

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig  
Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/LG/8030/16

Mark Reckless AM  
Chair of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

20

December 2016

Dear Mark

Thank you for your letter of 8 November regarding the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee inquiry into the future of agricultural, environment and rural policies in Wales. I was also pleased to meet with you on 13 December to discuss a range of matters, including the Committee's current inquiry which I welcome.

I would like to re-iterate my full support for the calls for the UK Government to commit to providing Wales with the same level of EU funding it currently receives. This is a key issue and the First Minister has sought assurances from the UK Government that existing EU funding will be replaced in full, including that equivalent monies in programmes like CAP will be guaranteed to the end of the current programmes in 2023. We will continue to make a strong and positive case for Wales to receive its fair share of funding in the longer term after the UK exits the EU.

I also fully support the Committee's calls for the UK Government to recognise Wales should maintain the freedom to make future policies on devolved areas. I would underline it is essential the devolved administrations play a full part in discussions, not least as policy areas such as agriculture, environment and rural development have been wholly devolved for the last 17 years. This will avoid unintended consequences and allow the unique context in each area to be fully reflected in the wider UK position. Within the UK, we have already seen a divergence of both policy and legislation between the different parts of the UK, as most recently seen in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. There are also key areas where we deal directly with the European Commission, for example, in relation to funding Programmes and agricultural payments and we must, therefore, be fully involved in the process of exiting those arrangements.

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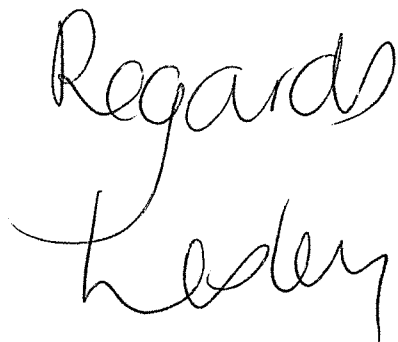
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

I reinforced these key points when I hosted the first monthly meeting with UK Agriculture Ministers on 8 November in Cardiff and again at a further meeting on 12 December. I also met with the Secretary of State, Andrea Leadsom MP, last month to discuss EU Transition and a series of quarterly meetings have been arranged together with Devolved Administrations for January. Through this cycle of meetings, I will continue to build on the discussions to date and work closely with the UK Government and Devolved Administrations to ensure Welsh interests are reflected in the UK's negotiating position. As future trade arrangements and associated supply chain impacts have implications across the environment and rural affairs portfolio, this also means greater involvement in non-devolved policy issues to ensure the needs of our industry in Wales are accounted for.

These discussions have highlighted that whilst the process of the UK's exit from the EU brings significant challenges, it also provides opportunities to set a new strategic direction for Welsh agriculture, tailored to specific Welsh needs. As a Government, we are committed to ensuring we safeguard and build on the progress made in relation to these policy areas, whilst addressing those areas where more needs to be done.

As I updated you at our recent meeting, I have been actively engaging with stakeholders to discuss the implications and opportunities following the EU Referendum and I hosted a fourth roundtable meeting with key stakeholders across my portfolio on 19 December.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Regards" on the top line and "Lesley" on the bottom line. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Lesley Griffiths AC/AM**

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