

# Agenda – Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee room 5 – Tŷ Hywel  
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 14 January 2026

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

**Robert Donovan**

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

[SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales)

## Hybrid

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### Private pre-meeting

09.15 – 09.30

### Public session

09.30 – 11.40

### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions, and declarations of interest

09.30

### 2 Inward Investment: Panel 1

09.30 – 10.30

(Pages 1 – 17)

Howard Rupprecht, Managing Director, CS Connected

Professor Nigel Driffield, Professor in Strategy and International Business

Group – Warwick Business School, University of Warwick

Professor Riccardo Crescenzi, Professor of Economic Geography, and Deputy  
Head of Department (Research), London School of Economics

Attached Documents:

Research brief



**Senedd Cymru**  
**Welsh Parliament**

## **Break**

10.30 – 10.40

## **3 Inward Investment: Panel 2**

10.40 – 11.40

Russell Greenslade, Director, CBI Wales

Gus Williams, CEO, Chambers Wales

## **4 Papers to note**

11.40

### **4.1 Timetables for Bill scrutiny**

(Pages 18 – 19)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Llywydd, and Chair of the Business Committee –  
19 December 2025

### **4.2 Follow-up from the General Ministerial Scrutiny session held on 3 December 2025**

(Pages 20 – 21)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and  
Planning – 19 December 2025

### **4.3 Follow-up information from the Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2026–27 session held on 26 November 2025**

(Pages 22 – 25)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate  
Change and Rural Affairs – 19 December 2025

#### **4.4 Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement**

(Page 26)

Attached Documents:

Meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Trade – Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning – 22 December 2025

#### **4.5 Farming Connect procurement**

(Page 27)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs – 5 January 2026

#### **4.6 Holyhead berthing incident, December 2025**

(Pages 28 – 29)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales – 5 January 2026

#### **4.7 Follow-up information from the General Ministerial Scrutiny session held on 1 October 2025**

(Pages 30 – 34)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs – 5 January 2026

### **5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting**

11.40

## **Private session**

11.40 – 11.55

## **6 Inward Investment: Consideration of evidence**

11.40 – 11.55

# Agenda Item 2

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**Economy, Trade, and  
Rural Affairs Committee**

Rt Hon Elin Jones MS

Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

19 December 2025

Dear Llywydd,

### **Timetables for Bill scrutiny**

As you will be aware, the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee has recently completed its Stage 1 scrutiny of the general principles of the Development of Tourism and Regulation of Visitor Accommodation (Wales) Bill. While my discontent with the timetable allocated for this scrutiny has been well rehearsed in previous correspondence, I would like to now reflect on the Committee's experience of working within this timetable.

As a Committee, we planned our approach according to the timetable set by Business Committee. In practice, this meant a particularly short window for evidence gathering, specifically:

- three Committee days over three consecutive sitting weeks on which to take oral evidence, which included two sessions with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language,
- a two week consultation period,
- the inability to revisit specific issues with stakeholders, and
- the inability to scrutinise a number of further points that were raised in additional evidence after our evidence gathering had been completed.

On the first point, while the Committee was able to schedule seven evidence sessions in addition to those with the Cabinet Secretary, the significantly reduced notice period for witnesses did cause issues for availability and for the Committee's flexibility in accommodating them. In some instances, letters were issued in place of taking oral evidence. While this allowed for targeted questions to be posed, I am sure you will appreciate this did not then allow for a full and frank discussion with Members



around the issues. This approach also meant that we had to hold our evidence sessions with the Cabinet Secretary on the same days as panels with stakeholders, so we had little time to digest the evidence and reflect fully before moving forward.

On the second point, while the Committee reached out to stakeholders to give notice that a consultation would be forthcoming in advance of the Bill's formal introduction, the condensed timescale for responses did frustrate the efforts of those who wished to provide evidence. Some of the comments the Committee received in relation to the timetable are highlighted below:

- The National Residential Landlords Association declined to submit detailed written evidence to the Committee, stating that "the short window provided for consultation is, regrettably, insufficient for us to meaningfully canvass our membership and prepare a robust, evidence-based submission."
- The Short Term Accommodation Association said: "the turnaround for evidence on the Bill has been very short and impeded a detailed consultation of members and additional data collection".
- Airbnb expressed strong concern about the "accelerated timeline for passage of the bill", saying that the timelines "feel excessively rushed", particularly given that "the bill will introduce major legal obligations on VAPs".

The Committee agreed that the timetable for Stage 1 scrutiny was insufficient, and while we were able to take a relatively broad range of evidence in the time allocated, it restricted our ability to carry out the thorough and proper scrutiny usually afforded to non-emergency proposals for primary legislation. Good scrutiny should be a cornerstone of good, robust, legislation, and I would like to draw your attention to the first recommendation in our report:

*"Recommendation 1. Future Seneddau and governments should not take the timetable afforded to this Bill as a precedent for the making and scrutiny of non-emergency legislation. Such a short timeframe should be avoided unless exceptional circumstances demand otherwise."*

I hope these reflections may be taken into account in preparations for the Seventh Senedd.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

—  
**Economy, Trade, and  
Rural Affairs Committee**

Rebecca Evans MS

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning

19 December 2025

Dear Rebecca

## **Follow-up from the General Ministerial Scrutiny session held on 3 December 2025**

Thank you for attending the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee on 3 December. Following the session, the Committee discussed the evidence you gave and would appreciate your response to the following follow-up questions.

AI Growth Zones – Please could you provide some more detail on AI Growth Zones, particularly what exactly you anticipate the zones will do and what you are hoping they will deliver?

Jobs created and protected – You kindly offered to share more information on this in our session. In that detail, please could you include your exact definitions for jobs created and protected, including timeframes for how long the job must last post intervention.

In the session, you offered to send the Committee follow-up information on several points. The clerking team has already sent this list to your officials, but I felt for completeness we should also include it here. You offered to share:

1. Further detail regarding Global Centre of Rail Excellence funding (ROP paragraphs 22-24);
2. Further detail of the project to use heat generated from old mines being carried out by the Mining Remediation Authority (ROP paragraph 90);
3. The analysis of the number and location of jobs created and safeguarded through Welsh Government support (ROP paragraph 163);

4. Your expectations for the delivery of economic development by Corporate Joint Committees (ROP paragraph 200);
5. Further detail of the support for SMEs regarding attracting inward investment, how that supports the supply chains, upskilling SMEs, the use of AI, and what Business Wales is offering in these areas (ROP paragraphs 206-208); and
6. Further detail on the work undertaken by the Welsh Government in terms of jobs at risk and the impact of AI on the jobs market (ROP paragraph 216).

Thank you for the time you gave to attend Committee. We would appreciate receiving your responses by 15 January to assist with our ongoing work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew RT Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

# Agenda Item 4.3

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet  
dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Andrew RT Davies MS  
Chair,  
Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

19 December 2025

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter seeking further information following my appearance before the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee on 26 November 2025 for Draft Budget scrutiny.

My responses to your queries are provided in Annex 1 below.

Yours sincerely,

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

## **Annex 1**

### **Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee 26/11/2025 - Welsh Parliament**

#### **Rural Affairs**

##### **Farming Connect and dedicated advice/support to people who want to expand in horticulture**

Knowledge Transfer Programme - Farming Connect 2026 – 2029 (inc training and support for diversification).

The Knowledge Transfer Programme - Farming Connect (“the Programme”), was first launched in 2001 to deliver advice on new technologies and production techniques to Welsh farmers. The aim being to enable farming families to diversify, improve business sustainability and access new markets for their products and services. The current Programme ends on 31 March 2026, in line with the revised timeline for the commencement of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). The Programme is currently funded as part of the SFS preparatory phase providing support to farmers on various aspects, such as soil health planning, animal health and Continual Professional Development, and benchmarking which are key components of SFS.

The Programme will be an integral part of the SFS and will support the implementation of the Scheme. The key aims will be to assist farm businesses in increasing resilience and productivity by focusing on areas such as improving soil health, animal health and welfare, pest management, benchmarking and developing additional skills and knowledge on a range of subjects. It will build on the lessons learnt from delivering the existing contract, recommendations made during previous independent evaluations as well as the recommendations made by the ETRA Committee in 2024.

#### **Barnett and Agriculture**

In October 2024, the UK Government removed the ring-fence previously imposed on agriculture funding and included the full amount of replacement farm funding in 2024-25. The total allocation was £339.6m. The Barnett formula will be applied to any future changes in spending (increases and decreases) in England on programmes which are devolved in Wales, including our needs uplift, in the same way as for all other areas of spending.

It is a principle of devolution that the Welsh Government budget should not be ring-fenced by the UK Government for specific purposes. It is for Welsh Ministers, with the Senedd’s approval, to decide how to allocate the Welsh Government’s budget to reflect the circumstances and priorities in Wales.

We very much welcome the fact that we now have full discretion over the level of agricultural support we can provide. This is something we asked the UK Government to provide.

Our budget for the next fiscal year provides over £360m for agricultural support – more than was provided in 2024-25, the final year in which farm funding was ringfenced by the UK Government.

## **Budget Pressures on Bovine TB, Bluetongue and Avian Flu**

OCVO have 4 budget lines and any underspends have historically been consumed by an overspend in the TB compensation budget line. As budgets become more constrained, we have reduced capacity to absorb these overspends. TB compensation, in addition to compensation for other disease outbreaks is an unfunded pressure and where this cannot be met within OCVO budgets, must be met by central reserves.

Both the TB Technical Advisory Group and the TB Programme Board have recognised the importance of investing in the TB Eradication Programme to accelerate disease reduction and enable long term savings for Government and industry. The TB Programme Board will bring forward a position paper in Spring 2026.

The current TB Eradication Programme Delivery Plan, which covers the period 2023-2028, commits Welsh Government to a review of TB compensation. An independent review is currently being commissioned and will report in Winter 2026. Options for a new compensation regime would require a public consultation and may result in legislative and delivery changes.

We continue to work with the Pembrokeshire and North Wales projects and are keen to learn how the wider industry may adopt their key principles, this may require further investment in the short term.

Following the declaration of an all Wales Restricted Zone for Bluetongue serotype 3, we do not expect further compensation will be required for this disease. We are monitoring the evolving Bluetongue situation, but it is difficult to predict if culling and compensation to eradicate other serotypes in line with our Exotic Disease Contingency Plan might become necessary in the future.

Avian influenza remains a risk and culling flocks for disease control purposes is likely to be required in 2025/26 and 2026/27 across the UK. We are working with industry to promote high standards of biosecurity to minimise contact between kept and wild birds and reduce the impact of this disease on livelihoods and Welsh Government resources.

## **Trade and Borders**

### **Border Control Posts (BCPs) in Wales**

It is not possible at this stage to put meaningful estimates on the costs to businesses or to the Welsh Government for the services of Border Control Posts (BCPs) in Wales. This is for a number of reasons.

We can no longer assume that any future border controls will be on the basis of applying the Borders Target Operating Model (BTOM) which applies to goods arriving in Great Britain. Even if there will be exceptions or exemptions to the SPS agreement the UK Government secures with the EU, it is impossible to say at this stage (a) what commodities they might cover, (b) the extent to which those exceptions would represent risks which would require border controls to maintain an acceptable level of biosecurity; and (c) what the nature, frequency and extent of effective and proportionate controls might look like.

Such models as exist in the shape of BCPs elsewhere are based on applying the BTOM. They are also almost entirely in the hands of private sector operators. We therefore have no access to the true costs of operating those BCPs, the extent to which costs have been absorbed across other port operations or even whether costs have simply been written off by port operators to avoid putting off custom by passing the charges on to transport companies and importers.

The only other government owned BCP is at Sevington, near Dover. The scale of this operation is such that it is not a useful comparator with whatever might come to be required in Wales. Until the SPS negotiations started, we had been working on the expectation that there would be a common user charge, with operating costs for Sevington and Holyhead effectively spread across all the relevant traffic passing through both ports. This would be on the basis that, once new arrangements had settled in, the operation would be self-sustaining through charges. However, negotiations on a common user charge with the UK Government have been suspended in view of progress towards the SPS agreement, and as noted above, would be on a very different basis should we need to reconsider at any point.

# Agenda Item 4.4

Rebecca Evans AS/MS  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Andrew RT Davies MS  
Chair of Economy, Trade, and Rural  
Affairs Committee

[SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales)

22 December 2025

Dear Andrew,

I am writing to inform you, in line with the inter-institutional relations agreement, that a meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Trade is scheduled for 8 January 2026.

The meeting will be the first chaired by Sir Chris Bryant, Minister of State (Minister for Trade) and the agenda will cover an update of the trade policy programme, a review of the IMG and discussions on the UK-US Economic Prosperity Deal.

I will update you further following the meeting.

Rebecca

**Rebecca Evans AS/MS**  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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Huw Irranca-Davies MS

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

5 January 2026

Dear Huw,

### **Farming connect procurement**

Please can you provide the Committee with some more information about the procurement process for the new Farming Connect contract. I understand the specification for the next Farming Connect contract is only available to those on the Rural Support Dynamic Purchasing Framework.

Farming Connect offers essential assistance to farmers, and with the implementation of the Sustainable Farming Scheme, this support is currently more critical than ever. Please can you set out how the procurement process is working? In particular please can you set out how it meets the requirements of fair and open competition we expect for public procurement.

Thank you for the time you gave to attend Committee. We would appreciate receiving your responses by 5 February to assist with our ongoing work.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

**Economy, Trade, and  
Rural Affairs Committee**

Ken Skates MS  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

5 January 2026

Dear Ken,

**Holyhead berthing incident, December 2025**

I am writing following the closure of Terminal 5 at Holyhead Port after a berthing incident on Friday, 5 December. As you will know, after the berthing incident last year and the subsequent closure, the Committee has been monitoring developments at the port and their impact on the economy and trade. The Committee is seeking to understand both the immediate and longer-term implications of these incidents for port operations and regional trade.

I am pleased to note that the port managed to maintain a full sailing schedule. However, it is concerning that almost exactly a year later a similar incident has occurred and part of the port has yet again had to be closed.

We would appreciate if you could answer the following questions regarding this latest incident at the Port:

1. Whilst the Port has maintained a full sailing schedule, can you confirm whether the closure of Terminal 5 has affected crossings in any way? For instance, has there been any impact on passenger or freight capacity, or on the ability to load cargo efficiently?
2. Can you provide details on any changes in trade volume or economic activity directly attributable to the closure of Terminal 5?
3. Were you satisfied with the response to this berthing incident? Specifically, were lessons learnt from the previous closure effectively implemented, and how did these measures influence the handling of the recent event?



4. Given that another berthing incident has led to the closure of the port, what specific actions are being undertaken by Welsh Government and its partners to prevent further incidents? Additionally, what contingency plans are in place to ensure the port can remain operational should such incidents occur?
5. Is there any further information you wish to share regarding the berthing incident and the subsequent closure of Terminal 5?

Thank you for considering these questions. We would appreciate receiving your response by 5 February to assist with our ongoing work.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Andrew RT Davies MS  
Chair  
Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

[SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddEconomy@senedd.wales)

5 January 2026

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter dated 20 October, regarding the issues I undertook to write on at my attendance at the General Ministerial Scrutiny session on 1 October. Please find my responses to the points raised below.

## **Bovine TB**

### Whole life restrictions on resolved standard interpretation Inconclusive Reactors (IRs)

All Standard interpretation IRs in Wales that have a negative result under standard interpretation at the re-test read on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026, will remain restricted for the rest of their life to the holding in which they were found. The only permitted off movements for such animals are to a slaughterhouse or an Approved Finishing Unit (AFU). The cattle can move directly or via an approved slaughter gathering or TB dedicated sale (orange market).

Using the IR re-test date as the trigger to implement the policy change rather than the IR disclosing test, is viewed to provide a clear message and allow greater understanding by the industry.

As the permitted testing window for the retesting of IRs is between 60 and 90 days, all IRs disclosed at tests completed from 1<sup>st</sup> November will be captured in the change. It is possible that IRs disclosed at tests completed earlier may also be affected if they are not retested until on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January.

The TB policy team and CCRA communications branch have worked in collaboration with the TB Programme Board, Task and Finish Group and APHA veterinary leads to develop a communications plan along with the guidance material which will be published.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth Gymraeg sy'n dod i law yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The policy change was announced on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2025, allowing a 2-month lead in period. Welsh Government will use various modes of communication as set out in the communications plan below to maximise the coverage. In addition, the farming unions and veterinary practices have committed to promote this policy change using their own member/client communication channels.

Date	Event	comment
Monday 27/10/25	Announcement/Press release/social media channels	Include case study quotes from DFM, CVO and industry
Monday 27/10/25	Publish Guidance WG Website including links to general licences	Include links to a process flowchart and the summary of evidence to support policy change.
Monday 27/10/25	Publish announcement on Gov.uk and TBhub.	With links to guidance on WG website
Monday 27/10/25	Stakeholder Bulletin	With links to guidance on WG website
Tuesday 28/10/25	Welsh Dairy Show, Carmarthen	Have presence to publicise change
W/B 27/10/25	Gwlad newsletter	Link to guidance
November 2025	Article in Gwlad winter update with link to guidance	To coincide with Winter Fair
24-25/11/25	Winter Fair, RWAS Llanelwedd	Have presence to publicise change
1/01/2026	Implementation/Announcement	Social media

## River pollution prosecutions

*Welsh Government provided an additional £3.5m in 2025–26 to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to strengthen regulation and enforcement capacity. This funding seeks to enable NRW to establish a dedicated Water Compliance Unit, expand multi-agency enforcement, and invest in critical monitoring equipment and pilot programmes.*

The enforcement of the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations (CoAPR) is undertaken by Natural Resources Wales in accordance with NRW's Regulatory Principles and the Regulators' Code. Prosecutions are just one aspect of NRW's enforcement approach, which is proportionate to the risks posed to people and the environment and includes a range of outcome focussed actions from provision of advice and guidance with timescales to complete actions, serving notices and Formal Caution. Advice and guidance in this context are given to ensure compliance in specified time period, rather than voluntary by nature.

The available data confirms 75 formal warning letters, 12 notices, 1 formal caution and 349 instances of advice and guidance have been issued or served. There are a number of cases currently being considered for prosecution, but none have been taken forward to date. Action has been taken under other legislation where agricultural pollution has occurred. As delegated agents for Cross Compliance SMR1, NRW is obliged to report the outcome of any CoAPR inspection to Rural Payments Wales (RPW). Breaches are scored using the Verifiable Standards and financial penalties are applied.

The Welsh Government has committed £4.13m for NRW's enforcement of the Regulations since their introduction. As of 31st March 2025, a total of 847 farms had been inspected. 53% were found to be non-compliant with one or more of the CoAPR requirements on the first visit, whilst 47 % were fully compliant with the regulations. At the end of March 2025, 91 of the non-compliant farms had been brought into full compliance.

As the main reasons for non-compliance relate to infrastructure requirements, it can take considerable time for the non-compliance to be rectified appropriately. The regulatory and enforcement approach taken will help those farms achieve compliance in the appropriate timescales, to deliver the outcomes the regulations seek to achieve.

NRW's approach to enforcing the regulations is helping to drive investments. We have committed £69m for farms to invest in capital items since the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations were introduced. A further 553 farmers have been invited to submit a full application under the latest Nutrient Management Investment Scheme window, with a total grant value of £19.6m. Those investments should result in long-term improvements to water quality.

*More broadly, in 2024 Natural Resources Wales undertook enforcement action in 337 water-related cases, reinforcing its commitment to minimise environmental harm wherever possible and ensuring the delivery of the best outcomes for communities and ecosystems. Further information on its enforcement work can be found in its [2024 annual regulatory report](#).*

### **Agricultural pollution – industrial sized dairy and livestock farms**

As you will be aware I published a written statement on 8 October outlining the next steps on the Review of the Control of Agricultural Pollutions Regulations. I have asked my officials to establish a new task and finish group to engage on the recommendations and inform the development of proposals. Due to the complex and technical nature of the recommendations and the importance of a collaborative approach, I will be using the experience gained from the SFS stakeholder engagement process to inform the way forward.

Whilst some of the recommendations will extend beyond the end of this Senedd term I am keen for task and finish group to identify what work can be undertaken now to support sustainable changes to the regulations. Officials have been working over the summer on preparatory work, including drafting technical specifications for work to be carried out by contractors with scientific and agronomic expertise. The specifications include exploratory work on key recommendations, including alternatives to the closed periods and the 170kg limit and soil protection measures. The Welsh Government is also engaging with the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) - a neutral, independent and not-for-profit body - on its review of industry guidance on best practice in relation to slurry storage for designers, contractors and agricultural operators to inform future slurry storage designs.

Final decisions will be for Welsh Ministers. However, given the importance of this work to a range of stakeholders, I will make sure the SFS Ministerial Roundtable and the eNGO roundtable are sighted on progress. Furthermore, any proposals for substantive changes to the regulations will require formal consultation and will need to be underpinned by the necessary Impact Assessments.

The enforcement approach outlined earlier will also continue, subject to annual review. We need to go further than we have before, challenge each other more than we have before, and we need to move quickly to make real improvements. We must clean up our rivers and coastal waters.

## **Monmouth and Brecon canal**

I welcome the opportunity to reaffirm the Welsh Government's position, which remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting Wales' cultural heritage while also supporting economic growth and tourism. We are determined to work hand in hand with partners to identify and deliver sustainable solutions that will safeguard this historic waterway and secure its future for generations to come.

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal is recognised as a vital community asset, enriching local life through recreation, education, and wellbeing. Its preservation is essential to ensuring that it continues to serve as a source of pride for future generations.

This historic waterway contributes over £30 million to the Welsh economy and supports more than 1,000 jobs. Recognising its importance, the Welsh Government has brought together partners to find a sustainable solution that balances heritage, community, and economic priorities.

To this end, the Welsh Government and the Canal & River Trust have entered into a funding partnership for the next five years. Under this agreement, the Welsh Government will provide cover for up to £400,000 annually, while the Canal & River Trust will contribute up to £100,000 each year. Discussions will continue with other partners to secure further contributions to ensure long term resilience and sustainability of the canal.

This agreement builds on the £5 million already committed to refurbish the Manorafon pumping station, a critical investment that creates the space needed to develop long-term resilience for this precious waterway. Engagement with stakeholders will remain central as we continue to shape the canal's future.

We are proud to support this initiative and remain committed to working collaboratively to protect and enhance the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for the benefit of communities, visitors, and the wider Welsh economy.

## **Licensing to regulate the release of game birds**

Gamebird releases in Wales are already subject to important safeguards. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 requires that releases within Sites of Special Scientific Interest must be consented by Natural Resources Wales. Evidence shows that activities carried out by the game shooting sector can deliver benefits for biodiversity, but that the release of gamebirds can also lead to harm, particularly where they happen in sensitive locations or at unsustainable levels. It is important we carefully consider how we develop a robust licensing approach that is right for Wales. We will need to work collaboratively across all sectors to determine the most appropriate approach for Wales.

Avian Influenza has added an additional challenge. The Welsh Government is currently introducing additional measures to Avian Influenza Prevention Zone Declaration in Wales. These are specific requirements in relation to mandatory biosecurity in the gamebird management sector, including a mandatory biosecurity checklist to be completed by all gamebird keepers. Initial risk communication has already taken place with relevant industry representatives to support the transition to the mandatory phase.

Thank you for writing to me on this important topic. I hope this information is helpful and goes  
some way in answering the Committee's queries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs