

Huw Irranca-Davies MS  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs

24 February 2025

Dear Huw,

## **Follow up to meeting of 5 February 2025**

Thank you for attending the ministerial scrutiny session on the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) on 5 February. During discussion afterwards, the Committee identified several points it would like to bring to your attention.

Firstly, whilst the Committee fully appreciates that there are many moving parts to bringing the SFS proposal to a conclusion, we wish to emphasise that the timeliness of an announcement is essential - it's important that everything is worked through and ready by the announcement in the summer to ensure clarity for farmers. In addition to this, we would like to stress the importance of securing sufficient funding over multi-year budgets which will make the scheme enticing to farmers and provide certainty given the long-term nature of farming practices. We have heard evidence from environmental organisations and farming unions highlighting that, if the scheme does not offer an attractive financial reward, farmers will not join up, and the scheme's ambition will not be achieved, no matter how well it is designed.

We also identified a number of points raised during the session we would appreciate clarity on, as set out below:

- The Committee recognises there is no 'plan B' for the scheme's design, as discussed during the session, which we appreciate provides clarity to farmers. However, we would be keen to understand whether any plans are in place in the event that the economic impact assessment shows poor outcomes for farmers or the environment? We are mindful it will only be a matter



of months between the scheme being finalised and its launch. This is particularly pertinent in the context that the previous economic impact assessment was a key issue that sparked the public protests based on the 2023/4 consultation.

- During the session, there was a discussion on the recent Welsh Government mapping of the land that would be suitable for tree planting. Specific percentages for the outcomes of this could not be provided at the time, so we would be grateful if these could now be provided, as committed to.
- As also discussed during the session, the Committee would welcome being provided the full report on the work of the carbon sequestration panel, including the results of the exercise to score different carbon sequestration options, when it is available..
- The Committee would like to take up the offer to receive a timetable of developments on the scheme, when firm details are available.

The Committee also welcomes the fact that Optional and Collaborative actions, which will be available from 2026, will be published with the scheme in the summer, as well as a timetable for when the other Optional and Collaborative options will be available during the Transition Period.

Finally, whilst the Committee recognises all political parties in the build-up to the 2026 election will have different manifesto positions, the ability to seek some form of political consensus to give confidence in the scheme will be paramount to its success. We hope you would agree this is a key priority, and will try to the best of your endeavours to get cross-party political buy-in to your proposals.

Kind regards,



**Andrew RT Davies MS**

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English