, Cardiff Council, Gwynedd Council, Cardiff University, Bangor University, the Stockholm Environment Institute (York), the National Assembly for Wales, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency Wales.

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