

Minutes**Date:** 5 July 2000**Time:** 9.00am to 12.30pm**Venue:** Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

In attendance

Members

Rhodri Glyn Thomas, Chair	Carmarthen East and Dinefwr
Mick Bates	Montgomeryshire
Janet Davies	South Wales West
Delyth Evans	Mid and West Wales
Christine Gwyther	Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire
Carwyn Jones	Bridgend
Elin Jones	Ceredigion
Peter Rogers	North Wales
Karen Sinclair	Clwyd South

Farm Development Strategy Group

Fred Cunningham	Chair
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Officials

Huw Brodie (items 2 and 3)	Director, Agriculture Department
Mike Dunn (items 2, 3, 4 and 5)	Head, Agriculture Policy Division
Kay Powell (item 6)	Head of Planning Division
Alan Starkey (item 4)	Agriculture Policy Division
Charles Coombs (item 7)	Sustainable Development Unit
Lisa Dobbins (item 7)	Sustainable Development Unit

Secretariat

Adrian Crompton	Clerk
Howell Rees	Deputy Clerk

Item 1: Apologies and substitutions and declarations of interest

1.1 The Chair said that no apologies had been received. He asked Members to declare any interests

relevant to the meeting. Peter Rogers said he was a farmer, Mick Bates that he was a partner in a farming business and Elin Jones that she had an indirect interest in a farming business. Mick Bates had applied to join the Welsh Meat Company.

Item 2: Assembly Secretary's report

2.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Assembly Secretary who made the following points:

- the Welsh Meat Company share offer had closed on 28 June and reached 70% of its target for membership. The proposal could not go forward as set out in the prospectus of 19 May. This was disappointing especially for those farmers who applied to join the company. Nevertheless, the substantial number of farmers who applied represented a very positive response of committed, forward-looking individuals and it would not be right to let these farmers down by not pursuing the proposal in some way. The company Board had met to consider the way forward and was examining alternative proposals. They had written to all the farmers who did apply explaining what they were doing and seeking their support to working up alternative proposals. The National Assembly Agriculture Department and the WDA would continue to support the company as it considered alternative ways forward;
- progress was being made in negotiating the revised proposals for the Tir Mynydd scheme through the European Commission. The farming unions were continuing to argue for the preservation of the status quo, focusing on examples of the farmers who would lose most heavily under the revised system. However the Commission had required the Assembly to move to a genuinely area-based scheme and substantial redistribution was inevitable but every possible effort had been made to limit and cushion losses to individual farmers;
- the Committee had asked for a brief progress report about setting up an independent appeals mechanism. A commitment had been given to consult widely and a consultation document should be issued before the end of July covering all elements of the appeals process. The consultation period would last for 8 weeks. The consultation document would be copied to all Assembly Members and the results of consultation brought to a meeting of the Committee in the Autumn;
- a cross party meeting had been held on 28 June to discuss the Assembly's policy on genetically modified crops. Agreement had been reached on a number of points:
- in future the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment would provide more comprehensive information on applications for releases to the environment which would be placed in the public domain;
- the Assembly Secretary would write to ACRE in similar terms to the letter that the Chair had sent;
- the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions would be asked to notify the Assembly of any Part C consents it received which affected Wales; and
- the Assembly's policy on GM crops would be taken forward on a cross party basis.

2.2 The Chair said he was sure the Committee shared his disappointment that the Welsh Meat Company had failed to get off the ground. He hoped that the project could still be taken forward, perhaps as a collaborative company and proposed that a letter should be sent to the directors of the Company offering

the Committee's support.

2.3 The Committee was in agreement that the failure was disappointing and the following points were made:

- It was suggested that the proposal had lacked vision and focused too much on the procurement of lambs rather than on adding value. The Company's board needed broader representation from ordinary farmers to improve its credibility. The Company had faced opposition from auctioneers who should have been involved in the proposal at an earlier stage.
- Concern was also expressed that other countries might take the model and set up similar ventures with more success. Farmers needed a co-operative approach if they were to negotiate successfully with the supermarkets.
- It was suggested that the biggest threat to lamb prices was the continuing absence of a strong export market.

2.4 In response to the points raised, the Committee noted that a feasibility study had shown that establishing an added value operation at the launch was a high risk strategy and that higher contributions would have been required from individual farmers. Auctioneers had been involved since the very start of the venture. The Committee could offer its support but it was for the directors to decide the way forward for the Company.

