

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 3 – Senedd

Meeting date:
6 February 2013

Meeting time:
09:00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



For further information please contact:

Alun Davidson
Committee Clerk
029 2089 8639
ES.comm@wales.gov.uk

Agenda

Private meeting

1. Introductions, apologies and substitutions

2. Common Agricultural Policy reform proposals – Discussion with MEPs (09.00 – 09.45)

Jill Evans MEP
Derek Vaughan MEP
Daniel Dalton, European Parliament ECR Adviser on agriculture

Break 09.45 – 10.00

3. Common Agricultural Policy reform proposals – update (10.00 – 10.45)

Dermot Ryan, Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU
Gregg Jones, Head of National Assembly for Wales EU Office

4. Common Agricultural Policy reform proposals – round table discussion (10.45 – 11.30)

Ed Bailey, NFU Cymru
Keri Davies, Wales Organic Group
Sue Evans, CLA

Emma Hockridge, Soil Association
Nick Fenwick, Farmers Union of Wales

5. Common Agricultural Policy reform proposals – round table discussion (11.30 – 12.15) (Pages 1 – 11)

E&S(4)-05-13 paper 1 – Wales Environment Link

Emily Keenan, The National Trust
Cllr Dilwyn Roberts, WLGA Rural Forum
Arfon Williams, RSPB Cymru

6. Discussion of Business Committee's letter about committee timetables (12.15 – 12.30) (Pages 12 – 18)

E&S(4)-05-13 paper 2

Briefings for MEPs on CAP Reform



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Agenda Item 5



#1 Rural Development Programmes

INTRODUCTION

The UK's countryside provides us with a multitude of benefits. As well as providing much of our food, it supports our rural communities and provides many 'public goods' such as biodiversity, landscapes, clean water and healthy soils. Its landscapes contain features of historic and cultural importance and present opportunities for recreation, thus influencing our health and well-being. In terms of wildlife, the UK countryside is home to many of our most iconic species and habitats, from Corncrake to Cornflower, and blanket bog to lowland heath.

Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), which are funded by Pillar II of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP),¹ play a key role in supporting the provision of these public goods in our rural areas which, by definition, cannot be adequately provided by the market.² RDP funding supports economic and social measures which are designed to assist rural communities to improve their competitiveness, improve the quality of life and provide basic services. It also provides incentives to improve animal welfare and funds training and advice for farmers. Core to all RDPs are agri-environment schemes, which allow farmers and other land managers to manage their land with wildlife in mind.

¹ Pillar I provides direct payments to farmers

² European Network for Rural Development, 'Public Goods and Public Intervention' (http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=D44F5AC8-F0D1-373F-E090-B782D2D22384)

Within the UK, each country produces its own RDP and develops its schemes within this to reflect the characteristics of their environments and the particular needs of their rural communities. Examples of Agri-environment schemes developed within the UK include the Higher Level Stewardship in England, Rural Priorities in Scotland, Glastir in Wales and the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme.

At present, the UK government is negotiating within Europe on the future shape of the CAP. The next RDPs within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are also being developed at present and the resources available for these will be influenced by the outcomes of the CAP reform process. However, at this early stage there are real opportunities for MEPs to ensure that the RDP in their part of the UK delivers not only for rural economies, but encourages the protection and provision of the important public goods rural areas provide.

WHY STRONG RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ARE SO IMPORTANT

RDPs can provide taxpayers with good value for money by supporting the delivery of the many public goods and benefits our rural areas provide. Millions of people in the UK care deeply about the country's wildlife, landscapes and environment and benefit both directly and indirectly from these public goods.

RDPs can therefore demonstrate the key principle for the use of taxpayer's money – that **public money should fund public goods** and ensure that those embracing the provision of non-marketable, public goods from their land should be rewarded for this.

The UK government is a signatory to the EU Biodiversity Strategy which commits us to halting and reversing declines in biodiversity by 2020. Well-resourced agri-environment schemes will be the decisive factor in whether or not we achieve this aim.

Investing in nature and the countryside through an RDP also makes sound economic sense. The environment is worth billions to the UK economy every year, providing ecosystem services such as pollination, water purification and flood defence.³ Well-designed and adequately funded environmental measures therefore deliver clear benefits to society and represent a genuine return for public investment in agriculture. Such measures provide the most effective means of conserving landscape features and biodiversity in farmland habitats under threat, whilst also helping to maintain viable farming and rural communities and delivering wider economic and social benefits.

