

Lesley Griffiths MS

Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd

3 January 2024

Dear Lesley

### **General Ministerial Scrutiny – 13 December 2023**

Thank you for your time with the Committee to discuss issues in your portfolio. It was a very useful session, and raised some questions that Members agreed to follow up with you for further clarification.

### **Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS)**

Members welcome the opening of a 12 week consultation on detailed SFS proposals. In Committee the payment rates associated with the scheme were discussed. Members noted that the payment rates will not be announced until the summer of 2024, after the outcome of the SFS consultation and final design of the scheme. Members are concerned about the implications of uncertainty about payment rates for farmers and their businesses:

- Can the Minister set out how she will be engaging with the farming industry with regard to payment rates, to ensure buy-in and participation in the SFS scheme to assure its success?

### **Applying lessons learnt from implementing the Habitat Wales scheme (HWS)**

The development of the SFS must take account of the various problems identified by stakeholders in the design of the Habitat Wales Scheme (HWS). These concerns have been set out in recent correspondence between the Minister and the Committee, and raised in Plenary sessions by Members across the Senedd. The Minister's response to the Committee's letter on HWS said "The development and delivery of the scheme has given us valuable lessons which we will use as we finalise the SFS.":



- Can the Minister provide a list of lessons learned from designing the HWS that will be considered for finalising and implementing the SFS?

## Agricultural Pollution Regulations

Members welcome the Minister's offer to update the Committee in the New Year on work on alternative measures:

- Members look forward to receiving that update on the assessment of proposals for alternative measures as soon as possible, given that the enhanced nutrient management approach is a temporary measure put in place for the 2024 calendar year.

## Animal Disease

There was discussion of preparedness for animal disease outbreaks in Wales, including managing the risks and being prepared for more than one outbreak at the same time. There was discussion of various notifiable diseases including Foot and Mouth Disease, of which there have been outbreaks in Turkey.

- Members welcome the proactive work being done, and would appreciate seeing the summary report of the recent table-top exercise and workshops, once completed, to help understand any gaps in preparedness and how these are being addressed.
- Members would appreciate receiving more information in particular about preparedness and vaccine stocks available for Bluetongue viral disease given the recent detection in England.

As you will be attending a scrutiny session on Welsh Government's Draft Budget Proposals for 2024-25 on 18 January, after which the Committee will report to the Senedd on the rural affairs budget, it would be helpful if you are able to respond to this letter in advance of that 18 January Committee meeting.

Kind regards,



**Paul Davies MS**

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English