



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1388
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00797/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

10 January 2024

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 18 December, regarding Petition P-06-1388 to remove the requirement for farmers to have at least 10% tree cover to access the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

I published the final consultation on the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) on 14 December which contains the most recent iteration of a wide range of proposed actions, including tree cover requirements.

I would like to clarify some points regarding the proposed 10% tree cover requirement:

Existing trees and woodland would be counted towards this minimum requirement. We do not propose each farmer would need to plant an additional 10% over and above the trees they already have.

Within this consultation we have proposed amendments to how the 10% could be calculated. For example, it is not feasible for tenant farmers to plant trees if their tenancy agreement precludes it, and it would be ecologically inappropriate to plant on priority habitats. Therefore, we propose to adapt the requirement so it is no longer 10% of the entire farm, but 10% of the area remaining once the unplatable areas have been removed from the calculation.

Unlike the current Basic Payment Scheme, trees and woodlands will be included in the land area which generate farmers' payments, so I hope farmers can once again learn to value the multiple benefits provided by trees.

We continue to explore with the farming industry how additional trees can be integrated in a way they become an asset such as providing shade and shelter to livestock from increasingly erratic weather, or as biosecurity barriers on farm boundaries. In this way trees can contribute to food production and the overall resilience of the farm business. It does not need to be a stark choice between trees or food production.

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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 tree cover requirement should not be considered in isolation. It is one component of a scheme designed to address the climate and nature emergencies alongside the ongoing sustainable production of food. In this way we can help our farmers become more resilient to the impact of climate change.

This petition was not based on the updated proposals. I urge all farmers to respond to the current consultation.

No final scheme design decisions, including on tree cover requirements will be made until the conclusion of this consultation. The consultation will close on 7 March.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS

**Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd**