

Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee

EPC(2) 06-06 (p2)

Date: 5th April 2006

Venue: Committee Room 1, Senedd

Title: The Tir Gofal(Amendment)(Wales) Regulations 2006

Purpose

1. To give the Committee the opportunity to scrutinise The Tir Gofal(Amendment)(Wales) Regulations 2006

Summary

2. To explain the purpose and content of The Tir Gofal(Amendment)(Wales) Regulations 2006.

Action for Subject Committee

3. The Committee is invited to note the paper.

Carwyn Jones AM

Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

The Tir Gofal(Amendment)(Wales) Regulations 2006

Background

In November 2004, the First Minister announced that responsibility for the administration of the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme would move from the Countryside Council for Wales to the National Assembly for Wales. Since then there have been extensive discussions, primarily between officials of the Welsh Assembly Government and CCW but also with the other partners in the scheme, CADW, Forestry Commission Wales, Environment Agency Wales and the Snowdonia National Park Authority. Other stakeholders have been kept informed of developments. A letter explaining the changes has been

sent to Tir Gofal agreement holders and a presentation has been made to the CAP Reform Stakeholders Group whose members include the farming unions, the CLBA, RSPB, Organic Centre Wales and the Young Farmers Clubs.

The Legislation

The Tir Gofal(Amendment)(Wales) Regulations 2006 is the vehicle which will allow the National Assembly for Wales to assume responsibility for the administration of Tir Gofal. A copy of the draft Statutory Instrument is at Annex 2. The Statutory Instrument was drafted by the Directorate of Legal Services following discussions between Welsh Assembly Government and Countryside Council for Wales officials. CCW were given the opportunity to comment on the final draft. The Statutory Instrument amends the Land in Care Scheme (Tir Gofal)(Wales) Regulations 1999 (SI. 1999/1176) to effect a transfer of responsibility for the administration of Tir Gofal from the Countryside Council for Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and provides for the transfer of rights and liabilities in connection with Tir Gofal scheme agreements entered into by the Countryside Council for Wales to be transferred to the National Assembly for Wales.

Subject to the agreement of the National Assembly for Wales, the regulations will come into effect on 16th October 2006. In advance of this, extensive preparatory work has taken place. A Project Board chaired by the head of the Welsh Assembly Government's Rural Payments Division has been overseeing the project and workstreams have been established to consider the legal, financial, human resource, locational and IT implications. Both CCW and Welsh Assembly Government were represented on these groups. The Trades Unions from both organisations were represented on relevant groups.

Administrative Issues

Most Tir Gofal staff will continue to work from their existing offices though there may be circumstances where it may be more appropriate for them to work from Welsh Assembly Government offices. Discussions on this issue are continuing. All Tir Gofal project officers as well as administrative, IT and financial staff whose work relates to Tir Gofal will transfer from CCW to the Welsh Assembly Government. This represents some 91 full time equivalents. The administration of the scheme will migrate from CCW's IT system to the Welsh Assembly Government's CODA system.

Benefits

The decision to transfer the administration of Tir Gofal from the CCW to the National Assembly for Wales is part of a wider agenda of the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver quality public services which are more joined-up, more responsive to people and businesses, and more efficient.

Officials from both organisations have been working hard to ensure that the transfer of responsibility is seamless to agreement holders and potential applicants. The transfer will offer a number of benefits to customers including access to a single point of contact covering all CAP and RDP schemes through their

Divisional Office.

The transfer will also be consistent with new European Finance and Rural Development Regulations that will require all European payments to be paid by one paying agency in each region from 1 January 2007. In Wales, this will be the National Assembly.

Regulatory Impact Appraisal

A full Regulatory Impact Appraisal (RIA) has been prepared and is attached. The RIA discusses the risks, benefits and costs in detail.