

Lesley Griffiths MS

Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

30 July 2020

Dear Lesley,

Thank you for attending the Committee's meeting on 9 July. The Committee has agreed that I should write to you to follow up on several matters. I would be grateful if you could respond to the questions that follow in writing by 10 September, to inform discussions in the Committee's meeting on 17 September, which you have agreed to attend.

Fisheries

1. You told the Committee you had hoped to make a statement regarding future fisheries policy in March, but that had been delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Are you able to tell the Committee when you expect to be able to make that statement?
2. In relation to the Welsh Fisheries Grant, you told the Committee that 120 vessels had received over £0.5 million in grant aid. Can you confirm what the purpose of this grant is and how you will determine whether it has been effective?
3. The £0.5 million funding grant constitutes an average of approximately £4,000 per fishing vessel. Can you confirm that you are satisfied that this is sufficient funding? What plans do you have for further financial assistance for this sector to aid its recovery?
4. During the evidence session, you referred to several examples of illegal fishing activity. Can you provide the Committee with details about the levels of illegal activity during this recent period where enforcement vessels have not been patrolling Welsh waters? Can you confirm all enforcement vessels are now operational?



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Environment

5. We have been told that delays relating to payments from the Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS) have resulted in problems for some NGOs. Can you provide the Committee with an update on the latest position and, if there are outstanding issues, set out a timetable for when they will be resolved?
6. During the session, you referred to the need to secure a “green recovery” after the Covid-19 pandemic. Can you set out your plans for a green recovery in Wales? Do you intend on publishing a plan or strategy so that others can see the direction of travel?
7. How will Members of the Senedd and the Welsh public be able to judge whether the Welsh Government has delivered a “green recovery”?
8. Can you provide details of the purpose and membership of the biodiversity taskforce? The taskforce has been allocated £0.5 million in funding, what outcomes do you expect to see as a result of your investment?

NRW

9. What is the latest position on NRW’s projected funding gap?

Food

10. Can you provide an update on the latest Welsh Government position on testing for Covid-19 in food processing plants?
11. Can you provide the Committee with an update on the funding that has been allocated to and spent by the #LoveWalesLoveTaste initiative?
12. Can you provide the Committee with your current assessment of food security in Wales, including the resilience of supply chains? Do you believe any action needs to be taken to strengthen that resilience, in the light of a potential second wave of Covid-19 infections (and related restrictions) in the Winter?
13. Can you provide the Committee with an update on the timeline for your response to the consultation in relation to the groceries code?



Brexit and Common Frameworks

14. Can you provide the Committee with an update on any relevant matters that were discussed in the inter-Ministerial group meeting on 29 July?

Flooding

15. We would be grateful if you would provide a copy of your new flooding strategy when it is published in September.

16. You told the Committee that “significant funding” has been given to local authorities “to enable them to not just investigate but publish their findings and then provide infrastructure, if that’s needed, to stop it from happening again”. How much has been allocated for this purpose?

17. Do you think the current level of funding provided to local authorities to deal with flooding is sufficient, given the increasing frequency of extreme rainfall events? Do you believe that more funding will be necessary to assist local authorities to deal with flooding this Winter?

18. When do you expect local authorities to publish their findings from the work that has been funded?

19. How satisfied are you that the necessary steps have been taken to “stop it from happening again”?

Climate Change

20. What assessment have you made of the impact on emissions levels of behavioural changes or business decisions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic?

21. Will you publish a formal Welsh Government response to the report produced by the group led by Chris Joffe, which was tasked at considering the cost of retrofitting homes in Wales, among other things?

Animal Welfare

22. You told the Committee that you will be bringing forward a Bill in relation to third-party puppy sales. The Welsh Government has previously suggested that this matter will be dealt with through secondary legislation under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Can you confirm whether you will be legislating on this matter using primary or secondary legislation?



23. You confirmed that a second public consultation was being undertaken on this matter. Can you confirm that you intend to consult on the text of the draft legislation?

24. Can you update the Committee on the Welsh Government's latest position on a support scheme for veterinary costs for vulnerable pet owners?

Agriculture

25. What is the timeline for responding to the Wales Audit Office's report on rural development programme funds?

26. Your official told the Committee that the Welsh Government's budget includes provision to pay disallowance fines. How much is allocated for this purpose?

27. What consideration have you given to the ongoing support for events and organisations that are focused on rural communities in the light of the restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic?

Yours sincerely,



Mike Hedges MS

Chair of Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

