

Minutes

Date: Wednesday 28 March 2001
Time: 2.00pm to 5.05pm
Venue: Committee Room, National Assembly Building

In attendance

Members

Glyn Davies, Chair	Mid and West Wales
Mick Bates	Montgomeryshire
Rosemary Butler	Newport West
Jocelyn Davies	South Wales East
Delyth Evans	Mid and West Wales
Carwyn Jones	Bridgend
Elin Jones	Ceredigion
Huw Lewis (items 3-5)	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhumney
Janet Ryder	North Wales

Officials

Huw Brodie (item 2)	Agriculture Department
Rory O'Sullivan (item 2)	Agriculture Policy Division
Glyn Perryman	Agriculture Policy Division

National Parks

Iwan Huws	Snowdonia National Park
Claire Parsons	Brecon Beacons National Park

Leader Group

Elwyn Vaughan	CYMAD
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Community Enterprise Wales

Angela Pullman

Forestry Commission

Simon Hewitt	Chief Conservator
David Bills	Director General

Huw Davies

Policy Officer

Secretariat

Adrian Crompton

Committee Clerk

Howell Rees

Deputy Committee Clerk

Item 1: Apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

1.1 Apologies were received from John Griffiths and Peter Rogers. Rosemary Butler substituted for John Griffiths. The Chair declared an interest as a farmer.

Item 2: Minister's report - ARD 05-01(p1)

2.1 The Minister provided an update on the foot and mouth situation. He wished to place on record his sympathy for the farmers whose livestock had to be slaughtered. He understood the distress caused by the delay in the slaughter at Gaerwen the previous day, caused by a delay in issuing a licence by the Intervention Board. The aim was now to increase the number of animals slaughtered at Gaerwen to about 4,000 a day. Carcasses would be disinfected, transported to Môtina Airfield, disinfected again and burnt. The Environment Agency and the Isle of Anglesey County Council had some concerns about using Môtina Airfield to dispose of the carcasses but these had been addressed and both now agreed that it was the best site available. A letter was being sent to people in the area explaining why the site had been chosen and how long the process would take.

2.2 The UK Government had approached the European Union for approval to use vaccination as a measure to control the disease in Cumbria. The Minister stressed that the situation in Cumbria was far worse than in Wales and he still viewed vaccination as a last resort, not an alternative to culling. Veterinary advice was that it took two to three weeks for the vaccination to become effective and even then it was not 100% effective. Vaccinated animals would still have to be slaughtered at a later date to avoid the loss of export trade.

2.3 A proven link had been established with the cull ewe section of Welshpool market and all contacts had now been traced and slaughtered. The link with the fat lamb section at the market was unproven. Form D restrictions on farms linked to the fat lamb section would remain in place until the following Wednesday (4 April) and, subject to a satisfactory veterinary inspection, could then be lifted.

2.4 The Minister announced that all susceptible animals on farms contiguous with infected farms in north Powys would be culled. A physical inspection would be made in all cases to decide if farms were contiguous. A risk assessment was being carried out to establish whether the cull should be applied to all cases or only to those where the disease had been confirmed since 16 March. All those farms that might be included in the cull would be contacted initially by phone and the aim was to issue decisions within 24 hours. The cull would begin the following day in areas where a large number of cases had been confirmed. It was not yet possible to say how long the cull would take to complete. A site was being sought for the disposal of the carcasses.

2.5 The Chair thanked the Minister for his report and endorsed his comments on vaccination. The Chair invited comments and questions.

2.6 A number of points about the cull in north Powys were raised:

- the Minister was urged to ensure that lessons were learned from experience on Anglesey so that barriers to the cull were removed before it began. He was also asked if the disposal site for animals culled in north Powys was within the infected area or not. The Minister said the site would be made public when the details were agreed.
- the Minister was asked if he intended to write to all producers in north Powys whose livestock might be included in the contiguous farms cull explaining why it was necessary. He confirmed that this was being done and that letters had also been sent to those producers with links to Welshpool market;
- would rare breeds or genetically important livestock be excluded from the contiguous farm cull in north Powys? The Minister said that such cases would be considered on an individual basis but justification would have to be very strong.

2.7 On the Anglesey cull the Minister was asked if any approach had been made to the Ministry of Defence about using the part of the Môtia Airfield it owned rather than the Council owned part closer to the main A5 road? The Minister said that the Council agreed that the site was the best available but no site was acceptable everyone.

2.8 A number of points relating to welfare and welfare movements were raised:

- animal welfare problems were beginning to emerge in livestock being kept indoors close to confirmed cases. The Minister was asked if, in those cases where the livestock was to be culled, slaughter could be brought forward. The Minister said that the Veterinary Service was in charge of slaughter and the point on welfare would be noted;
- problems were also arising where farmers wanted to move tack sheep back to common or shared grazing and the Minister was asked if this was being addressed. The Minister said that the risks associated with moving tack sheep back to common or shared grazing were too great to allow such movements;
- how could animal welfare issues be addressed in Form D areas where it was not possible to obtain a welfare disposal licence? The Minister said that individual cases should be taken up with the veterinary service;
- the conditions attached to movement licences required a vet to examine all sheep in a flock. The Minister was asked if a more general appraisal could be made instead. He explained that foot and mouth was difficult to identify in sheep and therefore every animal had to be examined;
- there were not enough disinfection centres in Wales and their spread was uneven. Would more be established? The Minister said that new sites were needed and anyone wishing to establish one should contact the Meat and Livestock Commission who were responsible;
- the Minister was asked if help could be provided with the costs of disinfection and veterinary

supervision associated with long distance welfare movements. The Minister said that these costs were a commercial and practical decision for individual farmers.

2.9 A number of general points were raised:

- did the Assembly's Agriculture Department have sufficient staff resources to deal with the foot and mouth situation and was it necessary to move staff from other areas? The Minister said this was a matter for the Permanent Secretary. He paid tribute to the staff of the Agriculture Department and the Divisional Offices for their hard work;
- the Minister was asked why new guidance had recently been issued on compensation, whether slaughtered stock were eligible for the £30 slaughter premium and if the new rules would be applied retrospectively. The Minister explained that flat rate compensation had been introduced to speed up the process. Farmers had a choice between a valuation and a flat rate but whichever was chosen applied to all that producer's livestock. The Committee noted that the flat rate was based on market values and incorporated any slaughter premium. The new flat rate was not available retrospectively;
- were protocols in place covering the conduct of people involved in slaughter and clean up and were counselling services available to them? The Minister said he would consider if any further guidance was required. Specific concerns about hygiene should be raised with the veterinary service. The Rural Stress Information Network could provide help and he would consider if additional counselling should be provided to those involved in this work;
- there was frustration amongst farmers in north Ceredigion at being included in an infected area. The Minister explained that the area was so classified because of Form D notices issued as a result of links to Welshpool market;
- the Minister was asked how long Form D notices remained in force. He said that there were no hard and fast rules. It depended on the strength of the virus and how long it had been present. The question of harvesting on contaminated land would need to be addressed;
- the Minister was asked what advice had been issued on the reopening of public footpaths. He said that advice had been issued to local authorities the previous week. Veterinary advice was available to local authorities and those organising events. He added that stray sheep should be reported immediately to the local authority;
- had any fodder shortages been identified and what was being done to track the issue? The Minister said that no shortages had been identified yet but would be addressed as they arose;
- the Minister was asked if the commitment by Michael Meacher to provide match funding for voluntary contributions for advice helplines applied in Wales. He agreed to check on this point;
- action was necessary to protect the market for Welsh lamb and the Minister was asked what was being done. He said that Welsh Lamb and Beef Promotions planned an aggressive marketing campaign in the summer.

2.10 The Chair agreed to consider sympathetically a request that the Committee should meet over Easter if necessary and to discuss the issue with committee members and the Presiding Officer.

2.11 The issue of the South Wales Sea Fisheries District (Variation) Order 2001 was raised. The Clerk

explained that the Order had already been considered by the Business Committee and the Deputy Presiding Officer (DPO). The DPO had determined that it should not be referred to a subject committee. Consequently, it had already been considered by the Legislation Committee and was due for debate in plenary the following day.

2.12 Members felt that the Order raised issues about the process for notifying them of forthcoming subordinate legislation. The Minister was therefore asked to include details of forthcoming legislation in his report to the Committee in future. The Minister agreed to do this but added that it would not be possible to include legislation that was subject to emergency procedures.

2.13 The progress achieved on payments under the Tir Mynydd and Suckler Cow Premium schemes was welcomed. In view of the pressure on farmers from the foot and mouth outbreak it was suggested that the issue of ICAS forms should be delayed. The Committee noted that it was important not to delay the existing timetable as that would negate the improvements made in recent years. A sympathetic line would be taken in individual cases where difficulties arose because of access problems due to foot and mouth.

Action points

2.14 Provide a note on the extent of the pre-emptive cull in north Powys – **Minister** (Agriculture Policy Division)

2.15 Provide a note on the availability of match funding for advice help lines – **Minister** (Food and Farming Development Division)

2.16 Provide written explanation of transition arrangements between Leader II and Leader+. (A copy of the letter provided is at annex 2). - **Minister** (Rural Policy Division)

Item 3: Diversification Review - ARD 05-01(p2); ARD 05-01(p3); ARD 05-01(p4)

3.1 The Chair welcomed Iwan Huws, Claire Parsons, Elwyn Vaughan and Angela Pullman to the meeting.

3.2 Iwan Huws introduced the paper from the National Parks and Claire Parsons explained the background to some of specific examples of community development. Iwan Huws said that, after foot and mouth was brought under control, the National Parks would be putting forward a proposal to the Minister to fast track agri-environment schemes on farms where livestock had been slaughtered.

3.3 Elwyn Vaughan introduced the paper from CYMAD and Angela Pullman that from Community Enterprise Wales (CEW). The Chair then invited questions and comments and the following points were raised.

3.4 CEW was asked how it related to county councils, the WDA and other enterprise agencies and how

were the activities of the various organisations co-ordinated? Was there competition between the agencies and duplication of effort in terms of providing business advice?

- Angela Pullman said that the larger agencies often did not recognise the potential of entrepreneurs who did not conform to the usual expectations. This meant that good ideas were not picked up and those barriers needed to be broken down. The demand for business advice could not be met so competition was not an issue. CEW saw itself as part of a continuum with other providers. The WDA and Business Connect provided advice for larger businesses whilst others went to the enterprise agencies or CEW. It was important to make clear to potential clients which agencies provided what advice, what was free and what had to be paid for and how to access advice.

3.5 How could effective partnership working be encouraged?

- Elwyn Vaughan said that this took time to achieve. He referred to the success of Biff Llyn as an example that was now being copied. It was important to engage with representative organisations and for those helping to develop co-operative ventures to have a real understanding of grassroots issues.

3.6 Local authorities had considerable procurement potential. How could that be developed through community strategies for the benefit of the rural economy:

- Iwan Huws said that the national parks had had a duty to foster the economic and social well being of local communities since 1995. This was a new role for local authorities and the Parks would work with them to develop their community development strategies.
- Angela Pullman said that she had discussed the development of community strategies with local authorities and felt they would welcome guidance.

3.7 What was meant by the "toolkit approach" mentioned in the CEW paper?

- Angela Pullman explained that this meant giving local people the skills they needed to develop their own solutions.

3.8 How could branding based on the National Parks be strengthened?

- Iwan Huws said that discussions were being held with the Agri-Food Directorate on how Snowdonia National Park's role could be developed. The Park already dealt with planning issues and operated the Tir Gofal scheme in its area on behalf of the Countryside Council for Wales and it made sense to add agri-food issues to its portfolio. The 11 national parks in Britain had hosted a food fair at Westminster and this sort of activity had to be developed.
- Elwyn Vaughan said that Snowdonia was perhaps the strongest brand image in Wales and advantage should be taken of that.

3.9 Childcare facilities were essential and extra funding had been announced for Chwarae Teg but what else needed to be done?

- Angela Pullman said that provision in rural areas was often expensive and she felt there was a need for a national programme to create networked social businesses and training programmes.

3.10 The Parks had identified legislation as a barrier to promoting local purchasing.

An explanation was requested.

- Claire Parsons said that this referred to the fact that it was often more expensive to sell produce locally than to bring in produce from outside the area.

3.11 The Chair thanked the presenters for their contributions.

Item 4: Woodlands Strategy for Wales - ARD 05-01(p5)

4.1 The Chair welcomed David Bills, Simon Hewitt and Huw Davies to the meeting.

4.2 David Bills introduced the Strategy. He said that the Secretary of State's powers in respect of forestry in Wales had been transferred to the Assembly although a debate over funding had held up a settlement between the Treasury and the Assembly on funding for the Forestry Commission in Wales. The Wales' Woodland Strategy provided the direction and policy for managing woodland in Wales and it had been developed in Wales for Wales. The Forestry Commission was very enthusiastic about the Strategy and would be devoting central resources to support it.

