



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Yr Is-bwyllgor Datblygu Gwledig
The Rural Development Sub-committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 21 Gorffennaf 2009
Tuesday, 21 July 2009**

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Countryside: Building a Secure Future'

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mick Bates	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Alun Davies	Llafur (Cadeirydd yr Is-bwyllgor) Labour (Sub-committee Chair)
Brynle Williams	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Leanne Wood	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Rhodri Glyn Thomas) The Party of Wales (substitute for Rhodri Glyn Thomas)

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Elin Jones	Aelod Cynulliad, Plaid Cymru (y Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig) Assembly Member, The Party of Wales (the Minister for Rural Affairs)
David Morris	Polisi Amaethyddol Cyffredinol/Ffermio Cynaliadwy, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Common Agricultural Policy/Sustainable Farming, Welsh Assembly Government
Rory O'Sullivan	Pennaeth Is-adran, Is-adran Polisi Cefn Gwlad, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Division, Countryside Policy Division, Welsh Assembly Government

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Dr Virginia Hawkins	Clerc Clerk
Meriel Singleton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 1.47 p.m.
The meeting began at 1.47 p.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Alun Davies:** Galwaf y cyfarfod i drefn. Diolch am eich presenoldeb. Er gwybodaeth, mae offer cyfieithu ar gael ac mae gan bawb yr hawl i siarad yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg.

Alun Davies: I call the meeting to order. Thank you for your attendance. For your information, translation equipment is available and everyone has the right to speak in Welsh or in English.

1.48 p.m.

**Sesiwn Graffu gyda'r Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig ar 'Ffermio, Bwyd a
Chefn Gwlad: Creu Dyfodol Cadarn'**
**Scrutiny Session with the Minister for Rural Affairs on 'Farming, Food and
Countryside: Building a Secure Future'**

[2] **Alun Davies:** Diolchaf i'r Gweinidog am ei hamser y prynhawn yma. Yr ydym yn ddiolchgar iawn ei bod wedi gallu dod o hyd i'r amser i ddod i'r sesiwn hon.

Alun Davies: I thank the Minister for her time this afternoon. We are very grateful that you have been able to find the time to attend this session.

[3] Weinidog, yr ydym eisoes wedi datgan ein bod am drafod eich datganiad polisi ffermio bwyd a chefn gwlad gyda chi, a dyma ein cyfle cyntaf i wneud hynny. Y tro diwethaf inni gael cyfarfod gyda chi, bu inni drafod TB, ac er gwybodaeth, bydd y pwyllgor yn rhyddhau datganiad ac adroddiad am TB ym mis Medi. Cawn gyfle arall i drafod hwnnw yn nes ymlaen yn yr hydref. A hoffech wneud unrhyw sylwadau agoriadol?

Minister, we have already announced that this committee would like to discuss your policy statement on farming, food and countryside with you, and this is our first opportunity to do so. The last time that we had a meeting with you, we discussed TB and, for your information, the committee will release a statement and a report on TB in September. We will have another opportunity to discuss that later in the autumn. Would you like to make any opening comments?

[4] **Y Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig (Elin Jones):** Hoffwn ddiolch i chi am y cyfle i fod yma ac am eich gweledigaeth i gynnal cyfarfod o'r pwyllgor hwn yn Llanelwedd yng nghanol bwrlwm y Gymru wledig.

The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones): I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be here and for your vision in holding a meeting of this committee in Llanelwedd, in the heart of rural Wales.

1.50 p.m.

[5] Penderfynais sefydlu grŵp o arbenigwyr, o wahanol elfennau o'r diwydiant amaeth a bwyd, i roi cyngor ac i weithio gyda fi ar greu strategaeth ar gyfer y sector amaethyddol a chynhyrchu bwyd yn ei gyfanrwydd, gan dderbyn bod yr heriau a'r cyfleoedd sy'n wynebu'r sector yn newid ac yn mynd i newid ymhellach eto dros y 10 mlynedd nesaf, wrth inni ystyried ein hymwneud â'r sector, gydag ymwneud y farchnad â'r sector, a chyda datblygiadau o ran rheoli tir a newid yn yr hinsawdd, a hefyd datblygiadau newydd o ran technoleg.

I decided to establish a group of specialists from different parts of the farming and food industry to give advice and to work with me on creating a strategy for the agriculture and the food production sector in its entirety, while accepting that the challenges facing the sectors, and the opportunities facing it, are changing and will change even more over the next 10 years, as we consider our involvement with the sector and the market's involvement with the sector, and with developments in land management and climate change, and also new technological developments.

[6] Strategaeth yw hon, wrth gwrs, a bydd datblygiadau ac elfennau gwahanol o weithredu yn deillio ohoni. Mae nifer o agweddau ar y gwaith eisoes yn weithredol. Hefyd, yn yr hydref, byddaf yn sefydlu grŵp annibynnol a fydd yn monitro cynnydd ac yn nodi a ydym yn cwrdd ag amcanion y

This is a strategy, of course, and there will be developments and different action elements resulting from it. Several aspects of the work are already in operation. Also, in the autumn, I will establish an independent group that will monitor progress and note whether we are meeting the strategy's objectives. The group

strategaeth. Bydd y grŵp yn mesur datblygiad y strategaeth a'r angen i newid, ac yn cynnig newidiadau wrth inni fynd ymlaen. Yr wyf yn awyddus i sicrhau nad dogfen a fydd yn eistedd ar sillf fydd y strategaeth hon ond un weithredol, a hefyd ein bod yn gallu cwrdd â'r amcanion yr ydym wedi gosod ein hunain, fel Llywodraeth, ar gyfer y sector pwysig hwn.

[7] **Alun Davies:** Diolch yn fawr ichi am hynny, Weinidog. Yr wyf am ddechrau'r sesiwn drwy ofyn cwestiwn i chi. Yn y ddogfen yr ydych yn sôn amdani, yr ydych yn dweud bod y strategaeth yn

will measure development of the strategy and the need to change, and will suggest changes as time goes on. I am keen that this document should not just sit on the shelf, but that it should be a living document and that we can meet the objectives that we have set ourselves, as a Government, for this important sector.

Alun Davies: Thank you very much for that, Minister. I will start this session by asking you a question. In the document that you have just mentioned, you say that the strategy is

[8] 'cross cutting in government with clear links to other departmental agendas'.

[9] Rhaid dweud, Weinidog, nad wyf wedi darllen unrhyw strategaeth gan y Llywodraeth nad yw'n cynnwys y geiriau hynny—fel arfer, maent yn y rhagarweiniad. Fodd bynnag, yn aml iawn, nid ydym yn gweld hynny'n digwydd. Yr wyf yn credu bod pob pwyllgor wedi darganfod, mewn ffyrdd gwahanol, bod diffyg cydlynu rhwng adrannau'r Llywodraeth. Sut ydych chi'n mynd i sicrhau bod y strategaeth hon yn wahanol?

I must say, Minister, I have not read any Government strategy that does not include those words—they are usually in the foreword. However, quite often, we do not see that happen. I think that every committee has found, in different ways, that there is a lack of co-ordination between Government departments. How will you, Minister, ensure that this strategy is different?

[10] **Elin Jones:** Mae gwahanol agweddau ar y strategaeth hon yn torri ar draws gwahanol agweddau ar waith adrannau Gweinidogion eraill. Yr un amlwg sy'n dod i fy meddwl yn syth, ac un o brif amcanion y Llywodraeth, yw sut mae gwahanol feysydd polisi yn delio â'r newid yn yr hinsawdd. Mae angen gwneud hynny ar draws meysydd polisi a gwyddom o ddatganiad Jane Davidson am y newid yn yr hinsawdd ychydig wythnosau yn ôl y bydd y modd yr ydym yn rheoli ein tir yn agwedd bwysig iawn o'n gallu fel gwlad i leihau ein heffaith ar yr hinsawdd. Mae agweddau ar y gwaith yn y strategaeth hon yn sicr yn diwallu rhai o'r gofynion o ran delio â newid yn yr hinsawdd, er enghraifft, cymryd y penderfyniad ar Glastir, a hefyd edrych ar sut mae gwahanol dechnolegau a gwyddoniaeth erbyn hyn yn gallu bod o gymorth inni wrth leihau allyriadau nwyon tŷ gwydr o'n da byw, y sector llaeth, y sector godro a'n sector cig coch. Mae gwneud hynny yn flaenoriaeth i'r Llywodraeth hon.

Elin Jones: Different aspects of this strategy cut across different aspects of the work of other ministerial departments. The obvious one, which comes to mind immediately, and one of the Government's main objectives, is how different policy areas are tackling climate change. That needs to be done across policy areas and we know, from Jane Davidson's statement on climate change a few weeks ago, that the way in which we manage our land will be important to our ability, as a country, to reduce our impact on the climate. Aspects of the work in this strategy certainly meet some of the objectives for tackling climate change, for example, taking the decision on Glastir, and also looking at how different technologies, and different science now, can help us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our livestock, the dairy sector, the milk sector and our red meat sector. Doing that is one of this Government's priorities.

[11] Mae agweddau hefyd o ran yr angen i edrych ar weithio mewn ffordd mwy effeithiol o ran ynni a defnydd ynni, ac mae tipyn y gall y sector ei gyfrannu at hynny o ran cynhyrchu ynni, ond hefyd o ran defnyddio ynni yn fwy effeithiol. Fel rhan o'r datganiad ar Glastir, yr wyf wedi clustnodi elfen o'r grant cyfalaf i ffermwyr allu datblygu cynlluniau ynni adnewyddadwy ar eu ffermydd. Bydd o fantais i ffermwyr o ran lleihau costau, ond bydd hefyd yn eu caniatáu i ddefnyddio'u ffermydd i greu ffynonellau incwm ychwanegol a ffynonellau ynni newydd.

There are also aspects in relation to the need to look at how to work more effectively with our energy and energy use, and there is quite a lot that this sector can contribute to that in energy production, but also in using energy more efficiently. As part of my statement on Glastir, I have earmarked an element of the capital grant to be available so that farmers can develop renewable energy plans on their farms. It will benefit farmers by reducing their costs, but it will also allow them to use their farms to create additional sources of income and new sources of energy.

[12] **Alun Davies:** Diolch am hynny, Weinidog. Deallaf sut mae'r amcanion yn y ddogfen hon yn cyrraedd amcanion y Llywodraeth mewn mannau eraill, ond sut byddwch yn cydlynu hyn i gyd? Yr ydym wedi gweld a chlywed beirniadaeth o'r Llywodraeth gyfan nad yw'r llawer o bethau da sy'n digwydd yn cael eu hintegreiddio a'u cydlynu'n ddigonol. A fyddwch yn rheoli'r rhaglen hon i sicrhau bod cydlynu rhwng a chydweithio â'r adrannau gwahanol?

Alun Davies: Thank you for that, Minister. I understand how the objectives in this document can meet the Government's objectives in other areas, but how will you co-ordinate it all? A criticism that we have seen and heard about the entire Government is that the many good things that are happening are not being integrated and co-ordinated properly. Will you be managing this programme to ensure co-ordination and co-operation with the various departments?

[13] **Elin Jones:** Yr wyf yn cydnabod bod hynny'n her i unrhyw Lywodraeth. Mae elfen y mae'n rhaid ei chydlynu ar lefel Cabinet, rhwng Gweinidogion, yn wleidyddol, i roi arweiniad o ran y gweithgareddau sy'n mynnu cydweithio. Rhaid i'r swyddogion wedyn roi hynny ar waith. Wedyn caiff hynny ei weld fel agwedd cwbl naturiol ar y gwaith, ac mae hynny'n bwysig oherwydd yr ydym am gyflawni'r amcanion er mwyn sicrhau sector iachach a chryfach at y dyfodol.

Elin Jones: I acknowledge that that is a challenge for any Government. There is an element that must be co-ordinated at Cabinet level, between Ministers, politically, to give a lead in relation to the activities that demand co-operation. The officials then have to implement that. Then that is seen as a completely natural aspect of the work, and that is important because we wish to achieve the objectives to ensure a healthier and stronger sector in the future.

[14] Rory, do you want to add anything about how you make that happen within the civil service?

[15] **Mr O'Sullivan:** On the strategy itself, the Minister has already referred to the monitoring group that will be set up. Internally, many of the actions in the strategy come under the rural development plan, which includes separate monitoring and evaluation that cuts across a number of departments. At the level of officials, many discussions take place on outcomes, whether they are hitting the targets and, if not, how we can change them and how we co-ordinate, particularly with regard to Farming Connect and diversification within farming and what the Department for the Economy and Transport can do for non-agriculture-related developments that might take place on the farm.

[16] **Elin Jones:** I have just been reminded of the intention to set up an internal stakeholder group, comprising civil servants from different departments, to monitor the development and implementation of this strategy across Government. That group will need to

take on board my aspiration to see this put into practice, and I do not really care whose civil servants or which departments lead on this or provide the effort to achieve it, just as long as it is achieved for Government and, ultimately, for the sector.

[17] **Brynle Williams:** Looking to 2013, when changes will take place in Europe, what plans do you have to support the industry during this time of change, and how will this strategy help to achieve this?

[18] **Elin Jones:** This strategy, hopefully, is clear in its aspiration to see Welsh farmers be more market-orientated and to respond more creatively and directly to the market and to what customers want from food produced on farms. However, we accept that, as well as support from the market, there is publicly funded support of our farming system, and that is subject to change at various points in time. I have announced a change to the land management aspect of publicly funded support, and there will be a transition period up to 2014 to allow farmers to respond and to allow them a lead-in time for that change. I am keen that I do not just get up one morning and decide to change the way in which funding is allocated and distributed; businesses and individuals out there should have a lead-in time to plan for that change.

2.00 p.m.

[19] Two aspects of the common agricultural policy review are important. One is that the budget will be reviewed this year or next year, so the totality of it may be reduced or possibly increased, although I suspect that it will be the former, and that will have an effect on the funding that comes to Wales, to the Government, and that goes directly to farmers in the form of the single farm payment. There is also the possibility, as part of the CAP review going up to 2020, of a considerable redistribution of funding from single farm payments to rural development funded schemes and land management schemes. We know that. I want to participate fully in those debates, and I hope that whoever is the Welsh Minister in 2013-14 will also want to do that on behalf of Wales.

[20] We are also faced with another change in Wales, namely to the basis of the payment of the single farm payment, which is currently paid on an historic basis. I have said that I intend to continue the historic model until the next CAP period of 2013 onwards, but we will then need to change to an area-based payment because the European Commission requires that of us. In addition, the historic model will have run its course 10 years down the line from its inception. That will be a major change, and we will need to provide another transition period for farmers to adjust to the new form of allocation.

[21] **Brynle Williams:** To move on slightly, Minister, the strategy places an emphasis on the benefits of the industry and the Welsh Assembly Government working together. Can you give us more details of exactly how the Government aims to encourage and support collaboration?

[22] **Elin Jones:** We have funding ability in our rural development plan, which is about creating supply chain efficiencies—that is the catchy title that it has been given, although I am not sure who came up with that. In the main, it is about making and strengthening the links between producer, processor and retailer, and concentrating especially on those areas where we want to see producers working together to sell on either to processors or to retailers, so that they are strengthened in the marketplace.

[23] Yesterday, I was at the Dunbia (Wales) Ltd and Sainsbury's stand with the Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, and it was great to see a scheme launched through which YFC members are working together to supply lamb products through the processor to Sainsbury's and getting a return on that. The message is simple: there are just a handful of major retailers out there who buy the bulk of Welsh product, but there are thousands of

producers. As individuals, they are on their own and are, therefore, weak in the marketplace, but if they work more collectively and co-operatively, they will strengthen their position, which will be to their benefit. That often provides something that retailers also want, such as a more sourced product and the continuity in the quality that they are looking for. The public sector is also looking for that, of course. [*Interruption.*]

[24] **Mick Bates:** How lovely it is to have music as the background for this meeting. [*Laughter.*] I would like to move to chapter 3, producing sustainably and profitably. We are familiar with the first two words in this day and age, but the ability for businesses to be profitable is critical. There is a lot of talk about food security at the moment. Do you think that it is possible to produce sustainably and to produce enough food in Britain so that we can become increasingly self-sufficient?

[25] **Elin Jones:** That is our aspiration for the industry. I have always been keen to dispel any myths that the choice is either food production or sustainable land management. The two can and should work together, and work together well, so it should not be a matter of one or the other. In positioning the Welsh food market, we want to offer a high-quality product. That is an aspiration of Hybu Cig Cymru its red meat strategy, and of other sectors. The return to the farmer will be greater because there is recognition of the quality of the product. That can be as true for the large-scale bulk market of red meat as it is for some of the niche products that we do so well in Wales.

[26] **Mick Bates:** On that particular point, I agree in principle with what you have said, but the practice for our milk producers, for example, may not bear out that statement. The milk prices depress very often, and it does not seem that that sector is in a sustainable position because its profitability is diminished. How do you see the dairy sector developing, given chapter 3?

[27] **Elin Jones:** The dairy sector in particular exists in a global marketplace. We have seen how global milk prices and milk powder prices affect what a dairy farmer in Llandysul gets for his or her milk. Therefore, there is that global context. The reason we saw an increase in milk prices a couple of years ago was because of the increase in milk powder prices, with China becoming a big demander and importer of milk powder. The drought in Australia was affecting the supply of milk from there, and so that directly affected the milk prices paid in Wales. The dairy industry merits particular attention at this point in time because we in Wales need to continue to produce milk and all the products that come from milk. There must be a temptation for some milk farmers to think that they could get a better return on their investment if they went into beef or sheep production, and to give up. It is very rare for farmers to go back into milk production once they have left it, so there is a responsibility on us, as a Government, to work with dairy farmers, but also on retailers and processors to recognise that this could be lost very quickly if a decent enough price is not paid for the milk that is produced.

[28] **Alun Davies:** We will be holding a short investigation into the dairy industry in the autumn term, following recess, so I would not like us to spend too much time on that this afternoon. Did you have an additional question, Brynle?

[29] **Brynle Williams:** Yes, just briefly on this. I am well aware of the milk problem that you have pointed out. The one thing that concerns me is the question of self-sufficiency. We are seeing the national flock declining. We have dropped by 3 million sheep in the past five years in the UK. We will not rehearse the arguments over the electronic identification of sheep, but there is a threat that many people will leave sheep farming. How do we balance the sustainability of the sheep industry with agri-environment schemes? We have rightly moved away from headage payments to agri-environment schemes, but the long-term effect of that is that we are losing sheep, from the hills and everywhere. That concerns me. The sheep

industry is a major contributor to the Welsh economy.

2.10 p.m.

[30] **Elin Jones:** You have just identified that the major reason we have seen quite a significant decrease in numbers—and this is not unique to Wales—is because the support system changed from headage payments to historic payments. Therefore, the incentive to keep numbers of sheep was not there and the market had to adjust to that. Retailers who want to put lamb and Welsh lamb on their shelves need to recognise—as may have been happening in the past 18 months—that headage payments to farmers are no longer available, so the price paid for lamb has to warrant the retention of sheep on the hillside. That is a challenge. Farmers work in the marketplace, and this is economics. At least we have got away from the headage payment system, which, in effect, subsidised the retailers. The retailers did not need to give as high a price for it, because they knew that the lamb supply would continue while the headage payment was an incentive to farmers to keep large numbers of sheep.

[31] **Mr O’Sullivan:** It was the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in 2001 that had the biggest impact but, since then, we have lost about 2 million sheep. What is important is the size of the breeding flock, which has shrunk to just over 4 million. Historically, it is very interesting to look at the size of the Welsh flock before the UK entered the European Union and now. It was quite clear that the payments made under the CAP in different guises led to this massive increase, and we are now seeing a shrinking back.

[32] Going back to agri-environment schemes, no-one is saying that sheep are bad for the countryside. We have to strike a balance between the sustainability of a profitable farm business and sustainability in our management of land. That is the point that the Minister was making about striking a balance.

[33] **Brynle Williams:** That is what concerns me. We are already seeing undergrazing in certain areas.

[34] **Mick Bates:** Minister, let us move onto your desire, noted in chapter 3, to benchmark farming business performance. That is a grand concept, and we all sign up to the principle of improving business performance, but how are you getting on with it and how do you think you will publish these results?

[35] **Elin Jones:** I will ask David to answer that one, because it is a detailed matter.

[36] **Mr Morris:** There is no doubt that the majority of people agree that benchmarking is important in any industry. You might say that there is nothing new in the actions relating to benchmarking in the strategy, and there is not, because we have been trying to persuade farmers for decades that benchmarking is important. It is better in some sectors than others. I think that we would argue that the dairy sector is better in that respect, and it is not as good in the beef and sheep sector. The disappointing thing is that we know from our farm business survey results that there is quite a range in performance. When we look at the difference between the bottom third and the top third of performers, we find that there is always quite a wide margin. So, if farmers want to improve their productivity, they need to know where they are on the scale, and so the starting point is benchmarking. A lot of work is under way and, interestingly, several of the applications for supply chain efficiency projects include benchmarking initiatives and mainstreaming benchmarking. Our Hybu Cig Cymru is doing a lot of work to develop and fine-tune benchmarking. We plan to roll out more of the farm business survey results to the industry, to use our Farming Connect process to communicate the benefits of the processes and the reasons why farmers must benchmark, and to make it easier for them generally.

[37] **Mick Bates:** What will you do with the data that you collect? Will this service be free to farmers?

[38] **Mr Morris:** Our ultimate aim is for farmers to be able to benchmark online. We are not yet sure whether there will be a charge, but we would aim to keep that to a minimum.

[39] **Mick Bates:** What process will you use to evaluate the success of this scheme?

[40] **Mr Morris:** It is a bit early to say. We would have to look at the uptake and at improvements over time when we compare the results, and analyse the data from benchmarking to see whether we are achieving productivity improvements. So, that will be based on bottom-line profitability, farm costs, output and gross margin analysis.

[41] **Mick Bates:** We all wait with bated breath to see what will happen with that. A milestone for the delivery of actions 37 to 40, relating to Farming Connect, is ensuring that environmental guidelines for that service are published in 2009. When will those guidelines be published and which environmental stakeholders have been involved in their development?

[42] **Elin Jones:** I do not know, but, hopefully, someone does.

[43] **Mr Morris:** I cannot tell you when they will be published, but the usual suspects will be involved in developing the guidelines, for example, the Environment Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales. We are working with those organisations on a partnership basis to develop all of our policies. They will be the first port of call. To take forward many of these actions, detailed implementation plans will be produced in the autumn when we will be able to include details such as publication dates and so on.

[44] **Alun Davies:** Perhaps, Minister, you could give us a note on that later in the summer. Are you happy with that, Mick?

[45] **Mick Bates:** Yes.

[46] **Brynle Williams:** Provenance labelling by 2010 is listed as a milestone for actions 47 and 48 on ensuring the safety and traceability of food. Can you tell us about your plans to have provenance labelling in place by 2010?

[47] **Elin Jones:** These issues have been well rehearsed in this committee and in the Assembly Chamber. Provenance labelling is already in place in our red meat sector—Welsh lamb and beef have protected designation status and we are able to market them in that way. I have said previously that I am interested in looking at developing that further to include Welsh dairy products and Welsh pork and pig products. However, I have alluded to changes happening on the European level. Protected designation status, food labelling and place-of-farm labelling are now subject to a review by the European Commission. It recently published a paper, starting that discussion. I wish to involve myself fully in that. We can deal with some issues in Wales, but much of this is dependent on the UK and, more particularly, on EU designation and legislation.

[48] **Brynle Williams:** We have seen the risks posed by new plant and animal diseases. Those are on the increase, regrettably, as the temperature rises. What are you doing to ensure that the early warning systems are effective in anticipating threats of pests and diseases in the future?

[49] **Elin Jones:** A great deal of work goes on, not just in the Assembly Government, but with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and with the Scottish Government to analyse the trends and the likely dangers of such diseases. We know of the

experience of bluetongue variant 8 and we are keen to analyse and watch out for the potential spread of other variants of bluetongue. Mechanisms are in place, which I could not outline for you now, for the monitoring and surveillance of animal diseases. Similarly, there are mechanisms in place on plant diseases. The Forestry Commission in particular plays an active role in Wales, and throughout the UK, in evaluating and considering the potential dangers to our trees from changes to the climate, which could be quite considerable.

2.20 p.m.

[50] **Mr Morris:** I would just like to add that we can do our best on forecasting, but it is also up to the industry to act on it. The poor uptake of the bluetongue vaccine is an example of where, perhaps, the industry has not taken heed of the warnings adequately.

[51] **Leanne Wood:** Minister, the action plan states that the revised axis 2 schemes will help to deliver biodiversity recovery. Wildlife indicators are showing a worsening picture in Wales. Actions 77 to 79 talk about that. What progress has been made in developing the new scheme, Glastir, and how will Glastir help to support declining species in Wales?

[52] **Elin Jones:** I will ask Rory to give a bit of detail on the development and content of Glastir. My decision on Glastir followed on from the publication of this strategy. It is wholly in line with this strategy. I was keen to ensure that our land management policies and the funding available to us in Wales—it will be around £89 million or £90 million—will meet some of the key challenges that we face as a Government across portfolios. There are also requirements placed on us by the European Union. Our biodiversity action plan, the need to meet the targets in that, and land management, have a key role to play in this. The new Glastir scheme will meet other challenges as well. The increase in biodiversity is part of that, but there is also a need to use our land management to preserve soil carbon, to manage water more effectively and to lessen the impact of climate change. So, it is wider than our current Tir Gofal scheme, which has been more focused on habitat restoration and biodiversity growth. All of these issues can work quite well together, if we think about the way that woodland on farms could benefit biodiversity, as well as benefit climate change and water management. With Glastir, the way that it works and what it achieves will be delivered on a farm level, and the detail of the scheme and how it works will make it a success or not.

[53] **Mr O’Sullivan:** On the detail, we are working very closely with the farming and other environmental interests to bring together the operational detail of the scheme. We are working to a timetable whereby we would hope to have that operational detail available in the late autumn. The Minister has mentioned that the key objectives are related to water, soil, carbon, energy renewal and biodiversity. On biodiversity, we are looking particularly at packages related to bats, birds, butterflies, bumble bees—

[54] **Elin Jones:** Everything beginning with the letter ‘b’. [*Laughter.*]

[55] **Mr O’Sullivan:** Yes, they were the only ones that I could think of at the moment.

[56] A key objective of Glastir is to have a much wider agenda so that we can deliver on a much broader base of outcomes. As for joining the scheme, we will be establishing the baseline at an individual farm level, considering what that farm has at the moment and what they are agreeing to deliver under the new scheme, so that we can measure the difference that can be made, or rather achieved.

[57] **Leanne Wood:** On that, will you be measuring the greenhouse gas emissions of individual farms?

[58] **Mr O’Sullivan:** No, not at the moment; that is quite difficult to do. The main point is

that we will be spending £89 million to £90 million a year and we are being very clear about where we are coming from and what we are achieving, to demonstrate the good value of taxpayers' investment in the farming community.

[59] **Mick Bates:** To move on to the final, very interesting chapter on encouraging innovation, in view of the fact that this strategy is running until 2020, how do you propose to monitor some of your headline issues, for example, microgeneration, during the life of your Government?

[60] **Elin Jones:** Do you want to take the question on monitoring, David?

[61] **Mr Morris:** It is difficult to respond to that, because it is a long-term strategy—

[62] **Mick Bates:** Is it meaningful then?

[63] **Mr Morris:** It is meaningful, because we recognise that we need to address renewable energy. It is a challenge that is facing the industry and facing all of us; we must start somewhere. Research work is ongoing, which we will monitor and develop further as time goes on. As to whether we can assess its impact or not, only time will tell. The other point about the strategy generally is that, as the Minister mentioned, we will have a monitoring and evaluation group that is independent of the Welsh Assembly Government. We will ask it to advise us whether we need to change direction. So, if we find that our work on renewable energy is not yielding the results that we would hope or that it needs to change direction, we will be open to that. It is a living strategy and a dynamic document, and it needs to be.

[64] **Mick Bates:** 'Living' and 'dynamic' are lovely words, but to take another of your measures, the number of women as head of holdings, are you telling us that you will not measure that during the life of the Government?

[65] **Mr Morris:** We will measure that. We have already started to develop the role of women in farming. We have started some initiatives: our farm development division is developing women in farming stakeholder groups to influence the policy agenda. We will measure the uptake and look at the type of recommendations that they are making and how they are incorporated into policy, so we will monitor and evaluate all the way through.

[66] **Mick Bates:** If I understand you correctly, we will see some of that evaluation on all of these indicators during 2010.

[67] **Mr Morris:** That would be too early. We will develop an implementation plan first and that is starting now. It will probably be 2011 at the earliest before we are able to come out with some evaluation of some of the actions, because they are long term by their nature. That does not mean that we should not evaluate as we go through and that we should not publish information on their success or otherwise, but we do not want to evaluate something that has not had a chance to be implemented and to influence the situation.

[68] **Mick Bates:** We will see you in 2020 then.

[69] **Elin Jones:** Rory is keen to say that you will not see him. [*Laughter.*]

[70] **Alun Davies:** I am not sure whether you will see me either.

[71] Diolch yn fawr, Weinidog, am eich amser gyda ni y prynhawn yma. Gwyddoch ein bod yn gwerthfawrogi hynny'n fawr. Fel Thank you, Minister, for giving us your time this afternoon. You know that it is greatly appreciated. As I have previously said, we

yr wyf wedi'i ddweud yn barod, byddwn yn adrodd yn ôl ar TB mewn gwartheg ym mis Medi a bydd adroddiad arall gan y pwyllgor am y strategaeth hon yn mynd gerbron y Cynulliad bryd hynny. Diolch yn fawr am eich parodrwydd i ateb cwestiynau ac am ddod â'ch swyddogion gyda chi y prynhawn yma.

will report back on bovine TB in September and another report by the committee on this strategy will be brought before the Assembly at the same time. Thank you for your willingness to answer questions and for bringing your officials with you this afternoon.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 2.28 p.m.
The meeting ended at 2.28 p.m.