³ UNEP-WCMC (2011), 'UK National Ecosystem Assessment: Synthesis of Key Findings' (<http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/Resources/tabid/82/Default.aspx>)

#1 Rural Development Programmes

RDPs can contribute to wider social and economic delivery, and play an important role in maintaining viable farming and rural communities, providing training for farmers and support for improved standards of animal welfare.

A CASE STUDY

Agri-environment schemes in the UK form a key part of the four countries' RDPs. Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) in England helps to illustrate that a well-designed, targeted scheme provides multiple benefits for the environment, rural communities and society as a whole. There is strong evidence to suggest HLS can reverse the declines of species such as the Grey Partridge and Reed Bunting at the farm scale, and is the key tool for restoring many of the most degraded priority habitats in England. There is also strong evidence that HLS has distinct socio-economic benefits. For every £1 of HLS scheme payment that goes to the agreement holder, £1.43 is generated off-farm in the local economy,⁴ indicating that investing in HLS realises a significant return for the taxpayer and local economy.

⁴ CCRI (2010), 'Estimating the Incidental Socio-economic Benefits of Environmental Stewardship Schemes' (<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/evidence/economics/foodfarm/reports/es-socioeconomic/esschemes-socioeconomic-summary-100330.pdf>)

⁵ Defra (2011), 'Agriculture in the United Kingdom' (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/files/defra-stats-foodfarm-crosscutting-auk-auk2011-120709.pdf>)

WHAT ACTION CAN MEPs TAKE?

As MEPs, there are some clear steps that you can take to ensure that the UK receives the well-funded and structured RDPs that it needs.

Firstly, it is clear that there is a need for sufficient funding. The first step to making this happen is to ensure that the UK gets a fair allocation of the overall Pillar II budget within Europe. This Pillar II budget allocation needs to be based on objective criteria, and not on often skewed past funding levels.

Secondly, to ensure that the UK countries have sufficient flexibility to be able to meet the diversity of challenges that they face, it is also essential that they have the ability to transfer funds from Pillar I to Pillar II. In 2011, UK farmers received £3.35 billion in direct payments under Pillar I,⁵ and with Pillar II representing much better value for money the facility to transfer more than the 10% currently proposed is essential.

A third step is to support the 25% minimum spend on environmental measures within Pillar II. The Commission has proposed making the current mandatory minimum optional, which will potentially erode the viability of a level playing field across Europe. For Member States such as the UK which are currently spending more than 25%, this level should not be reduced.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact **Julie Middleton** at **Wildlife and Countryside Link** on **020 7820 8600** or **julie@wcl.org.uk**

#2 Greening: Ecological Focus Areas

INTRODUCTION

As well as providing much of our food, our farmland supports our rural communities and produces vital 'public goods' such as biodiversity, landscapes, clean water and healthy soils. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the most powerful factors influencing how our farmland is managed and has a key role to play in supporting the provision of these public goods, which cannot be adequately provided by the market.¹ However, for much of its history it has driven environmentally damaging land management and whilst recent reforms have helped to turn the tide it is still not meeting its potential to safeguard food production and farming in the long-term by protecting and enhancing the environment.

The CAP is currently being reformed and the decisions taken across 2012–2013 will have significant consequences for the quality of land management up to 2020, a year which coincides with the renewed European Union (EU) targets for halting and reversing biodiversity declines. The current reform round contains proposals to 'green' direct payments under Pillar I by introducing a number of new requirements that farmers and land managers must meet. It is possible that 30% of direct payments to farmers will be conditional on these greening requirements.

¹ European Network for Rural Development, 'Public Goods and Public Intervention' (http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=D44F5AC8-F0D1-373F-E090-B782D2D22384)

This is a significant sum of public money and MEPs can ensure that the greening measures introduced will deliver benefits to the environment which are effective and lasting. In particular, the greening measures must better support the provision of the vital 'non-food' public goods that farmers and land managers provide. Of the measures proposed, we believe that the Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) have the greatest potential to deliver a range of public benefits in the farmed countryside, provided that EFAs account for no less than 7% of the farm area and are made up of features and land use types which are beneficial to the environment.

CURRENT SITUATION

For the first time ever, Member State governments share decision-making powers with the European Parliament and it is vital that the negotiation process between these parties delivers a policy that:

- Directs public funding to farmers and land managers who provide society with vital, but undervalued, environmental public goods.
- Demonstrates efficient spend and value for money

Reforming the CAP so that it helps correct the market failure to value and reward the provision of environmental public goods is one clear way to do this, in addition to supporting the economic viability of UK farming.

