

Agriculture & Rural Development Committee ARD 03-02(p1)

Date: Wednesday 6 February 2002

Time: 2.00pm to 4.50pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

REPORT OF THE MINISTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS

Antur Cig Cymru

1. The consultation document on the proposed formation of Antur Cig Cymru as a new, integrated body responsible for the marketing, promotion and development of the Welsh red meat sector, was issued on 24 January. The consultation period was extended to ensure that all interested organisations would have a full opportunity to consider the proposals in detail and to make comments. Responses are now required by 22 March. Members of the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee have received copies of the consultation paper.

Policy Commission Report

2. The Policy Commission on the Future of Farming in England published its report on 29 January. This report relates specifically to England. The Commission has, however, made a number of recommendations which could have wider implications for the UK as a whole. These will, of course, need to be discussed by the four UK Agriculture Ministers jointly.

Visit by Lord Whitty

3. On 1 February, Lord Whitty of Camberwell, DEFRA Agriculture Minister, visited Wales at my request. This included a visit to a hill farm to underline the importance of such farming to Wales.

Wildlife Poisoning

4. Clarification of figures on illegal pesticide and wildlife poisoning was sought at the last Committee meeting and in particular information on reported cases not investigated. This

information is set out in the note at Annex 1.

South Wales Sea Fisheries District (Variation) Order 2001

5. I agreed to keep the Committee informed of this matter following our discussion at the meeting on 9 January. An update is at Annex 2.

Illegal meat imports - penalties

6. Information was requested at the last Committee meeting about penalties enforceable on those found to illegally import meat carrying risk of BSE. The penalties for illegally importing products of animal origin generally are seizure and destruction of the goods and possible prosecution leading to a fine of up to £5000 or imprisonment for up to two years. Where meat found to contain Specified Risk Material (SRM) material has been imported from EU, it is usually referred back to the exporting country to take action against the exporter.

First Payment Of Grant In Farming Connect.

7. The Forestry Commission has approved the first grant payment of a Timber Processing Capital Grant made under *Farming Connect*. The Commission has allocated £500,000 of its grant budget from the National Assembly to fund grant aid designed to provide business advice and capital grants to farmers in Wales, administered through *Farming Connect*. The first grant payment will support the development of an on-farm sawmill and value adding plant.

Development of a Forestry Business Cluster for Wales.

8. As an outcome of the Wales Woodland Strategy, which I launched last year, the Forestry Commission has facilitated a meeting between the Forestry Industry Development Council (FIDC), the Forestry Contractors Association, the Forestry and Timber Association, Forest Enterprise and WDA to consider ways of setting up a Forestry Business Cluster for Wales to implement economic programmes from the strategy. All agreed that this was a desirable objective and FIDC have taken on the task of progressing the development of the cluster. Nominations are currently being sought for chair of the group and another meeting of the members will take place in the near future.

Farm Woodland And Biomass Group

9. The first meeting of this group, which I tasked the Forestry Commission to manage, was held in November 2001. Following the first meeting, three sub-groups have been established: Biomass, Grants and Training Advice and Woodland Development. These groups will feed into the development of an Action Plan due in May 2002. The group's remit is to draw up an Action Plan for woodland development and biomass, highlighting areas of development, need for

support, areas of research, new uses for timber and wood products, training and marketing opportunities.

Wales Timber Transport Forum

10. Over the last few years, the timber industry has increasingly focussed attention on the transport of round timber and there have been a number of working groups set up across the United Kingdom. To better co-ordinate these efforts, a Timber Transport Forum was established. This forum is based in Scotland and there has been growing pressure to set up a similar group to look at timber transport issues in Wales. A Wales Timber Transport Forum would feed into and draw experience from the wider UK forum but would seek specific solutions to the Welsh situation.

11. To progress this issue, the Forestry Commission has been asked to bring together the various stakeholders in Wales to see if there is industry support for such a forum. The intention would be to include representatives from the forestry industry, hauliers, Local Authorities and the WDA.

Woodland Forum

12. At the Committee meeting on 23 January, I agreed to provide details of membership of the Wales Woodland Forum. A full list of the membership is attached at Annex 3.

Annex 1

The Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS)

The Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme makes enquiries into the death or injury of wildlife, companion animals, and beneficial invertebrates from pesticide poisoning. Each year, a great number of animal or insect deaths are reported to NAWAD staff. Under the remit of the scheme, only cases where there appears to be the involvement of approved use, misuse or abuse of pesticides can be investigated. Although initial post-mortems are carried out on the vast majority of animals reported to NAWAD, only those which are seen to be due to pesticide poisoning are investigated further and recorded as such. The figures in the table below highlight this:

Year	2000	2001
No of reported incidents	74	54
No of incident investigated	32	20

No of incidents where poisoning was confirmed	11	6 (7 pending)
Chemicals found	Aldicarb (3), alphachloralose, bendiocarb, difenacoum (2), ethylene glycol, fenthion, strychnine (2)	Alphachloralose plus trace of bromadiolone, Aldicarb and bendiocarb, ethylene glycol, fenthion, paraquat, strychnine
Species affected (more than 1 species in some incidents)	Buzzard, peregrines (4), red kites (2), pigeon bait, cat(3), dog	Pigeon bait, feral pigeons, red kite, cat, dog(2)
Suspected cause of incident	Approved use –1 Abuse –9 Unspecified – 1	Abuse – 4 Unspecified use – 2
No. of cases referred to DEFRA Investigations Branch	1	1

Peregrine Falcons

Peregrine Watch is a joint initiative involving several bodies with an interest in Peregrines and also wildlife crime. Involved parties include: South Wales Police, Gwent Constabulary, RSPB, EA, NAWAD, RSPCA, Forest Authority and Rhondda Cynon Taff, Bridgend and Caerphilly Borough Councils.

NAWAD are represented on 'Peregrine Watch' and give assistance in cases of suspected poisoning. During 2001 there was one Peregrine related poisoning case. It appears in the table as pigeon bait, as it was this that was found and not any dead Peregrines. It was suspected by South Wales Police that the intended victim was a Peregrine as the bait was tethered beneath a nest. This case is on-going and is likely to be the subject of Court proceedings later this year. NAWAD have provided a statement and maintained links with PSD in DEFRA and also the Wildlife Incident Unit at CSL.

It is true to say that there is a great deal of Peregrine persecution centred around the South Wales valleys. Each year 36 nests are monitored by Peregrine Watch. In 2000 at least 20 of these nests failed to rear young to the fledgling stage. This is greater than would be expected

in 'natural' situations. In 2001 the number of failed nests is believed to have been greater although this has not been confirmed to date. Methods used by the persecutors involve not only poisoning, but also egg-theft, nest disturbance and illegal shooting.

As well as providing technical support in cases of poisoning, NAWAD fund much of the publicity for Peregrine Watch, providing posters and flyers.

Annex 2

South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee Order

1. At the 9 January meeting, I advised the Committee that the High Court quashed the Order made by the National Assembly in March 2001, which set the membership and funding of the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (SWSFC). I also advised that we were considering the judgement and, in accordance with the wishes of the member local authorities of SWSFC, would look to bring forward a new Order that complied with the findings of the judge, and that was unlikely to be challenged by either the SWSFC or the local authorities.
2. Members asked that the ARD Committee, and the Environment Planning and Transport Committee, if it wished, should be given the opportunity, and sufficient time, to consider the new Order. I explained that this would depend on a number of factors, not least the views of the Business Committee. I did, however, agree to bring details of the proposed new Order to the Committee, and it might help if I outline the current situation as part of that undertaking.
3. The quashing of the March 2001 Order means that the 1996 Order, remains in force. This means that Rhondda Cynon Taff remains a constituent council of the Committee, and it and the other authorities are required to meet the expenses of the SWSFC in equal shares in accordance with the terms of the 1996 Order.
- 4 Any new variation Order must be made on the application of a constituent council or the SWSFC. The 2001 Order was made on the application of Pembrokeshire County Council (with the support of the other constituent councils) and we will be writing to all the member authorities and the Committee, seeking views on options to withdraw Rhondda Cynon Taff from membership and the implications of this in relation to financial contributions eg the remaining constituent councils. This will enable a new Order to be prepared in due course that I intend should be circulated to members of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Members of Woodland Forum

Name Organisation Representing

Mr Tom Bourne Welsh Development Agency WDA

Mrs Rosie Carmichael The Royal Forestry Society Welsh Local Government Association

Mr Glynn Cook British Assoc. for Shooting & Conservation BASC

Mr Dainis Dauksta Welsh Timber Forum WTF

Mr Alec Dauncey Tir Coed Tir Coed

Mr Huw Denman Llanfihangel Rhos y Corn Community Llanfihangel Rhos y Corn Community

Mr Mike Dunn National Assembly for Wales NAWAD

Dr Bridget Emmett Centre for Ecology & Hydrology The University of Wales Bangor

Mr John Everard Continuous Cover Forestry Group CCF

Mr Bob Farmer Forest Enterprise Wales FE Wales

Ms Sue Gittins The Ramblers Association Wales Ramblers Association

Prof John Good FC Advisory Committee Wales FCACW

Mr David Jenkins Coed Cymru Coed Cymru

Ms Linda Jones Wales Tourist Board Wales Tourist Board

Mr Jerry Langford Woodland Trust (Coed Cadw) Woodland Trust (Coed Cadw)

Mr Nigel Ajax Lewis Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Glamorgan Wildlife Trust

Ms Judy Ling Wong OBE Black Environment Network Black Environment Network

Mr Harry Lloyd Corwen Forestry UKFPA

Mr John Lloyd Jones Countryside Council for Wales CCW

Ms Wendy Merrett The National Assembly for Wales Environment Agency Wales

Mrs Rhian Nowell-Phillips Farmers Union of Wales FUW

Mr Tony Prater RSPB RSPB

Prof Colin Price School of Agriculture & Forest Sciences University of Wales

Mr Paul Raymond Barker Raymond Barker & Co RICS

Ms Lindsay Roberts National Assembly Planning

Mr Ken Shaw Groundwork Bridgend Groundwork Wales

Mr Ian Sheffner Forestry Contracting Association FCA

Mr J Malcolm Thomas National Farmers Union Wales NFU

Ms Celia Thomas Pembrokeshire Coast National Park PCNP

Mr Trefor Thompson The Royal Forestry Society RFS

Mr Phil Tidey Small Woods Association Small Woods Association

Mr Trevor Trevor Forestry & Timber Association Country Land & Business Association

Mr Richard Turner CADW CADW

Mr Rod Waterfield Bodfari Charcoal Charcoal & Coppice Sector

Mrs Judith Webb Forestry & Timber Association FTA

Mr Hugh Wheeldon Hugh Wheeldon & Co Institute of Chartered Foresters

Mr Peter Wilson Forest Industries Development Council FIDC

Ms Deb Wozencraft Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales CPRW

Mr Nick Wynne The National Trust The National Trust