4.3 Following extensive public consultation and the comments made by the Committee in December, it was proposed to launch the Strategy in June subject to the funding of the Forestry Commission in Wales being resolved and the situation on foot and mouth. Implementation would be guided by the Woodland Forum, chaired by the Minister. At the launch it was intended to announce funded action plans designed to achieve delivery of some of the Strategy's programmes.

4.4 The Chair welcomed the Strategy and the Forestry Commission's commitment to it. He invited questions and comments and the following points were raised:

- in view of the collapse in the price of timber was a great deal of investment and effort being made in a commodity that would have no value? David Bills said that the main factor in the collapse of timber prices was the strength of sterling. The Strategy would deliver other important benefits, particularly in social and cultural terms;
- reference was made to the community consultation pilot in the Ystwyth Valley. The Forestry Commission was asked if the scheme at Brechfa was also a pilot scheme. Simon Hewitt said that the project at Brechfa was not specifically mentioned in the Strategy, but would be included in

the Action Plan and would provide valuable information. It was a much smaller area than the Ystwyth Valley but was well advanced;

- there was little in the Strategy about the possible effects of climate change so was it appropriate to adopt a strategy which covered 50 years? In view of climate change was the right mix of species being planted? Simon Hewitt said that the Forestry Commission spent £11 million a year on research which included work on the effect of climate change, species mix and water quality. Appropriate species mix would improve bio-diversity and be more robust to climate change. The Strategy would also be subject to constant review;
- what was the latest position on the transfer of funding for the Forestry Commission in Wales to the Assembly? David Bills said that negotiations between the Assembly and Treasury Ministers were continuing;
- what was meant by continuous cover and why had 50% been chosen as the target for the amount of woodland to be managed under the system? David Bills explained that continuous cover was an alternative to clear felling that offered environmental benefits. Various approaches to continuous cover were possible in Wales and, taking account of experience and Welsh conditions, 50% was a reasonable target **at this** initial stage;
- would the Forestry Commission take a proactive role in encouraging the uptake of renewable energy? Simon Hewitt said the Forestry Commission could only encourage the sector through providing information on the likely home grown resource and linkages to other projects throughout the UK. The Forestry Commission was working closely with the WDA on business support and Objective 1 funding to develop a proactive approach;
- to what extent had the Assembly's National Economic Development Strategy and its policies on sustainable development, equality of opportunity other cross cutting issues been taken into account in the Strategy's development? Simon Hewitt said that the Strategy had been developed by a working group that included the WDA, Countryside Council for Wales, local authorities, Environment Agency, Farming and Rural Conservation Agency, CADW and the Assembly's Agriculture and Environment Divisions, together with representatives of the voluntary environmental sector and the forestry industry. There was already a firm link between the Woodland Strategy and the National Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme.

4.5 The Chair thanked the Forestry Commission representatives for their contribution.

Item 5: Minutes of previous meeting - ARD 04-01(min)

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March.

Secretariat

March 2001

Annex 1

Minister for Rural Affairs
Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig

Our ref: SF/01/3226

Glyn Davies AM
Chair Agriculture and Rural Development Committee
The National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

14 June 2001

ARD COMMITTEE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON LEADER TRANSITIONAL FUNDING ARD 05-01

An action point arising from the ARD Committee meeting on 28 March was that I should provide a written explanation of the transition arrangements between the LEADER II and LEADER + Programmes (Committee Minutes paragraph 2.16 refers).

Arrangements have been made to ensure a smooth transition from the old scheme to the new. This includes transitional funding for existing LEADER II groups to enable them to keep members of staff in post and to cover basic administrative costs between the end of the old scheme (31 March 2001) and the approval of the new Local Action Groups (expected by the end of July). Therefore funding is available to cover the entire transition period 1 April to 31 July 2001.

Following an assessment of need £150,000 has been set aside for this purpose. The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) is handling the application and payment processes for this money. WEFO is currently processing transitional funding applications that have been received from 7 of the 8 LEADER II Local Action Groups and they aim to make the payments before the end of June.

I trust that the above provides the necessary information.

Yours sincerely

Carwyn Jones AM