WHY 'GREENING' AND EFAs ARE NEEDED

Despite some positive reforms to the CAP, such as the introduction of cross compliance² and particularly agri-environment schemes, the policy is still failing to drive more sustainable farming methods at the scale needed to reverse biodiversity declines and address wider environmental issues of resource degradation. As direct payments will continue to form the majority of the CAP budget after 2013 it is vital that they work much harder to deliver wider environmental benefits in return for public support for farming, particularly in this time of economic austerity and heightened scrutiny of public expenditure. The need for further greening of the CAP was explicitly recognised by the European Parliament in a recent report,³ and the importance of EFAs highlighted.

We believe that for the EFA approach to be most effective, it should have the following characteristics:

- Every farm has a role to play in protecting the environment; indeed this is the only sensible approach for a sector that depends on healthy and functioning natural processes. Therefore every farm should manage a modest percentage (no less than 7%) of its land for biodiversity and wider environmental protection and enhancement.

² Cross compliance is the set of basic requirements that farmers must meet in order to qualify for direct payments.

³ European Parliament, 'Our Life Insurance, Our Natural Capital: An EU biodiversity strategy to 2020', 2011/2307(INI)

#2 Greening: Ecological Focus Areas

- The current proposals for reform exclude grassland farms and we believe this should be rectified as grassland based farms also need to play their part in providing a healthy environment.
- EFA areas should include areas of uncropped arable land, woodland buffers, over-winter stubbles, landscape features⁴ and extensively managed farmland (such as extensively grazed permanent pasture or traditional orchards).
- Additional management of EFAs should be supported through the use of improved agri-environment schemes.

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EFAs will **not harm** the productive capacity of the UK or the EU. In fact, protecting the environment is a vital part of securing our long-term food security. EFAs are not a return to set-aside and many farmers already have areas of their farm which would count towards EFAs such as hedgerows and buffer strips. Many current agri-environment options would also be suitable as EFA land and it is therefore important to ensure that farmers who are already doing the right thing are not penalised by greening proposals. It is, however, important to state that simply being in an agri-environment scheme should not be classed as meeting the greening requirements as this would not deliver additional benefits for the environment.

⁴ Including archaeological and historic sites

WHAT ACTION CAN MEPs TAKE?

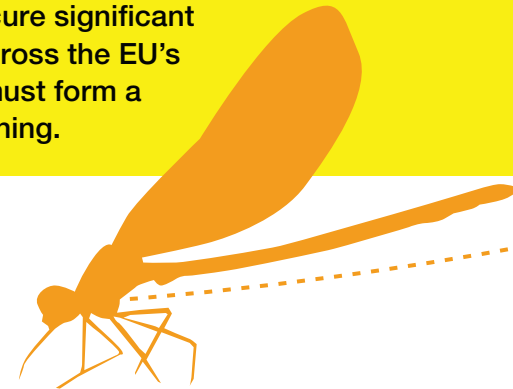
All future CAP payments must be linked to positive actions that deliver more sustainable land management. As the next CAP will continue to feature two separate sources of funding (Pillar I and Pillar II), positive action must be secured across both Pillars and through all payments.

The CAP reform proposals are being debated across 2012-2013 and it vitally important that meaningful greening measures are developed and agreed as part of this process. Of all the new proposals for CAP reform, EFAs have the most potential to secure significant environmental benefit across the EU's farmed landscape and must form a central part of CAP greening.

MEPs MUST ENSURE...

That this round of CAP reform secures:

- A robust 'greening' package of measures which requires EFAs on every farm
- EFAs that account for no less than 7% of the farm area
- EFAs that are comprised of land types that are environmentally beneficial, for example uncropped arable land, woodland buffers, over-winter stubbles, landscape features and extensively managed/semi-natural grassland



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact **Julie Middleton** at **Wildlife and Countryside Link** on **020 7820 8600** or **julie@wcl.org.uk**

#3 Cross Compliance

INTRODUCTION

The UK's countryside provides our food, but also supports thriving rural communities and provides 'public goods' such as biodiversity, landscapes, water and soils. It provides opportunities for recreation, supporting our health and well-being, and is home to many of this country's most iconic species and habitats.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) exerts a powerful influence over our countryside. For much of its history it has driven environmentally damaging practices, and despite recent reforms it is still not meeting its potential to safeguard food production in the long-term by protecting and enhancing the environment.