2.5 The Committee agreed that the Chair should write to the directors offering the Committee's support for finding a way to take the project forward.

2.6 The Chair moved the discussion on to the Tir Mynydd scheme. He said that the Committee had accepted the principles of the revised scheme that had been submitted to the European Commission. The Committee could not change the principles of the scheme but he had received proposals from the farming unions about linking payments to labour units and a reduced payment rate for moorland.

2.7 A discussion followed on the extent to which the scheme as submitted to the European Commission could be revised and the damage and confusion that the current uncertainty had caused for farmers. The view was expressed that not enough had been done to explain the revised proposals to farmers who needed a clear statement on what was possible and an indication of the payments they could expect next year as soon as possible.

2.8 It was proposed that the Assembly should withdraw the current proposals from the Commission and consult with the industry on a revised scheme. There was no support for this proposal.

2.9 The Committee noted that officials had considered a link to labour units but concluded that it was not possible to devise a scheme that could be rigorously audited. The proposal to reduce payments for moorland would have a similar effect to the tapering already built into the scheme. Further revisions now to Tir Mynydd would delay approval and could jeopardise payments to farmers next Spring. The

Assembly Secretary said that she had no intention of withdrawing the current proposals. She hoped that the proposals would be approved before the end of the month and illustrative figures would then be issued for farmers to calculate their likely payments under Tir Mynydd.

2.10 Concern was expressed that it had taken so long to issue a consultation paper on an independent appeals mechanism.

Action point

2.11 Letter to be sent to the directors of the Welsh Meat Company expressing the Committee's support for finding a way to take the project forward - **Chair and Secretariat**

2.12 A copy of the letter issued is at annex 1.

Item 3: Farm Development Strategy Group progress report - ARD 11-00(p2)

3.1 The Chair welcomed Fred Cunningham to the meeting. He reminded the Committee that the Farm Development Strategy Group was one of the Agri-Food Partnership's strategy groups and was concerned with the issues around the skills and information that farming families need. The paper identified five key areas for action, many of which dovetailed neatly with the work the Committee was doing on diversification and its interest in the other agri-food strategy groups. Subject to the views of the Committee, the thinking set out in the paper would be woven into the Regional Agri-Food Action Plan that was being written for the use of Objective 1 funding, and would guide complementary action being undertaken in the rest of Wales.

3.2 Fred Cunningham emphasised the partnership approach that the Group had adopted in drawing up its proposals and briefly explained the key points underlying the five priority areas that had been identified.

3.3 In discussion the following points were made:

- young farmers often had better computer and business skills than the older generation and it was suggested that help and training should be focused to reflect that. Fred Cunningham agreed that young people were more willing to adopt new methods. Agricultural software applications were generally user friendly and technology could allow a more immediate response and deliver better business practice. Training in the interpretation of business information was needed as much as in the skills required to use the technology available;
- Fred Cunningham was asked how the five priorities would be delivered. Huw Brodie explained how the nature on the five priority areas dictated their delivery and resource implication;
- **development of a long term vision for Welsh agriculture** - did not need specific funding;
- **improving business and information technology (IT) skills** - a report was being prepared by the Mid Wales Training and Enterprise Council. Skills priorities had to be defined and training models devised. A range of local organisations could deliver the training;

- **all Wales network of demonstration farms** - was an all Wales project and funding had been made available under the Pathway to Prosperity strategy;
- **advice and consultancy** - the standard of service had to be specified. Monitoring and evaluation procedures would have to be developed and a regional framework would be required;

3.4 The Chair said the discussion had underlined the importance of support for the agri-food sector being developed coherently, across Wales. There was real concern to avoid the fragmentation of projects that occurred under Objective 5b. In the context of Objective 1, this reinforced the need for funding to be shaped by a clear regional agri-food plan in which the industry had confidence. He proposed that he should write to the First Secretary, in his role as Chair of the Objective 1 Shadow Monitoring Committee, to register that this was what the Committee wanted to see. The Assembly Secretary supported the proposal and the Committee agreed that the Chair should write as proposed.

Action point

3.5 Letter to be drafted and agreed with Committee members for the Chair to send to the First Secretary supporting the coherent development of the agri-food strategy - **Chair and Secretariat**

3.6 A copy of the letter issued is at annex 2.

Item 4: Outcome of study on young entrants - ARD 11-00(p1)

4.1 The Chair welcomed David Roderick and Ronnie Lynes of ADAS Consulting to the meeting. He said that following last year's discussions on the budget, when the Committee recommended a scheme to help young farmers into agriculture, a study was commissioned into the feasibility of such a scheme. This paper reported on the outcome.

4.2 Mike Dunn said that the report concluded that a Young Entrants scheme would have little impact in isolation but could make some contribution as part of a package of measures. In discussion the following points were made:

- the view was expressed that main aim of a young entrants scheme should be to promote the restructuring of Welsh agriculture by encouraging an earlier transfer of farms from parents to children. The report focused on new entrants to farming rather than transfers between generations which also brought in new blood and more innovative approaches. The scheme could help with the acquisition of additional quota which was often an impediment to transfer;
- elsewhere in Europe young entrants could acquire quota from national reserves. It had been proposed previously that the same facility should be available in the UK and the Assembly Secretary agreed to provide a note;
- the value of a scheme which achieved no more than the earlier transfer of farms from one generation of a family to the next was questioned. The money could be better spent elsewhere;
- the crucial step for young entrants new to farming was from their first small scale, part time

venture to a larger, more viable unit. This was where assistance was required. The ADAS representatives agreed that for entrants new to farming the only realistic route was through a tenancy and the scheme could help as part of a package of measures;

- the Committee had not accepted the principle of a retirement scheme when it had discussed the option during its budget discussions last year because of the cost. The New Entrants scheme should not be a replacement for a retirement scheme. Low interest loans might provide a more useful means of assistance to young entrants. The Committee noted the view of ADAS Consulting that low interest loans could lead to over borrowing and would not necessarily deliver viable units.

4.3 The Assembly Secretary said the report did not offer a robust argument that could be deployed to secure resources for a Young Entrants scheme during the budget round. However the idea of exploring how to help young entrants acquire quota merited further consideration.

Action point

4.4 Note to be provided on the proposal to give preferential treatment to new entrants to farming in distributing quota from the national reserve - **Assembly Secretary**

Item 5: Budget - ARD 11-00(p3)

5.1 The Chair said that the Committee was not asked to consider the detail of budget lines, but to assess the way in which Agriculture & Rural Development programmes contributed towards the ***betterwales*** vision and targets. The Committee had given preliminary consideration to the paper 'Building a Better Wales Together' from the Finance Secretary at its meeting on 7 June. It had been asked to respond to that paper by 14 July. A draft letter summarising the Committee's spending priorities to send to the Assembly Secretary had been circulated to Members as a basis for discussion.

5.2 In discussion the following points were made:

- differing views were expressed about a young entrants scheme. Some members felt that such a scheme was an important part of the Committee's vision for the future of Welsh agriculture and should be the Committee's first priority. Others felt that, since its effect would be marginal, the money would be better employed elsewhere;
- the Committee needed be specific about its priorities which should include an independent appeals mechanism and an advisory service. The Committee noted that there was already provision within the budget for these schemes;
- the Committee should develop a coherent vision for the whole rural economy. Fuel prices, for example, had a significant impact on the cost of living in rural areas and it was proposed that the Committee should explore ways of helping those on lower wages with transport costs. There was broad support for this proposal. The Assembly Secretary said the work of the Rural Partnership provided a framework for developing a strategy and a paper would be prepared on how a rural

strategy for Wales could be developed for the Committee to consider in the Autumn.

5.3 In the absence of a clear consensus the Chair invited the Committee to consider on a series of resolutions:

5.4 that a young entrants scheme should be included as one of the Committee's priorities'

The Committee voted as follows:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas	For
Mick Bates	For
Janet Davies	For
Delyth Evans	Against
Christine Gwyther	Against
Carwyn Jones	Against
Elin Jones	For
Peter Rogers	For
Karen Sinclair	Against

The resolution was accepted by five votes to four.

5.5 that a young entrants scheme should be the Committee's first priority

The Committee voted as follows:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas	For
Mick Bates	For
Janet Davies	For
Delyth Evans	Against
Christine Gwyther	Against
Carwyn Jones	Against
Elin Jones	For
Peter Rogers	Against
Karen Sinclair	Against

The resolution was defeated by five votes to four.

5.6 that Tir Gofal and Organic Farming scheme should be the Committee's first priority

This resolution received no support

5.7 that the agri-food strategies for lamb and beef, dairy, organic and farm development strategy group

should be the Committee's first priorities.

