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Dathlu 20 mlynedd fel llais dros gyrff amgylcheddol anillywodraethol Cymru
1990 – 2010 Celebrating 20 years as a voice for environmental NGOs in Wales 1990 - 2010

30th June 2010

Dear Committee Chair,

Re: Inquiry into Reforming the Common Agricultural Policy

I am writing to supply you with additional evidence to complement the oral evidence session which Wales Environment Link (WEL) representative Arfon Williams attended on 16th June 2010. Mr Williams thought it would be useful to provide the Committee with additional information on WEL Members' engagement with the EU institutions.

WEL, as a network, primarily engages at the EU level through joint work with Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL), our sister organisation with an England and UK remit. WEL and WCL have co-signed letters to MEPs. WCL have met with MEPs and officials in Brussels and the UK to discuss the development of the CAP post 2013. WEL has discussed the future of the CAP with representatives from CCW. WEL also has contact with the WAG office in Brussels. However, most of WEL's work on the CAP is through the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government, through attending meetings and responding to consultations.

WEL members themselves use a range of different routes to liaise and work with the European Union institutions. However, levels of engagement vary depending on the size and resources of an organisation and this will affect capacity to engage on EU matters. WEL members' relationship and involvement in EU affairs can be classified broadly into two categories: the larger organisations and the smaller organisations (which are sometimes regionally based), who tend to have very minimal contact with the EU.

Routes of Engagement employed by WEL Members:

- A small number of WEL Members have a member of staff based in Brussels who will inform the organisation of EU policy developments and who will advocate on Welsh and UK affairs within the Commission, European Parliament and with the Council of Ministers through UK Representation.
- Many WEL Members' have London offices who take the lead in EU matters, work with UK government departments and meet with UK government Ministers.

- Some larger WEL member organisations are members of European umbrella organisations such as Birdlife (RSPB) or Europa Nostra (National Trust). These umbrella bodies will facilitate direct engagement with the EU institutions.
- Some WEL Members engage through UK umbrella bodies who will advocate in Brussels such as WCL.
- Larger WEL Members will respond to European Commission public consultations.

Many organisations are actively seeking to increase their engagement with the EU, for example Butterfly Conservation Europe is currently seeking funding from the EU to employ a part time liaison officer. However, engagement of WEL organisations is primarily limited by organisational resources.

I hope you find this information useful for the Rural Development Sub-Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Hannah Pitt
Chair WEL Land Use Working Group