Negotiations are now underway in Europe on the future of the CAP, including proposals for changes to 'cross compliance': the basic requirements that farmers must meet in order to qualify for CAP payments.¹ However, the proposed changes to cross compliance fail to address weaknesses in the current system, and would in fact remove some elements of vital importance to the protection of the environment.

¹ Cross compliance requires farmers to comply with a set of Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs), which relate to the areas of public, animal and plant health, environment and animal welfare. Farmers also have to keep their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC), the standards of which relate to the issues of soil erosion, soil organic matter, soil structure, ensuring a minimum level of maintenance, avoiding the deterioration of habitats, landscape features and protection and management of water.

WHAT IS CROSS COMPLIANCE?

- Cross compliance is the set of basic requirements that farmers must meet in order to qualify for CAP payments.
- It is made up of two strands. It requires compliance with existing EU legislation and directives (under Statutory Management Requirements) and also adherence with 'Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition' (GAEC) requirements set by Member States.
- Cross compliance is thus both a vital tool for upholding environmental, animal welfare, food safety and quality standards across Europe and a means of ensuring the protection of the wider public goods that our countryside provides, such as biodiversity, soils, clean water and landscapes.
- Its introduction in 2003 was significant because it acknowledged that delivery of environmental and other public benefits from farming was a reasonable expectation in return for publicly-funded payments.

WHY IS CROSS COMPLIANCE IMPORTANT?

Cross compliance is the compulsory element of environmental delivery in the CAP. The UK, like all EU Member States, has legal commitments including those in the Birds, Habitats, Water Framework, and Nitrates Directives. At present, some of the requirements relating to these commitments are included in cross compliance, along with

requirements relating to animal welfare, food quality and so on. Integrating these commitments into cross compliance is highly effective. It means that, in cases of non-compliance, not only can legal proceedings be taken – but CAP payments can be docked.

This provides a strong incentive for compliance. It would be both irresponsible and highly risky for Member States to rely too heavily on 'opt-in' measures (like agri-environment and voluntary initiatives) to meet these legally binding commitments. Payment schemes and unpaid voluntary activities are extremely important to engage farmers in delivering environmental improvement, but to be effective they must be underpinned by regulation.

Cross compliance forms the baseline for CAP payments. Farmers must meet cross compliance requirements to be eligible for payments under CAP. Most of these requirements are no more than basic good practice, and farmers are expected to bear the costs of meeting them.

By contrast, positive actions that exceed this minimum standard can be rewarded with targeted payments such as those under agri-environment schemes. A strong cross compliance baseline therefore provides value for public money. Lowering that baseline would mean that basic good practices which are currently compulsory would become eligible for incentive payments.

#3 Cross Compliance

Cross compliance sets a common standard across Europe. It gives a clear message on what is expected of farmers and helps create a level playing field across Europe. The baseline regulation it provides is good for farming as for any industry, creating stability, preventing a ‘race to the bottom’ to produce cheap goods at any cost, and allowing businesses to compete on meaningful terms. It also gives consumers confidence. Tax payers have a right to expect high standards in return for the large sums of money paid to farmers, which far outweigh the actual costs to farmers of meeting the requirements.

If the standards of environmental protection within cross compliance were to be relaxed, this would create costs elsewhere. If cross compliance requirements are removed or weakened, farmers would have to be offered incentive payments to perform actions that are currently compulsory. In addition, relaxing the standards of environmental protection expected from farmers would create costs elsewhere.

This is illustrated in the case of drinking water quality. In England, water companies will, in the period 2005–15, spend over £370 million just on removing nitrates from water, a significant proportion of which originate from agriculture. This cost is largely passed on to the customer. Tighter enforcement of agricultural regulations could reduce this cost by preventing pollutants

such as nitrates from reaching waterways in the first place. On the other hand, relaxing the rules could lead to increased nitrate pollution in waterbodies, higher clean-up costs for water companies and ultimately higher water prices for customers.

Whilst the removal of some elements from cross compliance might reduce farmers’ costs in the short term, these costs would simply be shifted elsewhere in the form of higher taxes or commodity prices, or reduced environmental quality. This benefits no-one in the long term, including farmers, who are themselves taxpayers, consumers and beneficiaries of the environment.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CROSS COMPLIANCE REGIME

The prevailing political mood in the UK and EU favours deregulation and simplification. Proponents of deregulation argue that reducing bureaucratic burdens on land managers will allow them to get on with the business of profitable farming. The Joint Links support the aim of streamlining unnecessarily complicated processes that do not deliver any benefit. However, we are extremely concerned by specific proposals to weaken the standards contained within cross compliance which would jeopardise environmental protection while doing little to simplify the situation for farmers.