The Committee voted as follows:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas	For
Mick Bates	For
Janet Davies	For
Delyth Evans	For
Christine Gwyther	For
Carwyn Jones	For
Elin Jones	Abstain
Peter Rogers	For
Karen Sinclair	For

The resolution was accepted by eight votes to none with one abstention

5.8 that the young entrants scheme should be the Committee's third priority

The Committee voted as follows:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas	For
Mick Bates	For
Janet Davies	For
Delyth Evans	Against
Christine Gwyther	Against
Carwyn Jones	Against
Elin Jones	For
Peter Rogers	For
Karen Sinclair	Against

The resolution was accepted by five votes to four.

5.9 Summarising the effect of the votes the Chair said that the Committee's priorities were;

1. the agri-food strategies for lamb and beef, dairy and organic;
2. the farm development strategy group, which should include an indication of support for a helpline for farmers to access a range of advisory services;
3. a young entrants scheme;
4. Tir Gofal and the Organic Farming scheme;
5. alternative sectors.

5.10 The letter to the Assembly Secretary would also include a request for the Finance Secretary to

consider the needs of rural communities in the budget and indicate the priority the Committee attached to improving access to services and addressing the problem of high travel costs in rural areas.

Action points

5.11 Draft budget letter to be revised to reflect the Committee's decisions on priorities and take on agreed additional points. Letter to be approved by Committee members before being issued - **Chair and Secretariat**

5.12 A copy of the letter issued is at annex 3.

Item 6: Diversification review - ARD 11-00(p4)

6.1 The Chair welcomed Kay Powell to the meeting. He said that, following the two evidence-gathering meetings, the Committee was asked to agree a set of recommendations on planning to pass on to Sue Essex. The paper contained a draft letter as a basis for discussion.

6.2 In discussion the following points were made:

- Kay Powell suggested felt that the use of the word "*consideration*" instead of "*weight*" in the final sentence of recommendation 1 would be more appropriate. The Committee agreed to amend the sentence;
- it was proposed that a recommendation should be included that all Wales strategies on energy and waste should be developed to provide a coherent background against which planning applications could be judged. The Committee accepted the proposal;
- the meaning of recommendation 2.5 about amending the General Permitted Development Order was not clear. After some discussion it was agreed that the recommendation should amended to "*whether the definition of agricultural permitted development within the General Permitted Development Order is adequate*";
- recommendation 3.3 proposed that agricultural liaison officers should be established in planning departments. This might not be appropriate and it was agreed that the word "local" should be substituted for the word "planning". It was also agreed that recommendation should suggest that agricultural liaison officers should be linked to the telephone helpline for farmers;
- if was felt that recommendation 8, about development around existing farm complexes went too far and needed modification. It was agreed that the word "*within*" should be substituted for the word "*around*".

6.3 The Chair said that the draft letter to the Assembly Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Transport would be amended and circulated to Members for approval before being issued.

Action point

6.4 Draft letter for Chair to send to Assembly Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Transport to be revised as agreed and issued - **Chair and Secretariat**

6.5 A copy of the letter issued is at annex 4.

Item 7: Sustainable Development Scheme - ARD 11-009(p5)

7.1 The Chair welcomed Charles Coombs and Lisa Dobbins to the meeting. He said the Committee was asked to consider the response to the consultation on the draft Sustainable Development Scheme and identify any views it wished to see taken into account in producing the final draft of the Scheme.

7.2 The Assembly Secretary said that the Plenary debate on the draft Scheme planned for 11 July had been postponed until the Autumn. Following that debate officials would make any necessary amendments to the draft and the revised final draft would be presented to Plenary for approval. The quality of responses to the consultation had been high and many good ideas had been suggested. There had been a broad welcome for the draft scheme. In discussion the following points were made:

- energy had been identified as a policy area key to the achievement of a sustainable development scheme. It was important that the planning system promoted renewable energy;
- a creative approach was required to develop meaningful and measurable indicators of sustainable development such as an index of sustainable economic welfare. The Committee noted that it was hoped that a consultation paper on indicators would be issued before the start of the Summer constituency weeks;
- it was important to educate people about what was meant by sustainable development and an action plan should be developed. The Committee felt the education process should explain the meaning of sustainable development in broad terms and also how it affected people's everyday life in specific ways;
- there was some discussion about whether the sustainable development scheme should be subsidiary to the strategic plan or vice versa. The Assembly Secretary said that sustainable development should be at the centre of all the Assembly's thinking and that the strategic plan had been written with sustainable development principles at its heart.

Item 8: Minutes of 21 and 29 June meetings - ARD 09-00(min) ARD 10-00(min)

8.1 The Committee adopted the minutes of the meetings held on 21 and 29 June 2000.

Secretariat

July 2000

Annex 1

Mr John Davies,
Chairman
The Welsh Meat Company PLC
Unit 107
Cardiff Business Technology Centre
Cardiff CF24 4AY

Pwyllgor Amaethyddiaeth a Datblygu Gwledig
Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

17 July 2000

Welsh Meat Company

At the last meeting of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, it was agreed that I should write to express our support for the Welsh Meat Company.

The Committee is unanimous in its belief that the best future for Welsh livestock producers lies in collaborative action to develop marketing and ways of adding value to their basic product. To this end, the Committee was disappointed that the target of 1,000 applicants to join the company was not reached but still encouraged that a significant number of producers recognised the value of the venture. We hope that the commitment of those who did apply can be built upon and offer our full support to your efforts to take the project forward.

Yours sincerely

—

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
Chair of the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee

c.c. Alan Morgan, Director of Business Services, WDA
Wynfford James, Agri-Food Directorate, WDA



Rhodri Morgan AM MP
First Secretary
National Assembly for Wales

Pwyllgor Amaethyddiaeth a Datblygu Gwledig
Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

17 July 2000

Dear Rhodri

Agri-food strategy

At its last meeting, the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee agreed that I should write to you, in your capacity as Economic Development Secretary and Chair of the Objective 1 Shadow Monitoring Committee, to register the Committee's view on the development of the Welsh agri-food strategy.

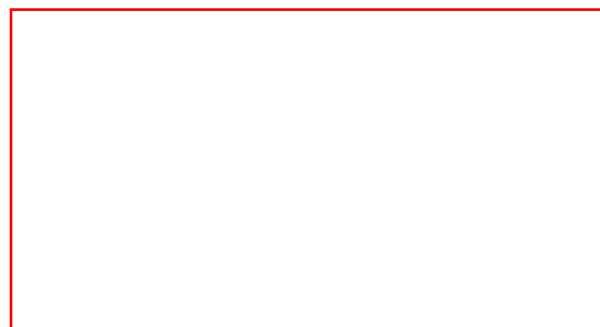
In discussion of the priority areas identified by the Farm Development Strategy Group of the Agri-food Partnership, the Committee agreed that there needed to be coherent development of support for the sector across Wales. The Committee shares the view of the industry that this is what is needed, and also shares its concern to avoid the fragmentation of projects that occurred under Objective 5b. In the context of Objective 1, this reinforces the need for funding to be shaped by a clear regional agri-food plan in which the industry has confidence.

Yours sincerely

—

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
Chair of the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee

Annex 3



**Pwyllgor Amaethyddiaeth a Datblygu Gwledig
Agriculture and Rural Development Committee**

Christine Gwyther
Assembly Secretary for Agriculture
and Rural Development
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

Eich cyf / Your Ref
Ein cyf / Our Ref

12 July 2000

Dear Christine

BUDGET PLANNING ROUND 2001-2002 TO 2003-2004 PRIORITIES

Edwina Hart, the Finance Secretary, wrote to the Committee inviting it to submit views to you on priorities for the Assembly's expenditure for the next three years within its area of responsibility.

The Committee recognises that much of the budget within its remit is inflexible if past and unavoidable commitments are to be met. Nonetheless, the Committee supports the key priority identified in *betterwales* to **promote a sustainable future for Welsh agriculture and forestry within a modern rural economy** and supports the use of funds, including those released through modulation and Treasury match funding, to this end. The Committee recognises that the Assembly's commitment to a Sustainable Development Scheme may have a significant effect on expenditure patterns in future years. Given our lead role in championing the scheme, we support action to ensure that the Assembly delivers this

commitment across all policy areas.

Our main priorities for expenditure over the next three years are as follows:

1. In support of the target to increase *the value added per person employed in agriculture and the number of jobs in the dairy, lamb and beef processing sectors* , we wish to see adequate funding made available to implement the lamb and beef, dairy and organic **agri-food strategies**.
2. In support of the target to *strengthen training, information and advisory services to help farms adapt* , we wish to see implementation of the recommendations of the **farm development strategy** group. We particularly welcome the idea of a simple helpline for farmers to access the range of services available.
3. In support of the target to *achieve a better balance of employment between sectors in rural areas and lower levels of out-migration of young people* , a scheme to help **new entrants** into farming at a cost of £3.4 million per annum. The Committee accepts the findings of the feasibility study into such a scheme and recognises that its effect will be marginal in terms of enabling young people to enter farming. Nonetheless, we feel it will be of practical value to many young entrants, will contribute to social sustainability in rural areas and give a clear signal of our support for family farming.
4. In support of the Sustainable Development Scheme and the target to increase *the proportion of agricultural land covered by an agri-environmental agreement, or which is registered as organic or being converted to organic status* , we give high priority to the funding of **Tir Gofal** and the **Organic Farming Scheme** .
5. In support of the targets to increase *the value added per person employed in agriculture and in forestry by developing biofuels* , the Committee would like to see developed the opportunities identified in **alternative sectors** by the Scottish Agriculture College. We note the consultants' view that all sectors covered by the report offer scope for development, especially organic horticulture, short rotation coppice and aquaculture. We look forward to discussing your proposals for exploiting the potential identified in the study.

The Committee is, of course, responsible for **wider rural development** , as well as for agriculture. We hope, therefore, that you will urge the Finance Secretary to consider the needs of rural communities in all her budget deliberations. In particular, the Committee attaches priority to improving access to services and to addressing the problem of high travel costs in rural areas.

Yours sincerely

Rhodri Glyn Thomas
Chair



Sue Essex
Assembly Secretary for the
Environment, Planning and Transport
National Assembly for Wales

**Pwyllgor Amaethyddiaeth a Datblygu Gwledig
Agriculture and Rural Development Committee**

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

12 July 2000

Dear Sue

Economic diversification in rural Wales

As you know, the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee is conducting a review of ways to encourage a stronger and more diverse rural economy. Following a series of consultation meetings in March, the Committee agreed to focus the first part of its review on the role of planning in rural diversification. I am writing on behalf of the Committee with our initial views which I hope you will take into account in your current review of planning guidance.

In a short period, the Committee has taken a great deal of evidence, in writing and orally, from interested organisations. All have made valuable and sensible suggestions. What follows represents the Committee's agreed areas for action but I would commend to you all of the evidence we have received. I have asked the Clerk of the Committee to provide you with a full set of the written submissions received.

Recommendations:

1. The Committee supports the suggestion that the **Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme should provide the guiding principles for the planning system**. Some bodies expressed concern that the environmental pillar of sustainable development was given

most weight in planning decisions whilst others felt the economic benefits of a high quality environment were sometimes overlooked. We recommend that **planning guidance makes clear that economic, social and environmental factors should all be given equal consideration** .

2. The Committee recommends the development of **clear, all-Wales strategies on energy and waste** to provide a coherent background against which planning applications can be judged;

3. The Committee supports the need for additional **research** in a number of areas:

3.1 the reasons for farmers' negative perceptions of the system and appropriate solutions. The research should examine if farmers are inhibited from bringing forward applications by real or perceived barriers imposed by the planning system;

3.2 the number and nature of diversification projects submitted, reasons for refusal and conditions imposed on those approved;

3.3 the spatial perspective of the relationship between planning and diversification at the national, regional and local level. The research should examine the need for local guidance to address local circumstances and should identify possible conflicts with national guidance at the local/regional level;

3.4 the relative merits and practicability of incorporating a rural business class into the use classes order;

3.5 whether the definition of permitted agricultural development within the General Permitted Development Order is adequate;

4. The Committee recommends a more **pro-active planning advice service for rural business** . We feel this should be integrated into a broader training, business advice and demonstration package which I hope we will consider in more detail later in our review. As part of this package we recommend:

4.1 the development of a good practice guide to encourage small scale farm diversification;

4.2 increased dialogue between the farming community, rural businesses, planning authorities and other public bodies drawing on best practice in local planning authorities;

4.3 the establishment of nominated liaison officers in local authorities to assist farmers and others in navigating their way through the planning process. These officers should be linked into the newly established telephone helpline providing advice to farmers;

5. The Committee recommends **that impact on future business viability should be taken into account** when assessing planning applications.

6. The Committee recommends a **criteria-based system** where each application is assessed on its merits rather than against a list of suitable activities.

7. The Committee recommends that the **definition of both agriculture and forestry should be clarified and extended** to take account of downstream activities such as processing and sales. We recognise, though, that amending the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is not within your power, but would ask that you make representations to this effect whenever you are able.

8. The Committee recommends that the **TAN on design** should be revised to give enhanced guidance;

9. The Committee recommends that planning guidance should allow **for small-scale diversification developments within existing farm complexes** .

Yours sincerely

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM
Chair of the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee