

**Date:** Wednesday 28 February 2001  
**Time:** 2.00pm to 4.35pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room, National Assembly Building

## **STOCKTAKE OF TIR GOFAL**

### **Purpose**

1. To inform the Committee of the stocktake of Tir Gofal.

### **Background**

2. The Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme is now entering its third application round and in order to ensure that the scheme continues to deliver high quality agri-environmental outputs across a range of farms and farm types in Wales whilst providing value for money both in terms of environmental and public benefits and administration, the Assembly is about to begin a stocktake of the scheme. A copy of the Terms of Reference which were sent to Members on 13 February, is attached.
3. The Terms of Reference have been discussed with FRCA and the Countryside Council for Wales both of whom are content. The other partners in the scheme, the Snowdonia National Park Authority, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission have been made aware of the stocktake, have had the opportunity to discuss its scope, and have raised no objections. Whilst, given the nature of the exercise, we will not be undertaking a full blown consultation we will be consulting informally with those with an interest in the scheme including the farming unions, the Young Farmers Club and RSPB.

### **Timing**

4. The Stocktake will commence this month with a report coming to Committee in June.

### **Financial Implications**

5. The costs of undertaking the stocktake will be accommodated within existing and planned administration costs budgets. Financial Planning Division has been consulted about this submission and noted that there are no additional financial implications for the Assembly.

### **Compliance**

6. The statutory basis for Tir Gofal is the Land in Care Scheme (Tir Gofal) (Wales) Regulations 1999

made under the power in section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 which has been transferred to the Assembly and delegated to the Minister for Rural Affairs. There are no issues of propriety or regularity. The Assembly Compliance Office has been consulted about these proposals and is content.

## **Action for the Committee**

7. The Committee is invited to note that a stocktake is taking place and offer any comments it may have on the scope of the stocktake and the key issues which should be considered. It is intended that the draft report on the stocktake will be tabled for discussion by the Committee in June.

### **Contact Point:**

Alan Starkey  
Food and Farming Development Division  
Ext 5776

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## **Tir Gofal Stocktake - Terms of Reference**

### **Aim**

Tir Gofal is the National Assembly for Wales' flagship agri-environment scheme. The aim of the stocktake is to ensure that the scheme delivers high quality agri-environmental outputs across a range of farms and farm types in Wales whilst providing value for money both in terms of environmental and public benefits, and administration.

In particular, the stocktake will consider:

- i. Whether the perceived complexity of the scheme is deterring applications and leading to high levels of drop out during the negotiation process; and whether it can be simplified without compromising environmental gain;
- ii. How the administration of Tir Gofal can be improved particularly in relation to:
  - the time it takes to produce an agreement
  - the complexity of the cartographic work.
  - running costs, whilst ensuring that all accounting, audit and EC requirements are met.
- iii. whether options can be identified to enable a greater number of farmers to benefit from the scheme, for a given budget, while maintaining the whole farm approach and delivering

environmental outputs effectively;

iv. whether the pattern of take-up under the scheme should be adjusted, taking account of deadweight and policy priorities.

v. the range of farms being accepted into the scheme, by size and geography.

## **Methodology**

The stocktake will be led by Alan Starkey of the Food and Farming Development Division with support from the Countryside Council for Wales together with colleagues within the Agriculture Department, FRCA and the other scheme partners. He will report to the Director of Agriculture. The process improvement aspects of the work will be led by Dewi Jones.

## **Timescale**

The stocktake will commence in February 2001 and will be completed by the end of May. The results will be put to the Minister for Rural Affairs in June and the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee later that month. Subject to the agreement of the Assembly, any changes which require changes in Secondary Legislation and/or clearance from the European Commission will be completed in time for the fourth application round which will commence in 2002.