The proposals of greatest concern are:

Removal of some of the Birds Directive requirements from cross compliance. This is of serious concern. Bird persecution continues to be a problem in many countries, including bird of prey persecution in the UK and songbird trapping in Mediterranean countries. Significant progress is being made in Cyprus using cross compliance as a deterrent against illegal bird trapping, with penalties applied to 92 claimants in 2011 (compared to only 19 in 2010). This proposal would reverse such progress and remove a strong deterrent to crimes against wildlife.

Exemption of small farmers from cross compliance. This is not justified: even small farms can harm the environment by applying above-average fertiliser or pesticide quantities, and every farm has a role to play in protecting and improving the natural environment. The public surely has a right to expect at least a basic level of environmental protection from all farmers receiving public money.

We also feel that cross-compliance should be strengthened in specific areas, by including the following European Directives which relate to the impact of agriculture on the wider environment:

The Water Framework Directive (WFD). Given the costs of agricultural diffuse pollution, and the role cross compliance plays in meeting a range of obligations under other EU Directives, we believe there is a strong case for the Water Framework

#3 Cross Compliance

Directive (WFD) to be included under cross compliance. This would require on-farm action to tackle the pollution of waterbodies. Every Member State is committed to achieving the objectives of the WFD and a cost-effective way to do this would be to ensure cross compliance better incorporates water protection measures.

The Sustainable Use Directive. The Sustainable Use Directive commits Member States to reducing the impacts of pesticide use and should be included in cross compliance requirements.

In terms of **animal welfare**, only three animal welfare laws are currently included in cross compliance. There are a number of harmonising laws such as those on chickens and laying hens which have not been included and so should be brought under cross-compliance at this stage.

WHAT ACTION CAN MEPs TAKE?

Representatives of UK voters and taxpayers must send a clear signal that weakening the level of environmental protection provided by cross compliance is not acceptable. It is a message that millions of members of those NGOs who make up the Joint Links will support. Instead, cross compliance must be strengthened to ensure that the significant sums of money paid to farmers through the CAP are linked to robust measures that deliver a strong baseline of environmental protection and animal welfare on every farm.

MEPs MUST ENSURE

- No overall weakening of the environmental, landscape or animal welfare requirements that farmers must fulfil in order to qualify for direct payments
- Retention of requirements for farmers under the Habitats and Birds Directives
- Inclusion of requirements under the Water Framework Directive and Sustainable Use Directive
- Inclusion of all animal welfare legislation
- No exemptions: all farmers must fulfil these basic requirements



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact **Julie Middleton** at **Wildlife and Countryside Link** on 020 7820 8600 or julie@wcl.org.uk

#4 High Nature Value Farming

INTRODUCTION

High Nature Value (HNV) farming is a term which is used to describe the low-intensity farming systems upon which the survival of many of our iconic species, habitats and landscape in the UK are dependent. These systems also provide a host of wider benefits for society including carbon storage, the protection of water resources and the maintenance of landscape character and cultural heritage. Many of the UK's upland farms would be classified as HNV, as would many of Scotland's crofting systems. Examples in the lowlands tend to be at a smaller scale and in locations where physical constraints have prevented wholesale intensification.

Despite the vital services they provide and their cultural value, HNV farming systems do not receive adequate public support and many are threatened. Existing support mechanisms such as agri-environment have helped to slow the loss of these systems, but are typically insufficient to make HNV farms commercially viable. A strong package of support is urgently needed in the next CAP period if these systems, and the incredible wildlife they sustain, are not to be lost forever.

WHAT IS HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMING?

HNV farming is intrinsically valuable for biodiversity because of the agricultural practices associated with the system. In Europe, landscapes have been shaped by human activities over millennia, and

many plant and animal species have co-evolved to be dependent on low-intensity agriculture. As farming systems have intensified - partly as a result of previous damaging CAP policies - much of this wildlife has been lost. However, some low intensity farming systems remain which support a great variety of species, including those which have disappeared from the wider countryside, whose survival now hangs in the balance.

WHAT IS HNV FARMING IN THE UK?

Whilst there are several 'types' of HNV farming in the UK, the most prevalent type is associated with upland areas and crofting systems where the climate, topography and geology have imposed constraints on farming type. As a result, extensive livestock production, in some cases with limited cropping, predominates in these areas. It is characterised by:

- A high reliance on semi-natural vegetation for grazing
- Low stocking densities
- Calves and lambs that are produced in spring and mainly sold for fattening elsewhere

Other characteristics often include:

- Use of traditional livestock breeds
- A high diversity of land cover and landscape features like hedgerows and trees which increase nature value

- Remote geographical locations and resulting economic challenges, such as difficulty accessing markets

Low-intensity HNV farming of this type faces enormous challenges of socio-economic viability and at the farm level, stark choices are being made between abandonment and intensification.¹ Although there is no official breakdown of income for HNV farms, research has shown² that the financial position of HNV farms is likely to be even worse than for Less Favoured Area farms in general - which on average are typified by low incomes and high dependence on public support payments.

Outside the uplands and crofting landscapes, low intensity farming is found at a smaller scale throughout the UK and is associated with farming which maintains a high proportion of semi-natural features (such as hedgerows, ponds, patches of woodland and arable margins).

Similarly, HNV farming systems are pivotal in managing the farmland in the UK which is home to rare species and/or important populations of species. There is also a pressing need to ensure that these low-intensity farming practices can survive in these areas and thus contribute to the survival of this wildlife.

¹ Beaufoy, G., 'HNV Farming: Explaining the concept and interpreting EU and national policy commitments (www.efncp.org/download/EFNCP-HNV-farming-concept.pdf)

² For example, Swales and Moxey (2008), 'Targeting CAP support at HNV farming and crofting systems'

#4 High Nature Value Farming

HOW IS HNV FARMING CURRENTLY COVERED IN EU POLICY?

Member States have existing commitments relating to HNV farming:

- Supporting HNV farming and forestry systems is an objective of the European Commission in current Rural Development Programmes (RDPs)
- HNV farming indicators are part of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) for RDPs. Member States are obliged to develop a system of 'impact indicators' for assessing the extent and condition of HNV farmland

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However, these policies are currently failing HNV farming systems and economic pressures continue to force farmers to intensify land management and production, or abandon it altogether. The current proposals for CAP reform will do nothing to stem the loss of HNV farming. However, simple changes could still be made to the proposals which would secure the future of these systems, the wildlife that depends on them and the valuable services they provide, for a relatively small proportion of the CAP budget.

³ For example, we propose Article 38 on Coupled Support could be amended to become 'Coupled and other specific forms of support' and a rule should be added for specific support of HNV (or semi-natural) pastures.

⁴ Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) in the new CAP proposals.

⁵ For example, Rural Analysis Associates (2011), 'Defining the Vulnerable Areas of Scotland: A report for the Highland and Island Councils'.

WHAT ACTION CAN MEPs TAKE?

While agri-environment schemes do play a part in helping to maintain HNV farming, they are insufficient in isolation to secure the future of these systems as they are limited as a result of 'income foregone/costs incurred' constraints. What is needed is a package of support measures, which would include:

- Support within Pillar I targeted at HNV farms, to support and reward the exceptional public benefits HNV farms provide. This is needed urgently. It could take the form of a premium for 'High Nature Value' pastures introduced as a new Article in the Direct Payments Regulation³ and would work in a similar way to the current Article 68 approach.
- This should be complemented by Pillar II measures such as well funded agri-environment schemes and the targeting of 'Areas of Natural Constraint' (ANC) payments to farms which deliver the most public benefits.

- In those areas of the UK where they are applicable, Less Favoured Area payments⁴ made according to more environmentally specific eligibility criteria. For example, the current Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS) in Scotland results in higher payments going to more productive, less disadvantaged areas in the LFA, counter to the spirit of the EU regulations, and should be replaced with a scheme targeted at the most vulnerable farming areas.⁵



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact **Julie Middleton** at **Wildlife and Countryside Link** on **020 7820 8600** or **julie@wcl.org.uk**

Briefings for MEPs on CAP Reform

WHO WE ARE

The UK's four Link organisations (the Joint Links) represent a suite of bodies working for the conservation, enjoyment and protection of wildlife, countryside and the marine environment. Our members practise and advocate environmentally sensitive land management and food production, and encourage respect for and enjoyment of landscapes and their features, the historic environment and biodiversity. We have been working together for many years to try and ensure that the CAP delivers all that it can for the countryside whilst rewarding those who embrace this responsibility in their management of the land.



Wildlife and Countryside Link
 89 Albert Embankment
 London SE1 7TP

T 020 7820 8600

 Registered charity no. 1107460



Scottish Environment Link
 3rd Floor, Gladstone's Land
 483 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh EH1 2NT

T 0131 225 4345

 Registered charity no. SC000296



Wales Environment Link
 27 Pier Street
 Aberystwyth SY23 2LN

T 01970 611 621

 Registered charity no. 1022675



Northern Ireland Environment Link
 89 Loopland Drive
 Belfast BT6 9DW

T 028 9045 5770

 Registered charity no. XR 19598

THIS BRIEFING IS SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS



Agenda Item 6

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru
National
Assembly for
Wales



Committee Chairs
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay

30 January 2013

Dear Chair

The Business Committee has discussed the timetabling of committee meetings on several occasions over the past year. At our last meeting we discussed the attached paper which is a proposal to include the Public Accounts and Finance Committees in a rotation with the five scrutiny committees who meet weekly. This would mean that each committee would meet for half a day each week - either Wednesday morning, Thursday morning or Thursday afternoon. Tuesday morning would be available if any of the six committees who meet weekly plus the Finance Committee needed to have any additional meeting time.

Before we reach a decision on this, the Business Committee would like to hear your views on the proposals. I would also like to invite you to discuss the issue with your committee members as well.

So that we can make a decision in good time for the timetable for the summer term to be agreed, please could you let me have your response by Wednesday 13 February.

Rosemary

Rosemary Butler AM, Presiding Officer

Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd
CF99 1NA
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

To: Business Committee

From: Business Committee Secretariat

Date: January 2013

Committee Timetable

Introduction

1. Following the attendance of the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee last week, the Business Committee requested information on the practical implications of the proposal he put forward.

The Chair's proposal

2. Darren Millar's proposal is that the PAC and the other principal scrutiny committees should be treated equally in terms of timetabling. Specifically, he proposes that there should be three main slots - Wednesday mornings, Thursday mornings, and Thursday afternoons - through which the PAC and the five subject committees would rotate in groups.
3. Tuesday mornings would be available for any committee to use should their workload make this necessary.

Current arrangements

4. The current committee timetable allows the PAC to meet weekly on Monday afternoons and Tuesday mornings.
5. Following discussion at the start of this term, the Business Committee considered an alternative arrangement, to be put to the Chair of the PAC, which would timetable the committee for weekly meetings on Tuesday mornings and fortnightly on Thursday afternoons.¹ This would generate a timetabling clash for the Chair on those Thursday afternoons as he is also a member of the Health and Social Care Committee.
6. All other options for accommodating additional time for PAC within the current Wednesday/Thursday timetable of committee business result in multiple membership clashes.

¹ This would mean PAC met at the same time every other Thursday afternoon as the Health & Social Care Committee and the Enterprise & Business Committee

The impact of the proposal on the committee timetable

7. Implementing the proposal would reduce the scheduled meeting time available to each of the five large scrutiny committees by a third, to 1 day per fortnight, compared to 1½ days per fortnight at present.
8. To compensate in part for this loss of time, the proposal is that Tuesday mornings would be available for any committee to use as needed. The only committee meeting routinely on a Tuesday morning would be the Petitions Committee (which meets fortnightly). Membership clashes exist between the Petitions Committee and Health & Social Care (1 member), Environment & Sustainability (2 members), Communities, Equalities & Local Government (1 member) and Enterprise & Business (1 member). The two committees which do not have membership clashes with Petitions (PAC and Children and Young People Committee) cannot meet at the same time as each other because of membership clashes.
9. Taking these factors into account, Annex 1 includes a possible rota for Tuesday mornings that would avoid any membership clashes. For most committees this would make a slot available every 4 weeks. Most committees would, therefore, have access to less time overall than at present.
10. Alternatively, time on Tuesdays could be made available on a 'first come, first served' basis. How workable such an arrangement would be would depend on how often and widely the slot was used. If relatively limited, membership clashes and competition for the time would be infrequent. If there were high demand for the slot, clashes would be more frequent and, conceivably, some committees could find the slot unavailable altogether.
11. Provided that the Finance Committee is included in the cycle along with the PAC and five subject committees, a rotation system around the three slots on Wednesdays and Thursdays can be done without generating any membership clashes. There are two possible permutations which are shown in Annex 1.

Current use of scheduled time by committees

12. Reliable data on the time actually used by committees for all formal and informal activity² undertaken by committees in their timetabled slots are not available. It is possible to obtain information on the number of slots that have been utilised in some way. Looking back, during the 2012

autumn term, there were 15 available slots for each subject committee³. Of the 75 in total, 63 were used for committee business. This varied between committees with Enterprise & Business, Environment & Sustainability and Health & Social Care undertaking formal or informal committee business in 14 of their 15 slots. The equivalent figure for the Children & Young People and Communities, Equalities & Local Government Committees was 10 out of 15. The PAC met 13 times out of a potential 20.⁴

13. How significant the impact of the reduction in time would be clearly depends on the future workload and priorities of those committees. It is always going to be difficult for committees to control the level of legislative activity since this lies with the Government and the Business Committee.

Other implications

14. The model proposed would impact on committees' ability to carry out informal activities such as meetings outside Cardiff and visits. A regular Thursday slot enables committee activity to be planned with minimal impact on other Assembly business and constituency time.
15. Similarly, the proposal would largely prohibit committees from conducting 'an inquiry in a day', whereby a large number of evidence sessions are scheduled in a morning and afternoon on the same inquiry.
16. The model might also have an impact on legislative timetables depending on how frequently committees rotate their slot.
17. It is assumed that the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee would continue to meet in its Monday afternoon slot. Given the nature of the deadlines on legislation it would be disruptive for CLA to take part in any rotation which means them meeting on different days.

Summary and next steps

18. Business Managers are invited to consider:

- The proposal would reduce the scheduled time available for the five large subject committees;

³ taking Wednesday AM, Thursday AM, Thursday PM as separate slots. Thursday meetings which started before 12:00 and finished after 13:00 are considered to have required use of two separate slots.

⁴ 10 of PAC's potential 20 meeting slots took place on Monday afternoons.

⁵ For example, the Health and Social Care Committee has done one-day inquiries into venous thrombo-embolism prevention (on 24 May 2012) and Still Births (on 28 June 2012).

- Use of Tuesday mornings would compensate partially, but not entirely, for that loss of time;
- How efficiently Tuesday mornings could be utilised would depend on the level of take-up;
- The impact of the reduction in scheduled time would vary from committee to committee. Some committees currently use nearly all of their scheduled slots but others do not;
- The proposal could be put into practice without any membership clashes occurring on Wednesdays or Thursdays.

19. Should the Business Committee wish to pursue the proposal, our advice would be to consult with all other committee Chairs and Members generally.

Annex 1

There are two arrangements by which membership clashes can be avoided within the PAC Chair's proposals.

Arrangement 1:

- Group 1- Enterprise & Business Committee; Health & Social Care Committee; Finance Committee
- Group 2- Public Accounts Committee; Environment and Sustainability Committee⁶
- Group 3- Children and Young People Committee; Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee

Arrangement 2:

- Group 1- Children and Young People Committee; Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee; Environment and Sustainability Committee
- Group 2- Enterprise and Business Committee⁷, Public Accounts Committee
- Group 3- Health and Social Care Committee; Finance Committee

In both arrangements, groups would rotate between Wednesday mornings, Thursday mornings and Thursday afternoons. The frequency of rotations is not critical to the effectiveness of the model- i.e. it could be weekly, termly, or any other period of time considered appropriate by the Business Committee, but a weekly rotation could affect legislative timetables and Members ability to plan other activities.

Example timetable for either arrangement:

	Wednesday AM	Thursday AM	Thursday PM
Spring Term (or Week 1)	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Summer Term (or Week 2)	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2
Autumn Term (or Week 3)	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1

Committees would also be able to make use of Tuesday mornings. Most committees have membership clashes with the Petitions Committee, which meets fortnightly on a Tuesday morning. The two committees which do not have membership clashes with Petitions (PAC and Children and Young People

⁶ Under arrangement 1, the Environment and Sustainability Committee could additionally meet in group 3's scheduled slot

⁷ Under arrangement 2, the Enterprise and Business Committee could additionally meet in group 3's scheduled slot

Committee) cannot meet at the same time as each other because of membership clashes. On average, most committees⁸ could guarantee being able to use one Tuesday morning every 4 weeks without any membership clashes.

Example arrangement for using Tuesday mornings:

Week 1	Petitions Committee, Children and Young People Committee
Week 2	Enterprise and Business Committee, Health and Social Care Committee
Week 3	Petitions Committee, PAC
Week 4	Children and Young People Committee; Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee; Environment and Sustainability Committee

⁸ An exception to this is the Children and Young People Committee, which could potentially meet on a Tuesday morning every 2 weeks, under this model.