

Vaughan Gething, First Minister

Via e-mail

19 July 2024

Dear Vaughan,

**Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister meeting**

Thank you for attending the scrutiny of the First Minister Committee on 12 July 2024.

It was a useful and informative session and the Committee appreciated the opportunity to explore the Welsh Government's work in the context of Rural Communities. There were areas of questioning that we were not able to fully cover during the session, and we would therefore appreciate a written update to the queries set out in the Annex to this letter.

Yours sincerely



David Rees MS

Chair, Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

# Annex: Additional information on Rural Communities

We would welcome some additional information on the following:

## Housing

1. The Director General for Climate Change and Rural Affairs agreed to write to the Committee to confirm when the analysis of the Dwyfor Meirionydd pilot, which is trialling various measures relating to the management of the number of second homes and short-term lets, is to be published.
2. What progress has been made on establishing an affordable homes taskforce, and what impacts will it have on addressing planning backlogs in rural areas?
3. How will you take forward the progress made by the previous First Minister on overcoming phosphates as a barrier to building new homes?
4. How will the forthcoming homelessness Bill specifically address rural homelessness?

## Corporate purchase of farmland for woodland creation

5. Can you give an update on the issue of large companies based outside Wales buying up productive farmland for woodland creation?
  - i. Do you see this as a problem and, if so, what is the Welsh Government doing to control it?
  - ii. What is the Welsh Government doing to help local communities benefit from large afforestation projects, financially or otherwise?
6. Could you give an update on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Woodland Finance Working Group, published in July 2022?
  - i. Could you give an update on the pilot projects to secure private finance for woodland creation? What models have been used what has been learnt to date?
  - ii. Has a feasibility study been carried out on establishing a public interest company focused on delivering woodland? If so, what did it conclude, and will it be published? If not, why not?

## The Welsh language

1. Does the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS), as the Welsh Language Commissioner asserts in the [summary of her response to the SFS](#), undermine one of the intended objectives for

sustainable land management - to “maintain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use”?

2. How will you ensure that, as part of the pause in introducing the SFS, the Welsh Government revisits the potential impact of the scheme on Welsh speaking communities? Will the Welsh Government review its impact assessment on the language as part of the process?
3. What yardstick will the Welsh Government use to measure the impact of the Arfor scheme on the Welsh language in rural communities, and how could such a scheme be extended to other areas of Wales to support Welsh-speaking communities?

## Food and drink

1. What is your vision for the food and drink industry in Wales and how it can support rural communities?
  - i. How does the Sustainable Farming Scheme support this?
  - ii. How is your government balancing the need for climate and environmental action against the need to produce food that is viable for the producer and affordable for the consumer? Are there any trade-offs?
2. What is the Welsh Government doing to ensure that food supply chain infrastructure, for example abattoirs and food processing and manufacturing plants, remain situated in rural communities?
3. How is the Welsh Government ensuring that the Welsh rural workforce has the necessary skills to maintain an “environmentally and socially responsible supply-chain”?
4. What is the Welsh Government doing to promote Welsh food and drink in Wales, the UK and overseas?