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Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig  
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Mike Hedges AM  
Chair of Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff  
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Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 22 October and for the Committee's Report 'The Welsh Government's proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme: restoring biodiversity'.

Reversing the decline of biodiversity is one of our biggest challenges, however, it is a challenge we must rise to for a multitude of reasons. Enhancing biodiversity alongside the ongoing production of high quality food and tackling the climate emergency, are among my main priorities in devising a future land management policy for Wales.

The *Sustainable Farming and our Land* consultation explained the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the "WFG Act") and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 establish an important legislative and policy framework, focussed on sustainability, from which we are developing our proposals for future land management policy in Wales. In this legislative context, our proposals will contribute to achieving the well-being goals set out in the WFG Act and, in this particular case, will make an important contribution to a "resilient Wales" by supporting outcomes which maintain and enhance a biodiverse natural environment. The proposed policy will also be important to deliver the Welsh Ministers' commitments under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in Wales.

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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.

The *Sustainable Farming and our Land* consultation has only recently closed. We are in the process of considering consultation responses, alongside undertaking a co-design programme with farmers and stakeholders to further explore the practical aspects of the proposals. We also have ongoing uncertainty from the UK Government over the level of funding which will be returned to Wales should the UK leave the EU. The design of a future scheme and the associated delivery model is, therefore, still at an early stage of development. Therefore, it is not possible to give a final response to many of your recommendations at this time. For this reason, many of the recommendations are accepted in principle (rather than outright) whilst policy proposals are developed and finalised.

There is one aspect of your report I wish to clarify. I agree our ambitions for a future advisory service are ambitious, however I believe providing the right level of advice and support will be crucial in enabling our farmers to adapt to the changes we propose. You have referred to “the Welsh Government’s commitment that the costs of advisory services will not have to be met from the funds available for farming support” (page 31). As I have previously stated, there is no clarity on future budget allocation from the UK Government and no detailed delivery model has been designed.

I would like to thank the members of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee for the report. I have set out my response to the individual recommendations below.



**Lesley Griffiths AC/AM**

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